



ST. FELIX CATHOLIC SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Preamble.

Created in the image and likeness of God, each child shares a fundamental human dignity. St. Felix 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" (John 13:34). 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 the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply, whenever the term "bullying" is used it is to denote either bullying or cyber-bullying.

"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, which is **objectively** offensive, is directed at a "targeted student," and that:

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

"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, writing, images, sounds, photographs, 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, isolation/exclusion, and 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” means property on which the school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by the 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, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, and paraprofessionals.

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

Prohibition against Bullying and Retaliation.

St. Felix Catholic 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 the 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 owned, leased or used by the school.

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 the school to commit an act or acts of bullying that materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school is also prohibited.

Reporting.

Any staff member or volunteer who has witnessed or has become aware of any instance of bullying or retaliation must report that act to the principal.

Any student or parent/guardian of a student is 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.

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

Reports may be made confidentially when requested.

Reports may be made anonymously. 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.

Retaliation.

Retaliation against a targeted student, witness of bullying, a person who makes a good faith report of bullying, or who provides information during an investigation of bullying, is prohibited. Every effort will be made to keep the identity of the reporter confidential.

Response and Investigation.

The school takes seriously all reports of bullying.

Upon receipt of a report of bullying the principal or designee will conduct an investigation. When possible, the investigation will begin within three school days of the report of bullying. Due to unforeseen circumstances, if three school days is not feasible to investigate, the targeted student must be provided a time-line when the investigation will take place.

The school reserves the sole discretion to determine the scope and adequacy of the investigation. The investigation may be reported to local law enforcement.

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 targeted student, the aggressor, and any other affected persons about available community resources: Social Services, family service worker, social worker, counselor, Catholic Charities.
- notify law enforcement if circumstances warrant notification

Training.

All staff will receive initial training of this policy, followed by an annual review here after, and, at the discretion of the principal, for volunteers who have significant contact with students.

Publication and Notice.

The principal shall provide written or electronic notice of this policy to the staff, and include this policy in the school handbook.

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.

This policy shall be available in the administrative offices of the school and the school website.

Adopted on November 17, 2015