

Anti-Bullying Policy

Procedures and Information

The State of Ohio Board of Education as well as St. Michael School believes that our schools should provide physically safe and emotionally secure environments for all students and staff. It is our goal to foster a positive school climate through this policy.

The State Board of Education defines a positive climate as one, which evokes non-violence, cooperation, teamwork, understanding and acceptance toward all students and staff in and in transit to and from the school environment.

In compliance with the State of Ohio (House Bill 276) and a mandate from the Ohio Department of Education that all public schools have an effective bullying policy, we have compiled the enclosed document to address this issue here at St. Michael. This document is derived from the anti-harassment, anti-intimidation, anti-bullying model provided by the Department of Education and addresses these issues in light of the House Bill as well as Ohio Revised Code.

As you read through the document, you will notice that terms and actions are well defined so that there is no question as to what the policy encompasses. In addition to this, we have addressed the types of behaviors, which are not tolerated, and how they will be handled here at school. We have also included a section for parents to assist you in handling complaints when your child is the victim and what you can do to diffuse situations as well as strategies to help your child handle various situations. We have also addressed the issue of what you can do if you find that your child has been the one who bullies.

We ask you to read this document thoroughly and carefully and share this information with your child. With this policy in place and with each of us; parents, faculty, staff and students, complying with this policy, we can truly provide the physically safe and emotionally secure environments that each of us wants for our children.

Aggressive Behavior Toward Students

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying behavior by any student/school personnel in the St. Michael School is strictly prohibited, and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from school. "Harassment, intimidation, or bullying", in accordance with House Bill 276, means any intentional written, verbal, graphic or physical acts including electronically transmitted acts i.e., Internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or wireless hand-held device, either overt or covert, by a student or group of students toward other students/school personnel with the intent to harass, intimidate, injure, threaten, ridicule or humiliate. Such behaviors are prohibited on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of:

- causing mental or physical harm to the other student/school personnel - including placing an individual in reasonable fear of physical harm and/or damaging of students'/personal property; and,
- creating an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the other

Types of Conduct

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” can include many different behaviors including overt intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate another student or school personnel. Examples of conduct that could constitute prohibited behaviors include:

- ✓ Physical violence and/or attacks;
- ✓ Threats, taunts and intimidation through words and/or gestures;
- ✓ Extortion, damage or stealing of money and/or possessions;
- ✓ Exclusion from the peer group or spreading rumors;
- ✓ Repetitive and hostile behavior with the intent to harm others through the use of information and communication technologies and other Web-based/online sites (also known as “cyber bullying”), such as the following:
 - Posting slurs on Web sites where students congregate or on Web logs (personal online journals or diaries);
 - Sending abusive or threatening instant messages;
 - Using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students and posting them online;
 - Using Web sites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students;
 - Excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to Internet service providers

How Can I Help My Child?

1. Read school policies thoroughly with your child.
2. Sign the statement of acceptance.
3. Encourage your child to make a commitment to show kind and respectful behavior and occasionally ask your child to evaluate his/her actions.
4. Open the door to communication with your child by consistently asking him or her how school is going, if he/she is having any difficulty with friends, or if he/she is anxious about anything. Be willing to listen without getting emotional.
5. Encourage and cultivate acceptance and tolerance for differences in others.
6. St. Michael School needs parents to be partners with the school. If your child is involved in a bullying incident, don't minimize the situation. Make a phone call and involve school personnel right away.

Informal Complaints

Students, parents or guardians and school personnel may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be “harassment, intimidation and/or bullying” by verbal report to a teacher, principal, or other school personnel. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of “harassment, intimidation and/or bullying”, including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of the prohibited behavior(s), and the names of any potential student or staff witness. A school staff member or administrator who receives an informal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing, including the above information. This written report by the school staff member and/or administrator shall be promptly forwarded to the building principal and bullying intervention committee for review and action in accordance with Section Six.

Anonymous Complaints

Students who make informal complaints as set forth above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the school staff member(s) and administrator(s) who receive the complaint. The anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of “harassment, intimidation and/or bullying”.

Formal Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file reports regarding suspected harassment, intimidation or bullying. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected “harassment, intimidation and/or bullying”, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the building principal and bullying intervention committee for review and action in accordance with Section 6.

What Can I do if My Child is a Victim of Bullying?

1. Encourage your child to share problems with you and assure him/her that this is not tattling. Listen attentively and reassure your child that he or she will not have to face the problem alone.
2. Try not to become emotional about what you hear. When parents become angry or overly sympathetic, children are unable to focus on the real issue. They may shift, instead, to trying to protect, mimic or manipulate the parent.
3. Keep a written record of bullying episodes so you can share details with the school.
4. Call the school to inform them about what your child has reported and to gather more information.
5. Encourage your child to notify school adults immediately when bullying occurs. Reinforce that the staff are partners in preventing bullying.
6. Praise your child for having the courage to share his/her concerns about a bullying situation.
7. Praise your child for his accomplishments and differences. A confident child is less likely to be targeted by bullies.
8. Try to improve your child’s social skills by encouraging good behavior.
9. Talk to your child about strategies for dealing with the bully.

