

Sacred Heart School
Boone, IA

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

It is the policy of Sacred Heart School to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from bullying or harassment and to provide all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. No student of the school shall be subjected to bullying or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived traits or characteristic: age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status. No employee, volunteer or student shall engage in harassing or bullying behavior toward a student based on this list of traits or characteristics.

It shall be a violation of this policy and state law for any employee, volunteer or student in Sacred Heart School to bully or harass any student on school property, school-owned and school-operated vehicles and at any school function, or school-sponsored activity regardless of its location. School employees, volunteers, and students shall not engage in reprisal, retaliation, or false accusation against a victim, witness, or an individual who has reliable information about such an act of harassment or bullying.

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux City shall be responsible for promoting the understanding and acceptance of, and assuring compliance with, applicable laws and board policy and procedures governing bullying or harassment within the school setting. The school will annually provide all school employees, volunteers and students training on the anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy of the Diocese and the school subject to available funds. To the extent that funds are available, the school will also adopt and provide programs to school employees, volunteers and students, parents and guardians with the skills and knowledge to help reduce incidents of harassment and bullying.

Violations of this policy or procedure will be cause for disciplinary action as described in Section II below.

I. Definitions

- a. "Electronic" means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, Internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, electronic text messaging, and social media platforms.
- b. "Harassment" and "bullying" shall be construed to mean any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:
 - i. Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.
 - ii. Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.
 - iii. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's academic performance.
 - iv. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.
- c. "Trait or characteristic of the student" includes but is not limited to actual or perceived traits or characteristics of age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual

orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

- d. "Volunteer" means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students.

II. Procedure for Reporting/Action Regarding Allegations of Bullying or Harassment

- a. Any student, parent, or guardian of a student, employee or volunteer of a Catholic school in the Diocese of Sioux City who feels that the student has been bullied or harassed or who feel they have witnessed incidents of bullying or harassment shall contact the building principal or any other staff member. Any staff member to whom an incident of bullying or harassment has been reported shall contact the principal/school administrator immediately.

Claims made against a principal/school administrator shall be reported to the President or Pastor and the Diocesan Superintendent.

- b. To facilitate a prompt investigation, the principal/school administrator will have the person making the claim fill out the form for reporting bullying or harassment and instruct the person to recall and record as many details as possible, including identifying any witnesses to the incident.
- c. The principal/school administrator will then interview any witnesses, having them fill out a report form as completely as possible. Investigators will consider the totality of circumstances presented in determining whether conduct objectively constitutes harassment or bullying.
- d. The principal/school administrator will interview the person claimed to have committed the bullying or harassment.
- e. All founded cases of bullying or harassment by a student will be subject to the disciplinary actions outlined in the local board-approved schedule of consequences, which may include expulsion.
- f. All founded cases of bullying or harassment by a school employee or volunteer will be subject to the disciplinary actions outlined in the school's Employee or Personnel Manual and/or the Administrative Manual of the Catholic Schools Office, as applicable.
- g. Upon completion of the investigation, the person filing the claim will be provided a written notification of the case as either founded or unfounded.
- h. All claims of bullying or harassment, the supporting documentation, final disposition and disciplinary actions shall be filed in the principal/school administrator's office. The principal/school administrator will report a summary of these claims and resulting actions to the Office of Education annually on a form provided to them by the Catholic Schools Office. The school will also provide summary information regarding bullying and harassment to other agencies as required by the law.
- i. In the case of a student who threatens physical harm to another student for any reason, a "no tolerance" stance will be taken. The perpetrator will be suspended from the program immediately. Reentry will be contingent upon a report from a competent mental health professional that the perpetrator is not perceived to be a threat to self or others. It may also be contingent upon a program of continued counseling.

III. IMMUNITY. The law provides immunity from civil or criminal liability to a school employee, volunteer, student, or a student's parent or guardian who promptly, reasonably, and in good faith reports an incident of harassment or bullying, in compliance with the procedures in this policy. This immunity extends to

participation in any administrative or judicial proceeding resulting from or relating to the report.

IV. COLLECTION REQUIREMENT. Each Catholic school in the Diocese of Sioux City shall maintain a system to collect harassment and bullying incident data.

V. INTEGRATION OF POLICY AND REPORTING. Each Catholic school in the Diocese of Sioux City shall integrate its anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy into the comprehensive school improvement plan required by the Iowa Department of Education and shall report data collected under Section IV above, to the local community.

VI. NOTIFICATION. This policy shall be provided to school employees, volunteers, students, and parents or guardians through the Staff and Student/Parent Handbooks. This policy may also be published in official school communications, as appropriate (i.e. school newsletter, school website, or public media).

Legal References: Iowa Code 729A.1, 280.28(3)
Iowa Administrative Code 281-12.3(13)

New: 01/21 (adopted from Sioux City Diocesan Board of Education Policy)

Reviewed:

Updated: