

Bullying Prevention Policy

July, 2023



I. Purpose/Rationale

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them.
It is to just such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs.”
Mark 10:14

Acknowledging that all of creation is rooted in the teachings of Christ, our Savior, the Archdiocese of New Orleans establishes an Anti-Bullying Policy that is rooted in the social teachings of the Church. We recognize these principles:

- God created each person as a unique individual, created in the image and likeness of God and endowed with undeniable dignity. (Genesis 1:27)
- As children of God it is our destiny to grow in “wisdom, age and grace.” (Luke 2:52)
- Catholic Social Teaching perceives an obligation to work to create conditions in which the unique dignity of each person is respected and all human rights are protected. (Luke 4:18-19)

The Archdiocese of New Orleans is committed to exposing all students to the teachings of the Catholic Church in order that they may reveal Christ to the world. Our goal is to nurture generations that are cooperative, unselfish, respectful and tolerant of others. Our educational approach is characterized by the integration of Catholic Truths and values within the framework of the learning experience. Therefore, we are committed to providing a loving, positive, and safe learning environment for all students.

Bullying has a negative effect on the faith community, creates a climate of fear, and inhibits students’ ability to learn. Bullying may destroy respect for the dignity of the student, may undermine the Catholic atmosphere of the school, and may deprive the student a safe and caring learning environment. It may touch the bystander by desensitizing them to aggressive and derisive behavior, and may adversely affects the long-term emotional and social development of the bully.

Individuals who are bullied may begin to develop a perceived lack of value and self-esteem and experience feelings of isolation. They may have difficulty in the learning process and worry about their personal safety. A person who is bullied may have trouble establishing and maintaining long-term relationships. Ultimately, a person who experiences bullying may become angry and aggressive or develop deep-seated emotional or psychological problems.

Jesus Christ clearly commands us to “love your neighbor as yourself”. (Matthew 22:39) Therefore, the Archdiocese of New Orleans adopts an Anti-Bullying Policy in order to preserve the dignity of all and to further promote the Gospel and teachings of Christ.

II. Scope

The Archdiocese of New Orleans believes that any and all forms of bullying are unacceptable behaviors. Therefore, all statements or actions of student-on-student bullying made at any time, including on campus, during or at school-sponsored events, while traveling to or from a school-related activity, or off-campus, will not be tolerated. All students, teachers, and other school employees shall take appropriate measures within the scope of their individual authority to prevent bullying.

III. Definition of Bullying

Bullying behavior is defined as repeated and persistent verbal, written, physical, or psychological action, implied action or communication intended to cause harm, fear or distress to another person (or group of persons). An imbalance of power between the aggressor and the target is often involved. Bullying is a means of control and may be carried out directly through physical, verbal, written, or electronic means, or indirectly through social and emotional aggression. Bullying includes any of the foregoing by a person even if the person did not initiate any of the foregoing but perpetuates it.

Examples of bullying, as defined above, may include, but are not limited to:

<u>Verbal (overt)</u>	<u>Physical (overt)</u>	<u>Social/Emotional (covert)</u>
Name-calling/Put downs	Hitting	Relational Aggression
Insults	Kicking	Manipulating Friendships
Racial Comments	Spitting	Gossip/Spreading Rumors
Harassment	Pushing	Exclusion/Shunning
Sexist Comments	Inappropriate Gestures	Intimidation
Teasing/Taunting	Tripping	Written Notes
Threatening/Extortion	Stealing	Electronic Misuse/Text Messages
	Choking	(Cyberbullying)
	Damaging Person Property	
	Unauthorized Use of	
	Personal Property	

In addition, retaliation in response to bullying will not be tolerated, and any such retaliation will be dealt with accordingly.

Bullying includes the definition of bullying set forth in La. R.S. § 17:416.14.

IV. Reporting Bullying

The principal or the principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints of alleged bullying. All school-based employees are required to report alleged bullying to the principal or the principal's designee immediately. All other members of the school community including students, parents/guardians, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report bullying as soon

as it is witnessed or experienced. Any person who becomes aware that a school-based employee has failed to report, prevent, stop, or investigate bullying as the employee may be required to do by the law or in accordance with this policy should report the alleged failure to the principal or the principal's designee. The principal or the principal's designee will be responsible for investigating any school-based employee who is required to report alleged bullying but fails to do so. The investigation and any punishment of the employee will be in accord with the employment policies and procedures for employee misconduct and discipline.

