

Holy Spirit School Bullying Policy (5-31-12)

Holy Spirit School, as a community based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Gospels, tenants of the Catholic Church, and in accordance with our Mission, Philosophy and Student Learning Expectations, is dedicated to supporting the sanctity of life. We believe students will thrive in an environment where their safety and emotional well-being are supported to a degree that they would expect in a loving environment. We believe that developing emotional and social intelligence is equal in its importance to academic performance when it comes to educating the “whole child” and preparing Holy Spirit students for the world in which they live. Therefore, we strictly prohibit any form of bullying by any and all members of our community: students, faculty, and parents. Bullying will not be tolerated **during the school day or during any school-sponsored activities** on or off campus, which include Internet interactions that involve students, faculty, or parents in the Holy Spirit School community. Parents and staff are expected to be aware of and understand this policy.

This policy is designed to define bullying and add clarity to the procedure in which incidents of bullying will be handled at Holy Spirit School. Through a systematic and unified approach, students, faculty, and parents will have confidence that bullying will be addressed in a way that maintains the dignity of all individuals involved and in accordance with our Christian values. As bullying behavior occurs, it will be viewed as an opportunity to raise social and emotional intelligence and promote a loving, peaceful, and nurturing environment where students will always feel protected and respected.

DEFINITIONS

We follow the *No Bully*[®] organizations definition of bullying as follows:

A person is being bullied when he/she is exposed, **repeatedly and over time**, to negative action on the part of one or more persons. Negative action is when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person through physical contact, words, or in other ways.¹

School bullying takes four main forms:

Physical bullying is when a student uses physical force to hurt another student included but not limited to hitting, pushing, shoving, kicking, pinching or holding them down. Physical bullying also includes taking or breaking a student’s belongings or stealing or extorting money.¹

Verbal bullying is when a student uses words to hurt another student. This includes, but is not limited to threatening, taunting, intimidating, insulting, sarcasm, name-calling, teasing,

slurs, graffiti, put-downs or ridicule. It also includes hostile gestures such as making faces, staring, giving the “evil eye,” eye rolling and spitting.¹

Relational bullying occurs when students disrupt another student’s peer relationships through leaving them out, gossiping, whispering or spreading rumors. It includes, but is not limited to students turn their back on another student, giving them the silent treatment, ostracizing or scape-goating.¹

Cyber bullying refers to the use of cell-phones, text messages, e-mails, instant messaging, chats, blogs, gaming and social networking sites to bully another student in any of the ways described above. Examples of cyber bullying include but are not limited to sending threatening or insulting texts, posts to social networking sites, or creating a web page devoted to putting down another student.¹

When bullying is also harassment: Bullying is part of a continuum of aggression and violence, and at times may amount to harassment. Harassment occurs when a student is the target of threatening, disturbing or unwelcome behaviors because of a legally protected characteristic, such as disability, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or race. Sexual Harassment occurs when a student is asked for sexual favors or is the target of unwelcome sexual behavior which makes a student feel uncomfortable, scared or confused and which interferes with their schoolwork or ability to participate in school activities or attend classes.¹ This bullying policy supplements the HSS harassment policy.

Bystander Rule

Bystanders of bullying incidents often support bullying behaviors through inaction and silence. We encourage anyone that witnesses bullying to report it to a faculty member or staff as soon as possible. Retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited and may result in consequences including Parent Notices, loss of privileges, detention, or suspension.²

PROCEDURES

Reporting Guidelines

(If you feel the situation poses immediate danger, call 911.)

1. Suspected bullying behavior should be reported to a faculty member immediately. If that is not possible reports may be filed by completing the Bully Report Form. It is encouraged that the reporter’s name be included for any reports of bullying incidents.
2. Forms should be submitted to the homeroom teacher, administrator, or a trusted faculty member.

3. With the collaboration of the homeroom teacher, an appropriate faculty member will investigate the incident and talk to the target, aggressor, any witnesses and the person making the report.
4. The findings will be reported to the administration as soon as possible, typically within five school days.
5. Follow up communication to confirm actions have been taken will be conducted with the reporter of incident, if known.
6. If warranted, corrective steps or consequences will be implemented as soon as appropriate.
7. If the findings indicate the incident is of a more serious nature, parents will be notified as soon as possible with the relevant information (see confidentiality statement below).

Confidentiality

The school and staff are required to follow strict rules regarding confidentiality. For purposes of the school bullying policy, this means that disciplinary actions with students will only be discussed and shared with the Parent or Legal Guardian of that child. Discussion with the victim and his/her parents will also be treated confidentially, with the exception of facts related to the bullying incident and appropriate related findings and conclusions from the investigative process. We understand the desire for more information about the results of the investigative process and resulting action. We will strive to ensure that all parties feel heard and supported within the parameters of our confidentiality obligation.

Disciplinary Guidelines

Our belief in the sanctity of all life, target and aggressor alike, underpins our practices for the consequences of bullying behavior and are consistent with the “**Code of Conduct**”. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, Parent Notices, loss of recess time, detention, in-school suspension and expulsion. Counseling for either party may be arranged or required. In determining the appropriate consequences to bullying behavior, and with the understanding that every situation is unique, the administration will consider the following factors:

- Age, development and maturity of parties
- Degree of harm
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behavior(s)
- Past or continuing behavior(s)
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the incident(s) occurred
- Role of bystander

The Solution Team® is Holy Spirit's chosen bully response method.

