

St. Louis Catholic School Bullying Prevention Policy

Created September 2009

St. Louis Catholic School believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment and is committed to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance free from bullying and harassment.

St. Louis Catholic School will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student or staff. A student, staff, or parent shall not intimidate or harass another person through words or actions in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at designated bus stops, or at school activities or sanctioned events.

Bullying is not a rite of passage to be endured by young people. Instead it is a behavior that must be addressed because of the harmful impact it can have on students. Bullying can lead to depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, feelings of isolation, as well as school absenteeism, and low academic achievement.

Definition

Bullying occurs when a student or other person is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative action on the part of one or more other students or persons. Bullying is characterized by the following three criteria: (a) it is aggressive behavior or intentional 'harm doing'; (b) it is carried out repeatedly over time; and (c) it occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power.

Bullying takes many forms, including the following:

- ***Physical bullying*** - physical acts of aggression such as hitting, kicking, tripping, or pushing. ***Verbal bullying*** - threats of physical bullying, name calling or other insults, making 'faces or obscene gestures, graffiti on bathroom walls.
- ***Relational bullying*** - spreading rumors, intentional exclusion of others, passing of harmful notes about another person.
- ***Internet (Cyber) bullying*** - the spreading of harmful information or lies about others through email, chats, text messages, online blogs, cell phones or cameras.
- ***Sexual bullying*** - unwanted touching or comments made about a person's body, body type or physical features including wedgies, bra snapping, and obscene sexual gestures.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Harassment

As defined by the above mentioned behaviors, bullying behavior is strictly prohibited, and such conduct will result in disciplinary action. This prohibition includes anyone associated with St. Louis Catholic School including students, school staff and administrators, parents, and community members.

All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. Staff is expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. Each complaint of bullying will be promptly investigated.

All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reports may be made anonymously. Formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report. (St. Louis Catholic School Discipline Referral Form).

All such reports will be taken seriously. The principal or principal's designee will conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident in order to verify the validity and seriousness of the report.

Any reprisal or retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports a bullying incident. Filing a report in good faith will not reflect upon the individual's status, nor will it affect grades or employment status.

Consequences for Bullying

St. Louis Catholic School staff and administrator have developed and will implement a hierarchy of consequences that matches specific bullying behaviors to disciplinary and/or remedial action. The following factors will be taken into consideration when determining appropriate consequences: age, development, degree of harm, surrounding circumstances, nature and severity of the behavior, incidences of past or continuing patterns of behavior, relationship between involved parties, and the context in which the alleged incident has occurred.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student who commits one or more acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. The Bullying Hierarchy of Consequences will be used as a basis for determining the disciplinary action.

Remedial action and consequences for school employees will be determined on a case by case basis and in accordance with the employee handbook or school code of conduct. Parents, volunteers, and community members are expected to maintain the same high standards that are expected of students and staff.

Since bystander support of harassment or bullying can support negative bullying behaviors, St. Louis Catholic School prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff will encourage students to support students who walk away from these acts when they see them, constructively attempt to stop them, or report them to the

designated authority. Students will be given the skills to know how to intervene when they witness a bullying incident.

Disclosure and Public Reporting

Notification to all parties subject to this policy defining and prohibiting bullying shall be made at minimum one time over the course of the school year. A summary of the policy will be incorporated into student and employee handbooks. It will also be distributed to parents and organizations in the community having cooperative agreements with the school.

At the beginning of each school year, staff will be reminded about the policy, as well as their responsibilities regarding bullying behavior. As a reminder, staff will also discuss the policy with the students throughout the year that bullying is not tolerated and that there will be consequences for bullying behavior.

Data on the number and types of reports made under this prohibition, the results of investigations undertaken to verify the details made in complaints, and the sanctions imposed for incidents found to be in violation of the same will be kept on an annual aggregated basis. No individuals, either the reporter or the violator, will be named in the reports.

*St. Louis Catholic School has the option and responsibility to create the Bullying Incident Report and Hierarchy of Consequences as well as review the bully policy annually.