Any member of the school community who has information that bullying has taken place may file a report of bullying, whether a victim or witness. Any student (and/or the parent or guardian on that student's behalf if the student is a minor) who believes he/she is a victim of bullying is strongly encouraged to report bullying in writing to a school official.

Law Enforcement will be contacted when there is evidence of criminal conduct.

False reports of or retaliation for bullying also constitutes violations of this policy.

Administrators/principals/designee(s) will document in writing any complaints about bullying along with information regarding investigation and response.

V. Investigating and Responding to Bullying

The Principal bears the ultimate responsibility for investigating complaints of bullying. If the Principal so chooses, she or he may designate another member of the administrative team to act as her or his designee. Any investigation will begin no later than the next business day the school is in session after the report is received. The investigation shall be completed no later than 10 school days after the date a written report of the incident is submitted to the appropriate school official.

Investigation of complaints of bullying should consist of personal interviews with the various individuals who may be involved or have pertinent information regarding the alleged bullying. Interviews with alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, and all witnesses will be conducted separately. At no time will the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator be interviewed together. Parents/guardians of students involved in bullying accusations will be notified.

When interviews are complete and all information collected, the Principal or his or her designee will determine whether the actions complained of constitute "bullying" as defined in this policy and, if so, referral of such to the proper disciplinary authority within the school.

Conduct that is determined to be bullying in nature will generally warrant some sort of disciplinary action in accord with the school's disciplinary policy. Disciplinary consequences should be sufficiently severe to attempt to deter violations and to appropriately address prohibited behavior.

In accord with the school's disciplinary policy, consequences and appropriate remedial action for bullying may include, but may not be limited to:

- Community service hours
- Written punish work
- Loss of Privileges
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Appropriate actions will be taken to care for the student found to have been bullied. A final, written report on each incident will be prepared and placed in each student's files. All information regarding the incident(s) will be confidential.

In keeping with the teachings of Christ, corporal punishment is unacceptable within the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Students found to be engaged in bullying behavior should be referred to counseling to address the underlying causes of the inappropriate behavior.

VI. Training and Preventive Education

To enhance the education and formation of our students, schools must actively promote positive student behavior while preventing inappropriate behavior. Therefore, schools within the Archdiocese of New Orleans are required to:

- 1) Adopt an Anti-Bullying Policy to be included in the school's student handbook consistent with this policy;
- 2) Provide professional continuing education for all faculty and staff that addresses an increased awareness of the problem of bullying and systematic program for addressing the problem in the particular school;
- 3) Educate parents and other school community members, including but not limited to teachers and employees, of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy; and,
- 4) Students should be taught that as bystanders of bullying behavior, they have a moral obligation to defend the target through the use of supportive words and non-violent actions.
- 5) Create and provide a form to report incidents of bullying, including an affirmation of truth of the statements made in support of the report.

The responsibility for the implementation of the program rests with the Principal in coordination with the Pastor of the Parish, if the school is associated with a parish. Training and implementation will be on-going, throughout the school year, including a quarterly review of the policy at minimum. New employees who have contact with students will receive four hours of training. Current employees who have contact with students will receive two hours of training each year. Training will specifically include how to recognize bullying, how to identify

likely victims of bullying, how to use appropriate intervention and remediation techniques, procedures to report incidents of bullying, and information on suicide prevention.

VIII. Yearly Review of Resource and State laws

Principals shall be responsible for a yearly review of their school's Anti-Bullying policy to ensure continued consistency with this policy and state law.

IX. Applicability of State Laws

This policy is not intended to supplant state law insofar as certain actions that meet the definition of bullying as defined herein may also result in certain persons who are mandatory reporters having to report certain matters to law-enforcement authorities or certain state agencies depending on the circumstances. For example, but without limitation, certain actions may require that they be reported as abuse according to state law. The proper Archdiocesan authority should be consulted depending on the nature of the alleged actions.

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