

SAINT BRIDGET SCHOOL

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Saint Bridget School acknowledges that its purpose for existence is rooted in the mission of the Church. In fulfilling its role within the educational mission of the Church, the School 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. Each child must be challenged to reach his/her full potential by fostering in each child a love of learning and by providing an environment that also fosters respect and understanding of one another. In this regard, it is essential that a safe, positive and productive educational environment be established where students can attain the highest academic achievement and where no student shall be subjected to bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation. Bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation or other similar disruptive or violent behaviors constitute conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and the School's ability to educate its students in a safe and embracing environment. The School's staff is expected to demand that all students behave appropriately and treat others with civility and respect. Bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are not to be tolerated.

Accordingly, the School hereby promulgates this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as required by the Archdiocese of Boston Bullying Prevention Policy.

B. PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, AND RETALIATION

1. Acts of bullying are prohibited:

a. on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a 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 other vehicle owned, leased, or used by Saint Bridget School; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by Saint Bridget School; and

b. at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by Saint Bridget School, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target, infringe on his or her rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the School.

C. PREVENTION ACTIONS FOR BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, AND RETALIATION

1. Saint Bridget School absolutely prohibits bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation as defined

above. We are committed to teaching our students the value of good decision-making and the consequences of poor decision-making. This education and use of consequences taken must balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. It must also take into account the age and developmental needs of the students.

2. The range of disciplinary actions includes, but is not limited to, the following: verbal warning, written warning, reprimand, detention, school suspension or expulsion as determined by the school administrator subject to applicable due process.

D. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Plan, the following definitions shall apply:

Aggressor - a student who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Bullying - 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, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the Target or damage to the Target's property;
- places the Target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a hostile environment at School for the Target;
- infringes on the rights of the Target at the School; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school

By way of example only, bullying may involve, but is **not** limited to:

- unwanted teasing
- cyber-stalking
- social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion
- rumor or spreading of falsehoods

Cyberbullying - bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a:

- wire
- radio
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications

Cyberbullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyberbullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than

one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Hostile Environment - a situation in which bullying causes the School environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

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.

School Grounds - property on which a School building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a 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.

Target - a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

E. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

1. **Reporting by staff** – Members of the school staff (as listed above) shall immediately report an instance of bullying or retaliation against a student to the school principal or designee. This can be done verbally or on the Saint Bridget School Bullying Incident Report.
2. **Reporting by students, parents, and others** – Saint Bridget School expects students, parents, and others who have witnessed or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation against a student to report the incidents to the principal or designee. The reporter may make an anonymous report; however, no disciplinary action may be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. A student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.
3. **Reporting to parents** – Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school principal or designee will notify the parent/guardian of the target and of the aggressor of this finding and of the school's procedure for responding to it.
4. **Reporting to the police** – At any point after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, or during or after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may involve criminal conduct, the school principal or designee may notify the Abington Police Department.

F. INVESTIGATION

1. The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the age(s) of the student(s) involved.
2. During the investigation, the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents, and others as necessary. The interviewer will remind the alleged aggressor, target, and witness(es) that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.
3. To the extent possible, and given his/her obligation to investigate and address the matter, the interviewer will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The interviewer will maintain a written record of the investigation.
4. Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with School and Archdiocese policies and procedures for investigations and will be made available in the main office.

G. DETERMINATIONS

1. The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take steps reasonably calculated to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in School or in benefiting from School activities. The principal or designee will: a) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and b) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary actions are necessary.
2. Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with teacher(s) and/or the school guidance counselor, and the target's or aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.
3. The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. Any notices to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a court order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

H. RESPONSES TO BULLYING

1. **Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building** - When the principal or designee determines that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the law requires that the School use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach

appropriate behavior. Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include: offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's anti-bullying curricula; providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with guidance counselors and other appropriate school personnel; implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals; meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home; adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills; and making a referral for an evaluation.

2. **Taking Disciplinary Action** - If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined according to facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the School's code of conduct. If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student will be subject to disciplinary action.
3. **Promoting Safety for the Target and Others** - The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the School environment to enhance the safety of the target and others. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate School staff to implement them immediately.

I. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Annual Staff Training on the Plan** - Annual training on the Plan for all School staff, and, at the discretion of the principal, volunteers who have significant contact with students, will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or his or her designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of any bullying prevention curricula to be offered at the School. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to participate in School-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

J. COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES

1. **Notification requirements** - Each year the School will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The School will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the School's Internet Safety Policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and/or electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians.