

# St. John's

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## CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*Exceptional Education Anchored by Faith*

### St. John's Catholic School Brunswick, Maine Anti-Bullying Policy



Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you."

## **Purpose**

At St. John's Catholic School, we believe that all members of the community have the right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring which will not tolerate bullying. This policy builds on the school's pastoral care policy to provide clear and agreed upon procedures and strategies for combating hurtful behaviors towards others, bullying in the school, responding to bullying behaviors, and protecting and supporting all parties involved.

## **Policy Framework**

Flowing from the Christian vision expressed clearly in our Catholic faith, we are all called to establish relationships which are grounded in love, compassion, reconciliation and justice. In witnessing Christian values we reject ideas, beliefs, and behaviors which marginalize or victimize people.

## **Definition**

While there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, there is general consensus that bullying behavior has the following elements:

A desire to hurt; the perpetration of hurtful behavior (physical, verbal, or relational) in a situation in which there is an imbalance of power; the action being regarded as unjustified, typically repeated and experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable. (Ken Rigby, 2002)

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress.

## **Examples of bullying include:**

Physical: Hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others.

Verbal: Teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumors

Non-Verbal Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using e-mail or text messaging to hurt others, rude gestures

Exclusion: Deliberately excluding others from group, refusing to sit next to someone

Extortion: Threatening to take someone's possessions, food or money

Property: Stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property

## **The Potential Impact of Bullying**

Bullying has the potential to affect both the individual and the entire school community.

Students who are bullied may:

- Develop feelings of negative self worth, possibly leading to feelings of isolation and abnormal absenteeism
- Develop feelings of helplessness, feeling they ought to be able to do something about it but lack the confidence to take any remedial action
- Feel frightened for their safety
- Feel embarrassed, angry, or unfairly treated
- Disconnect socially from peers
- Project anger onto others
- Suffer problems in concentration or in sleep
- Develop health problems associated with the emotional/psychological distress created by bullying
- Exhibit "at risk" behaviors, such as anxiety or depression
- Have long term problems in maintaining interpersonal relationships and in sustaining self-esteem.

### **The Possible Impact on the School Community**

Although the effects of bullying may be most painful for the individual victim, bullying can create “shockwaves” across an entire school community.

It may be responsible for some of the following:

- Feelings of anger, tension or disharmony amongst students or staff
- An atmosphere which seems unsafe and uncaring
- A perceived lack of trust and cohesion between members of the school community
- A lack of faith amongst the student body in the ability of staff to maintain a controlled, peaceful environment
- An abnormally high number of aggressive actions
- A perceived condoning of “preferencing” where older students exert power over students in younger year groups
- Tension and frustration within the parent body as a result of their fears for the safety, happiness and well-being of their children
- Feelings of guilt, shame or helplessness as the result of knowing about or witnessing bullying
- A reluctance by a section of the community to participate in activities, especially those which are non-compulsory
- Links between bullying behavior and legal issues
- A reduction in community confidence in the school

### **How do we prevent bullying at St. John’s Catholic School?**

Ultimately, strategies to minimize and prevent bullying will only be effective when placed within the context of a culture in which respect for others is consistently taught and demonstrated across all facets of school life. The Christian values, which represent the antithesis of bullying, must be continually affirmed in words and actions.

Strategies to prevent bullying will fall within the following broad categories:

- Moral education in the context of religious education, liturgies, assemblies where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, reconciliation, tolerance, respect and justice are encouraged.
- Across the curriculum values teaching (i.e. looking at the problem of prejudice within the context of a novel or a history lesson)
- Clear statements from staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying
- Teaching specifically related to bullying through the program.
- Teaching more positive ways of resolving conflict, such as working cooperatively within the classroom and playground.
- Staff and students as role models, particularly those in leadership roles such as peer support.
- Measures for vigilant classroom and playground supervision.
- Provision of safe and structured playground spaces and structured activities at break times.
- Provision of activities which develop a culture of caring for one another and acknowledging the worth and contribution of others and which help to develop compassion.
- Appropriate provision of counseling or other support services
- Provision of support for parents through information seminars, support networks

### **How Do We Respond to Bullying at St. John's Catholic School?**

Bullying is viewed as a breach of the school's behavior code. Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

The response to bullying will provide:

- Guidance and other support for the recipient
- Appropriate and consistent sanctions and support for the student who bullied

Staff will be encouraged to report suspected incidents of bullying to the class teacher (home room teacher) of both the recipient and the student who bullied. If they encounter an incident of bullying, they will take steps to protect the recipient and witnesses. All staff are expected to pass on information about any bullying to the Principal for further action.

The School seeks to promote a culture in which students will be encouraged to:

- Take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident
- Report the bullying incident to a teacher as soon as possible
- Make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted

Recipients of bullying will be encouraged to:

- Confront the bully and let him/her know that his/her behavior is unwanted and unjustified. This step should be taken if initial tactic is unsuccessful.
- Discuss the problem with parents, who may be able to assist with strategies to deal with the problem
- Notify their class/home room teacher / or teacher on duty

Witnesses of bullying will be encouraged to:

- Assist students being bullied
- Ask for teacher support
- Discuss problem with friends and parents

## What Parents Can Do

Parents play a key role in the support of both the recipients and the students who bully. The school must work in partnership with parents in the disciplinary process.

### Parents can assist in the following ways:

When your child has been the recipient of bullying:

- Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable. Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously.
- Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault.
- Don't tell them "not to worry, to forget it, to toughen up."
- Avoid bullying tactics around your child, so they don't get mixed messages.
- If the bullying is verbal, help your child develop the skills to ignore it so that the student who bullies does not get the satisfaction of a reaction. Practice the way to walk past looking confident with head up. Practice a supply of quick responses – for example 'that's your opinion' 'talk to someone who cares'.
- Avoid the urge to take everything into your own hands unless absolutely necessary, as this will make your child feel less in control.
- Help your child feel good about the other things in his/her life. Enhance their self-esteem.
- The recipient/victim and witness/es of the bullying may need further support to develop strategies to overcome the situation. The class teacher will seek to involve the parents in the formulation of the plan and its monitoring.

When it is clear that your child is the student who bullies:

- Recognize the seriousness of the issue and support the school in implementing this policy.
- Stay calm and avoid becoming angry and defensive.
- Reassure your child that you still love them – it is their behavior you do not like, but you will work with them to help change this.
- Cooperate with the school in implementing the appropriate procedures and graduated responses for dealing with bullying.

### Procedures to deal with Bullying

- All interview(s) will be conducted to ascertain the specific nature of the bullying and its effect on the recipient and witness/es, in an attempt to develop mutual empathy. Decisions will be made as to the level of severity of the incident and whether the parents (of those involved) need to be informed. The interview should also focus on appropriate strategies to assist all involved. Further support may be offered, if required.
- The initial interview should also include a clear statement on the consequences if the bullying continues, or if there are any reprisals as a result of the reporting of the incident.
- A record of the separate interviews must be placed in the Notes section of the student's record and any ensuing events. Notify the Pastor.
- A less formal post-interview follow up of both parties should be conducted separately a week after the initial incident, to ensure that there have been no problems.
- If the student continues to engage in bullying behavior, he/she will be interviewed in the presence of his/her parents by the Principal, Pastor, School Resource Officer, and classroom teacher. Direct consequences will include calling on internal and external assistance re development of a plan of action to manage student behavior, conflict resolution, anger management.
- When action plan(s) have been implemented, all those engaged in their development will continue to monitor and formally follow up at regular intervals.
- Any further recurrence of bullying may result in an issue of warning regarding suspension and could lead to the implementation of suspension procedures and, if necessary, removal of the student from the school through:
  - Suspension pending negotiated transfer
  - Negotiated transfer of
  - Expulsion

In the Christian environment that St. John's Catholic School represents, we expect all children to model the gospel message and follow a Christian Code of Conduct. The following Anti-bullying Policy will be implemented. All students, parents and staff will be expected to abide by and sign off on the pledges the Anti-bullying Pledges.

For our purposes, bullying behaviors are described but not limited to the 5 categories listed and described below.

### **Bullying Behaviors and Characteristics**

- Physical Aggression
  - Pushing/Shoving
  - Spitting
  - Kicking/hitting
  - Stealing
  - Defacing Property
  - Physical acts that are demeaning and humiliating
  - Physical violence against family or friends
  - Threatening with words and/or a weapon
- Social Alienation
  - Gossiping
  - Setting up to look foolish or embarrass
  - Ethnic slurs
  - Setting up to take the blame
  - Publicly humiliating
  - Deliberately excluding
  - Rumor spreading
  - Threatening with total isolation by peer group
- Written / Verbal aggression
  - Mocking / taunting
  - Name calling
  - Teasing about appearances or possessions
  - Intimidating phone calls, e mails, or instant messages
  - Verbal/written threats of aggression against property or possessions
  - Verbal/written threats of violence or infliction of bodily harm
- Intimidation
  - Dirty looks
  - Graffiti
  - Daring to do something inappropriate
  - Defacing property or clothing
  - Playing a dirty trick
  - Poking fun during class
  - Taking possessions
  - Extortion
  - Threats or coercion against family or friends
- Sexual Harassment
  - Sexual or dirty jokes
  - Inappropriate remarks, gestures, sounds
  - Spreading sexual rumors
  - Physical acts that are degrading/demeaning
  - Cornering, blocking, standing too close, following too close

Students who violate the anti-bullying pledge and exhibit bullying behaviors as described will have the following consequences applied.

Consequences are what happen as a result of behavior. Consequences can be positive or negative depending on the type of behavior. Consequences should be fair, predictable and certain to happen. They should be related to the rule that has been broken.

Major Sanctions are last resort actions which only occur with due process in the event of serious breaches of the school's behavior code. All major sanctions are options that can be undertaken after Step 6 in any order deemed appropriate for the situation.

### **Graduated Response Chart for St. John's Catholic School Anti-Bullying Policy**

#### **Step 1 Alert Student**

- Why** To refocus, to return to the appropriate activity, to make the student aware that the behavior is inappropriate
- When** When student's behavior is disruptive or school rules are being broken
- How** Ask student to return to what he/she is supposed to be doing, student makes restitution.
- Who** Student and Teacher

#### **Step 2 Caution the Student**

- Why** To stop the disruptive / hurtful behavior
- When** When inappropriate behavior continues
- How** Relocate student with classroom, student makes restitution
- Who** Principal / Teacher / Student

#### **Step 3 Teacher / Student Parents Develop Program**

- Why** To assist student to modify unacceptable behavior
- When** When student's behavior continues to intrude upon teaching and learning time, or school rules continue to be broken
- How** Restitution but negotiating a rewards system, through use of a communications book with parents by making a contract between teacher and student
- Who** Principal / Teacher / Parents / Student

#### **Step 4 Call on External Assistance**

- Why** To set up a support group to manage concerns about student behavior
- When** When the student's behavior intrudes upon teaching and learning time beyond manageable limits, school rules being broken which threaten the safety or dignity of others, harassment or bullying. This is a serious breach of the Behavior Code.
- How** Principal, parents, staff members and student develop a plan of action to manage student behavior
- Who** Principal / Teacher / Parents / Student / External (i.e. School Resource Officer SRO) School Social Worker

#### **Step 5 Follow-up to external assistance**

- Why** To monitor and follow up formal action plan
- When** At regular intervals after action plan has been implemented
- How** Through a series of support group meetings involving all members in Step 4
- Who** Principal / Teacher / Parents / Student / External (i.e. SRO) Consultant

#### **Step 6 Issue Warning**

- Why** Action plan is deemed unsuccessful
- When** Prior to any action being taken towards putting major sanctions into play
- How** A written warning, where appropriate, is issued outlining potential consequences for continued serious breaches and/or inappropriate behavior
- Who** Principal / Pastor

### **Step 7 Suspension procedures**

- Why** Action plan has failed to modify seriously disruptive student behavior
- When** When all of the above steps have been unsuccessful – A serious breach has occurred
- How** The student's right to attend the school is withdrawn for a temporary time. Appropriate activities to be undertaken by the student to modify the behavior
- Who** Principal / Pastor / Teacher / Parents / Student

### **Step 8 Suspension Pending Negotiated Transfer**

- Why** Suspension procedures have not modified student behavior
- When** When all internal and external resources available to the school have been unsuccessful in modifying student behavior - A serious breach has occurred.
- How** Through consultation with and research of alternative locations and environments Consultation between staff and parents to determine optimal relocation
- Who** Principal / Pastor / Superintendent / Parents / Student

### **Step 9 Negotiated Transfer**

- Why** Negotiations are complete and suspension period is over
- When** Negotiations with alternative location, parents and students are successful – A serious breach has occurred
- How** Re-enrollment at new location. Where appropriate, offer assistance to student/family to ensure positive re-location
- Who** Principal / Pastor / Superintendent / Parents / Teacher / Student

### **Step 10 Expulsion**

- Why** Student's behavior has not changed. Student is deemed to be a threat to the wellbeing or safety of others. Negotiated transfer has not occurred.
- When** When previous major sanctions have been unsuccessful or deemed inappropriate. A serious breach has occurred.
- How** After consultation with Pastor, Principal makes recommendation to the Superintended. Recommendation is then reviewed and a decision is determined based on the reports.
- Who** Principal / Pastor / Superintendent / Parents / Teacher / Student