

Our Lady Star of the Sea School

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

I. Introduction

The purpose of the OLSS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is to create a safe, positive, and productive educational environment where students can achieve their maximum potential without being subjected to bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation. This plan has been developed in compliance with the Diocese of Camden's Bullying Prevention Policy and will be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

II. Definitions

- **Aggressor:** A student who engages in bullying or retaliation.
- **Bullying:** The repeated use, by one or more students, of written, oral, or electronic expressions or physical acts or gestures, with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate, or intimidate the victim, directed at a target, which a reasonable person should know would have the effect of:
 - Causing physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property.
 - Placing the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property.
 - Causing the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the target's education.
 - Materially and substantially disrupting the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.
- **Cyber-Bullying:** Bullying through the use of technology or electronic communication, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.
- **Retaliation:** Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.
- **Target:** A student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

III. Prohibitions Against Bullying and Retaliation

Bullying and retaliation are strictly prohibited:

- On school grounds.
- On property adjacent to school grounds.
- 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.
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school.

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Bullying by students is also prohibited at other locations and through other means if it:

- Causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the target's education.
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

IV. Reporting Procedures

Clear procedures for reporting bullying or retaliation include:

- **Anonymous Reporting:** Individuals can report bullying or retaliation anonymously. However, no disciplinary action will be based solely on an anonymous report.
- **Reporting Channels:** Reports can be made in person, by phone, or in writing via email.
- **Immediate Response:** The principal or a designated staff member will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation.

V. Investigation Procedures

Upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, the principal or his/her designee will:

- Conduct a prompt and thorough investigation.
- Review the disciplinary history of the accused student(s) for patterns of similar behavior.
- Prepare a written report of the investigation, including findings of fact, determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and the disciplinary or non-disciplinary actions taken.

VI. Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary actions for an aggressor may include:

- Verbal warning.
- Written warning.
- Detention.
- Suspension.
- Expulsion (in severe cases).

Disciplinary actions will balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action.

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VII. Counseling and Support Services

Strategies for providing counseling or referrals include:

- **For Aggressors:** Referral for behavioral counseling, anger management programs, and social skills training.
- **For Targets:** Referral for emotional support, safety planning, and therapeutic services.
- **For Families:** Referral for information sessions, counseling referrals, and support groups.

VIII. Bullying Prevention Program

OLSS will establish a bullying prevention program or curriculum that includes:

- **Education and Awareness:** Programs to educate students about the impact of bullying and the importance of respectful behavior.
- **Skill-Building:** Activities to develop empathy, conflict resolution skills, and self-esteem.
- **Peer Support:** Initiatives such as peer mentoring and buddy systems.

IX. Informing Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians will be informed about the bullying prevention program through:

- **Parent-Teacher Meetings:** Regular meetings to discuss the program and its implementation.
- **Newsletters and Website:** Updates and resources provided through the school's communication channels.
- **Workshops:** Training sessions for parents on how to support their children in preventing and responding to bullying.

X. Professional Development

Ongoing professional development will be provided to build the skills of all staff members, including:

- **Training Programs:** Workshops and seminars on preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying.
- **Resource Materials:** Access to up-to-date resources and materials on bullying prevention.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Opportunities for staff to share best practices and strategies.

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XI. Implementation and Oversight

The principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the plan within the school. This includes:

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessment of the plan's effectiveness and making necessary adjustments.
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging the school community in ongoing efforts to create a safe and respectful environment.

XII. Notifications

If the principal or his/her designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, he/she shall:

- Notify the local law enforcement agency if required.
- Notify the parents or guardians of the aggressor.
- Notify the parents or guardians of the target.

The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the aggressor will not be disclosed to the parents or guardians of the target unless required by law. If bullying or retaliation involves students from other schools, the principal will notify the appropriate administrator of the other schools.

XIII. Publication and Notice

At the beginning of each school year, the principal or his/her designee shall provide notice to the staff of the policy and the plan. Relevant student-related sections of the plan shall be included in the school handbook provided to the students and their parents or guardians each year. The plan shall also be posted on the school's website.

XIV. Student Assistance

OLSS shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students (both targets and aggressors) affected by bullying or retaliation, as necessary.

XV. Available Consultation

Staff members with questions concerning this policy are encouraged to contact the Catholic Schools Office.

By adhering to this comprehensive Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, OLSS commits to fostering a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all students and staff.