

St. Joseph Catholic School

Anti-Bullying Policy

St. Joseph Catholic School believes that each Catholic school in the Diocese of Evansville must be aware that its purpose is rooted in the mission of the Church. Each Catholic school, in fulfilling its role within the educational mission of the Church, must share and live out, through Catholic Christian tradition, the message of Jesus Christ and be committed to providing an integrated Catholic educational environment that permeates all aspects of its daily life and operations. The following policy has been established by the St. Joseph Catholic School regarding anti-bullying.

I. Policy Statement

Bullying is prohibited in St. Joseph Catholic School. It must not be tolerated during the school day nor during any school sponsored activities on or off the school grounds. Bullying and intimidation are actions that are contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. This behavior is against the fundamental tenet of “love your neighbor as yourself”, and destroys respect for the dignity of the student, undermines the Christian atmosphere of the school, and deprives the student of a safe and caring learning environment. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior; treating others with civility and respect; and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

II. Definitions

1. Bullying

- a. As defined by St. Joseph Catholic School, bullying is defined as any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the other student while on school grounds or at a school sponsored activity where acts against are repeated against the same student over time. Bullying includes physical intimidation or assault, extortion, oral or written threats, digital or electronic expressions/threats, teasing, putdowns, name-calling, threatening looks, gestures or actions, cruel rumors, false accusations, and social isolation.
- b. As defined by IC 20-33-8-.2, bullying means overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:
 - i. Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student’s person or property;
 - ii. Has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student’s physical or mental health;

- iii. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's academic performance; or
- iv. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school.

III. Policy Provisions

1. St. Joseph Catholic School shall adopt discipline rules in compliance with IC 20-33-8-13.5 that prohibit bullying and include provisions concerning education, parental involvement, and intervention. These discipline rules shall apply regardless of the location in which the bullying occurred when the bully and the targeted student are students at St. Joseph Catholic School, or disciplinary action is reasonably necessary to avoid substantial interferences with school discipline or prevent an unreasonable threat to the rights of others to a safe and peaceful learning environment.
2. The principal at St. Joseph Catholic School shall implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses for students who commit one or more acts of bullying, consistent with the code of student conduct, as well as the consequences and remedial responses for staff members who commit one or more acts of bullying. Appropriate consequences and remedial actions are those that are graded according to the severity of the offenses and consider both the developmental ages of the student offenders and students' histories of inappropriate behaviors.
3. The principal shall be responsible for designating a member of his/her staff to receive all complaints alleging violations of this policy.
4. All school employees, volunteers and contracted service providers who have contact with students are required to verbally report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. A written report of the incident shall also be submitted to the school principal or principal's designee within one (1) school day of submitting the verbal report.
5. Students, parents and visitors of a school within St. Joseph Catholic School are encouraged to submit a written report of alleged violations of this policy to the principal (or principal's designee) on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. Such a report may be made anonymously. Formal action for violations of the code of student conduct may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
6. Any school employee, volunteer or contracted service provider who promptly reports an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures of this policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising from any failure to remedy the reported incident.

7. The principal or designee shall conduct a thorough and complete investigation for each report of an alleged incident of bullying received. The investigation shall be initiated by the principal or the principal's designee within one school day of the report of the incident. The principal may appoint additional personnel to assist in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed and the written findings submitted to the principal as soon as possible, but not later than five school days from the date of the report of the alleged incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The principal shall submit an Incident Report to the CSO within ten (10) school days of the completion of the investigation.
8. St. Joseph Catholic School shall record the frequency of bullying incidents in the following categories: verbal bullying, physical bullying, social/relational bullying, and electronic or written communication bullying.
9. The principal shall provide the parents of the students who are parties to the investigation with information about the investigation, in accordance with Federal and State law and regulation. The information to be provided to parents includes the nature of the investigation, whether the school found evidence of bullying, and whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the bullying incident if the evidence of bullying was substantiated.
10. Any school employee, volunteer, or contracted service provider who receives a report of harassment, intimidation, or bullying from a student, parent, visitor, or colleague, and fails to initiate or conduct an investigation, or who witnesses or observes a bullying incident and fails to take sufficient action to minimize or eliminate the harassment, intimidation, or bullying, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
11. Based on the investigation findings, the principal shall ensure the school's consequences and remedial actions have been followed and shall provide intervention and/or relevant support services (i.e., refer to counseling, establish training programs to reduce bullying and enhance school climate, enlist parent cooperation, and involvement or take other appropriate action). Intervention and support implemented by the principal or his/her designee should include follow up services to both the targeted student and the bully. The principal shall inform the parents of all students involved in alleged incidents, and, as appropriate, may discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services.
12. The principal of St. Joseph Catholic School is authorized to acknowledge and respond to instances of false reporting of alleged bullying incidents. The principal is expected to respond with consequences and remedial actions regarding any person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying as permitted under P.L. 285-2013 for:

- a. Students – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student could range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
 - b. School Employees – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee or contracted service provider who has contact with students could entail discipline in accordance with corporation policies, procedures and agreements.
 - c. Visitors or Volunteers – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer could be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act, including law enforcement reports or other legal actions, removal of building or grounds privileges, or prohibiting contact with students or the provision of student services.
13. St. Joseph Catholic School shall disseminate the anti-bullying policy and bullying prevention instruction to all students in grades K-5 within the school no later than October 15th of each school year. It is expected that anti-bullying information will be part of a more comprehensive bully prevention effort communicated to the students throughout the school year, and that the age appropriate, research based instruction for all students in grades K-5 be delivered by a school safety specialist, school counselor or other person with training and expertise in the area of bullying prevention and intervention.
14. St. Joseph Catholic School shall provide annual training on this policy, bullying prevention, and bullying intervention instruction to school employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers who have direct and on-going contact with students.

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