Research shows that Solution Teams resolves incidents of bullying in 80 percent of cases, making it one of the most effective anti-bullying interventions to date.³ Statistically it is the only proven effective method that coincides with our Catholic values. It maintains the dignity of all children, both aggressors and targets alike, as we strive to achieve our mission of educating the whole child. In most cases it builds the communication, leadership, confidence and/or social skills development of all students involved in the Solution Team process.

The Solution Team program provides a series of structured meetings where an adult team leader (the facilitator, usually the classroom teacher), with the permission of the target, brings together a carefully selected team of students to help resolve the particular bullying incidents of one of their peers. The facilitator describes how it feels to be in the target's shoes and asks the team to help solve this situation. The team may include the aggressor, the aggressor-followers and some positive leaders from the same peer group.

Solution Team experience is also a powerful lesson in applied empathy for students on the team. Over time Solution Teams help schools develop a culture where students are willing to break the code of silence and speak out against bullying.

Given the above, we consider the Solution Team approach the core of our program; therefore parents are not allowed to "opt out" their student(s) from the Solution Team process. The Facilitator running the Solutions Team is sensitive to the needs of all involved when making decisions on who will participate in any particular Solutions Team, when and where to hold the meetings. The Facilitator always asks each child his or her willingness to participate as part of the standard procedure for running a Solutions Team event. No student will be forced into participation, but the Facilitator will instead encourage participation if it is in the best interest for all students involved.

The Solutions Coach® is Holy Spirit's chosen method of working individually with students who are involved in bullying and need additional coaching, especially if they are habituated to the roles of aggressor or target. It is a protocol the faculty can implement to ensure these students develop social and emotional skills that may need strengthening. It is one of several protocols the Holy Spirit staff may use to raise social intelligence.

While the "*Solution Team*" and "*Solutions Coach*" are Holy Spirit's chosen bully response method, it is important to note that the school is **not** obligated to offer this resource in the resolution process. The Solution Team and Solutions Coach are intervention tools that in some cases are, and some cases are not, appropriate for a bullying situation. Teachers have the discretion to use a Solution Team and Coach as they deem appropriate. If parents have any questions, they should feel free to discuss them with their child's teacher.

Remedy Protocol

It is important to realize that the process described in this policy takes time. Often we want immediate results that are not always possible. If however after giving a fair opportunity for the situation to work through the above process, and there is still reason for concern, the following questions describe the additional steps that should be taken *in the following order*:

What if the process is not solving the problem for my child within a reasonable amount of time?

- Who do I tell first? *Begin with the Homeroom teacher.*
- If the teacher is not following the Reporting Guidelines? *Talk to the principal.*
- If that does not solve the problem, what do I do? *Talk to the pastor.*

TRAINING GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Training

The goal of the training for staff, parents, and students is to unite all in a common vocabulary, understanding and commitment to preventing bullying. Long-term commitment to maintaining a bully-free environment at Holy Spirit is critical. We must be in this for the long haul. To that end a minimum training schedule is outlined below.

Staff:

1. "No Bully" and/or "Solutions Team" training for all staff as well as the Director and Assistant Director of Extended Care program.
2. A minimum of (1) in-service training per school year focused on creating a bully-free school environment.
3. "No Bully" and/or "Solutions Coaching" training for all teachers.
4. Annual establishment of a "Faculty Bully-Free Committee," consisting of three to five staff members willing to provide support and resources for teachers handling incidents of bullying.
5. A weekly/monthly report/discussion from the Faculty Bully-Free Committee will be an item on weekly staff meeting agenda in order to create a communal resource to help staff effectively address bullying issues and development of social and emotional intelligence in students, raise awareness of the number of incidents, and the effectiveness of measures taken. These discussions will address situations, not individual students.

Parents:

1. A minimum of (1) mandatory training per year focused on creating a bully-free school environment. These trainings will be offered typically in conjunction with Parent Club meetings.

2. A “Cheat Sheet” card will be provided for parents who volunteer for Yard Duty. It will give specific behaviors to look for and provide follow up instructions with specific actions. This is critical as many instances of aggressive behavior occur when students are not under the direct supervision of their teacher or parent.

Students:

1. A minimum of (1) school wide training program/assembly/workshop (e.g., “The Power of One”) will be conducted each year.
2. The Bystander Policy will be incorporated and taught accordingly.
3. Social and emotional skills lessons will be taught monthly.

ATTACHMENTS, RESOURCES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Attachments

- Bullying Report Form

Resources

- No Bully – www.nobully.com
- Soul Shoppe – www.soulshoppe.com
- Common Sense Media – www.commonensemedia.org
- Casel – www.casel.org
- Power of One – www.sorenbennick.com/power_of_one.html
- Quest for Character – www.quest4character.com
- Whole Life Curriculum – www.wholelifecurriculum.com
- Seth’s Law – http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ab_9_bill_20111009_chaptered.pdf

Bibliography

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2. “Bullying Policy.” highlandcatholic.org. 2010. Highlander Catholic School. (11/9/11). <highlandcatholic.org/current-parents/handbook_and_policies/bullying-policy/html>
3. “Solution Team®.” nobully.com. ©2011. No Bully. (5/31/12). <nobully.com/solutionteam.htm>