

## ***Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation***

### **ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY**

#### **Preamble**

Created in the image and likeness of God, each child shares a fundamental human dignity. A Catholic school provides an environment dedicated to protecting and fostering the development of that dignity. The school helps children learn how to exercise their God-given freedom responsibly, with the goal that good choices become good habits, that is, *virtues*. The highest virtue is charity, which God both requires and makes possible. "Here is my commandment," says Jesus, "that you love one another as I have loved you." As bearers of the divine image, members of the school community deserve care and respect from all. Bullying and retaliation are not to be tolerated.

This policy serves as a guide for when expectations of respect are not met, and for when reconciliation and restitution are needed.

#### **Definitions**

For purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

"Aggressor" means a student who engages in bullying or retaliation.

"Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, that is objectively offensive, is directed at a Target, and that:

- causes physical harm or emotional harm that results in clearly identifiable physical symptoms to the Target or places the Target in reasonable fear of such harm;
- causes damage to the Target's property;
- places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a Hostile Environment at school for the Target;
- infringes on the rights of the Target at school, including defamation and invasion of privacy; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

*For the purpose of this Policy, whenever the term "bullying" is used it is to denote either bullying or cyberbullying.*

"Cyber-Bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images,

sounds, data or intelligence of any nature, including a post on a social network, internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device.

“Hostile environment” means a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to materially and substantially alter the conditions of the student's education.

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

“School grounds” mean property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

“Staff” includes, but is not limited to, educators, faculty, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletics coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

“Target” is a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

### **Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation**

The school expressly prohibits bullying in all forms, either by an individual or group of aggressors.

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, is prohibited:

- On School Grounds owned, leased or used by a school;
- At any school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off School Grounds;
- At a school bus stop;
- On a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device.

Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related. Similarly, the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a school to commit an act or acts of bullying is also prohibited.

### **Reporting**

Any Staff or volunteer who has witnessed or become aware of any instance of bullying or retaliation must report that act to the Principal or another school official designated by the Principal. In the selection of this person, care should be taken that both a male and female school official are designated to receive reports of bullying.

Any student or parent/guardian of a student are strongly encouraged to report all acts of bullying. Reports can be made to the student's teacher, who must then report it to the Principal or Assistant Principal, or directly to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Reports may be made confidentially and anonymously when requested. The anonymous nature of the report may make it difficult to investigate or corroborate the alleged bullying. No disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

False accusations of bullying are absolutely prohibited and may result in discipline in accordance with the school's discipline policy.

Anyone with general questions or concerns about bullying or the school's policy should address those questions or concerns to the Principal.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against a Target, witness of bullying, a person who makes a good faith reporting of bullying, or who provides information during an investigation of bullying, is prohibited.

### **Response and Investigation**

The school takes seriously all reports of bullying.

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, the Principal or his or her designee will conduct an investigation. When possible, the investigation will begin within three school days of the report of bullying.

The School reserves the sole discretion to determine the scope and adequacy of the investigation.

Anyone with questions about the investigation should direct those questions to the Principal.

### **Violations**

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the School's disciplinary policy.

The School retains the sole discretion to determine whether Bullying has occurred and what the response should be.

Depending on the circumstances, the School's response could include:

- taking appropriate disciplinary and remedial action;
- notifying the parents or guardians of the Aggressor of the determination;

- notifying the parents or guardians of the Target, the Aggressor, and any other affected persons about community resources.

### **Training**

Training on this Policy shall be provided for Staff at least once every three years and, at the discretion of the Principal, for volunteers who have significant contact with students.

### **Publication and Notice**

The Principal or his or her designee shall provide written or electronic notice of this Policy to the Staff.

Written or electronic notice of the Plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms and in languages which are most prevalent among the students, parents or guardians.

### **Consequence Expectation**

If it is determined that harassment/intimidation/bullying has occurred, one or more of the following consequences may result:

- Administrative conference with student (with or without parent)
- Assignment designed to increase awareness and sensitivity to the issue
- Detention (before school, recess, after school)
- Referral to an outside agency for evaluation
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Referral to law enforcement for possible criminal action

This Policy shall be conspicuously posted in the administrative offices of the school.