What Can I do if I discover that My Child is the Bully?

1. Immediately upon hearing about an incident, have a serious talk with your child. Send a strong, clear message that bullying is not acceptable.
2. Expect that your child will try to minimize and deny his or her actions and responsibility. Help your child understand that no matter what another person may have done to upset him/her, your child is accountable for how he/she chooses to respond.
3. Maintain contact with school and your child’s teachers. Support the school’s efforts to modify your child’s behavior. Frequent communication with teachers and administrators gives your child the message that the adult team (parent and School) are committed to helping him/her be successful.
4. Set a good example for your child. If your child observes aggressive or disrespectful behavior by you (i.e. how you treat servers at restaurants, how you handle driving frustration, etc.), your child is more likely to act aggressively toward other children.
5. Monitor and supervise your child’s activities such as: how he/she interacts with other children, what he/she is saying on the phone, how and who he/she is communicating with on the computer.
6. Share your expectations with your child about how he/she treats others and be willing to set limits and/or take away privileges if your child has been hurtful to others.
7. Realize that parents who have clear rules and follow through on expectations AND who show love and interest in their child’s feelings tend to raise the most confident and successful children.

Investigation - What Will Happen if My Child is Involved in Bullying Someone?

The principal working with the bullying intervention committee shall be promptly notified of any formal or informal complaint of suspected harassment, intimidation or bullying. Under the direction of the building principal and the bullying intervention committee, all such complaints shall be investigated promptly. A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying were verified, and, when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action shall be included in the report. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when a student making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complaint. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

Verified acts of "harassment, intimidation, or bullying" shall result in an intervention by the building principal and the bullying intervention committee that is intended to ensure that the prohibition against harassment, intimidation or bullying behavior is enforced, with the goal that any such prohibited behavior will cease.

"Harassment, intimidation and bullying" behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in seriousness and impact on the targeted individual and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying. While conduct that rises to the level of "harassment, intimidation or bullying," as defined above will generally warrant disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such prohibited behaviors, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (detention, in and out-of-school suspension; or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building principal and the bullying intervention committee. The following sets forth possible interventions for building principals to enforce the school's prohibition against "harassment, intimidation or bullying."

When verified acts of "harassment, intimidation or bullying" are identified early and/or when such verified acts do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of "harassment, intimidation or bullying", its prohibition and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered "harassing, intimidating or bullying".

When acts of "harassment, intimidation and bullying" are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints that are not otherwise verified, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

In and out-of-school suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation.

Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the principal, the bullying intervention committee, parish priest and then referred to the superintendent for final disposition. This consequence shall be reserved for serious incidents of "harassment, intimidation or bullying" and/or when past interventions has not been successful in eliminating prohibited behaviors.

How Can I Help My Child do The Right Thing if They See Others Being Bullied?

1. Talk to your child about how he/she felt as he/she witnessed the bullying. Children who are “bystanders” may experience a wide range of feelings such as: scared, guilty, powerless, entertained, relieved, impressed and ashamed.
2. Praise your child for telling you about the incident and encourage him to speak up whenever he/she sees someone being bullied. Assure your child that this is NOT tattling, rather it is helpful in creating safety for him/her and others.
3. Help your child to make other good choices when he or she sees bullying such as:
 - Getting adult assistance during a bullying situation.
 - Refusing to join in when someone is being bullied.
 - Assisting a rejected or lonely person.
 - Not spreading rumors about the people involved.
 - Creating a distraction to draw the bully away.

St. Michael School
ACCOUNTABILITY REFERRAL FORM

NAME _____ DATE _____

HOMEROOM TEACHER _____ GRADE _____

(Adult initiating form if other than HR teacher) _____

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR (choose all that apply)

- Physical violence and/or attacks
- Threats, taunts and intimidation through words and/or gestures
- Extortion, damage or stealing of money and/or possessions
- Exclusion from the peer group or spreading rumors
- Repetitive and hostile behavior with the intent to harm others through the use of information and communication technologies and other Web-based/online sites (also known as "cyber bullying"), such as the following:
 - Posting slurs on Web sites where students congregate or on Web logs (personal online journals or diaries)
 - Sending abusive or threatening instant messages
 - Using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students and posting them online
 - Excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to Internet service providers
 - Other _____
 - SpecificComments _____

BEHAVIOR OCCURRED

- Cafeteria
- Classroom
- Hallway or Stairwell
- Church
- Playground
- Restroom
- School Bus
- Extra-Curricular (please specify) _____
- After School Care
- Other Locker Room
- Any school sponsored activity

COURSE OF ACTION (To be determined by Principal and Bullying Intervention Committee)

- Administrative disciplinary action (code of conduct violation) _____
- Asked student to stop/discussed behavior
- Parent conference needed
- Student loses school privilege
- Student makes phone call home
- Student writes about behavior & what could happen as a result of his/her bullying behavior
- Other _____

Specific Comments _____

Student Signature _____ *Parent Signature _____

(*Form must be returned to school the following school day.)

Phone Call Made _____

Form Mailed _____