



Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures

Introduction

St. Mark Catholic School is a Catholic School where Christ is at the center of everything we do. We believe in the inherent goodness of every person, respecting the personal integrity, intellectual abilities, and unique personal qualities of each. It is our mission to develop lifelong learners committed to knowing, loving, and serving God and to empower our children to serve and lead the world. St. Mark Catholic School will not tolerate bullying behavior. Guided by this policy, our Student-Parent Handbook, and our Gospel Values, bullying behavior will be dealt with in a purposeful and timely manner.

Definition

(Provided by the Indiana Department of Education)

Indiana Law defines “bullying” (per IC 20-33-8-.2) as overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:

1. places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student's person or property;
2. has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student's physical or mental health;
3. has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's academic performance; or
4. has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school.

Bullying fosters a climate of fear and disrespect that can seriously impair the physical and psychological health of its victims and create conditions that negatively affect learning. Bullying includes unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. The imbalance of power involves the use of physical strength, or popularity to access embarrassing information to control or harm others. Bullying can occur anywhere (in-school or outside of school) and at any time – both during and after school hours. Bullying can include physical bullying, verbal bullying, social/relational bullying, and electronic/written communication.

Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. It includes hitting/kicking/punching, spitting, tripping or pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, and making mean or rude hand gestures.

Verbal bullying involves saying mean things. It can include teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, or threatening to cause harm.

Social/relational bullying involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying involves telling other children not to be friends with someone, leaving someone out on purpose, spreading rumors about someone, or embarrassing someone in public.

Electronic/written communication involves cyber-bullying, collective or group note writing, any bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices (computer, cell phones).

Procedures

Reporting Procedures

All members of the SMCS community have the right and responsibility to report incidents of concern regarding negative social behaviors and bullying so that together we can maintain a safe environment for all and practice the skills necessary for positive relationships within the community. School administration and teachers are not always present to witness incidents or areas of concern, and therefore can only intervene when they are informed about them.

Students are encouraged to report bullying concerns to their classroom teacher or another school staff member by way of a verbal report or written note, or by completing a bullying concern report form.

Parents are also encouraged to report directly to faculty their concerns about any bullying behaviors. Parent reports can be made by way of a verbal or written report, or by completing a bullying concern report form.

Teachers and Staff will report to the school administration all bullying concerns and incidents that come to their attention through either direct observation or reports from others. All reports that teachers share with the administration will be documented on a bullying concern report form.

School Administration can also initiate a process to address an observed concern or incident. Depending on the concern, their report may be shared with the classroom teacher of the student(s) involved. All administration initiated reports will be documented on a bullying concern report form. School Administration will maintain records of all reports filed during the school year.

Intervention Procedures

All reports of bullying concerns will be handled seriously and promptly by the faculty and administration. Upon review and investigation of a report, some concerns will be addressed within the classroom by the teacher, while more serious and repeated concerns will be referred to the administration for further intervention. Students involved shall be made aware of the

incident and dealt with individually using developmentally appropriate interventions in accordance with the discipline policy outlined in the SMCS Student-Parent Handbook. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in order to protect all of the individuals involved in the matter.

Action to address incidents of bullying behavior shall take into account:

1. the age levels of the students involved
2. the levels of physical and/or emotional harm that have occurred
3. any past or similar incidents or continuing patterns of behaviors
4. the relationship of the parties involved

Roles & Responsibilities

SMCS students have a responsibility to:

- Promote a positive environment by respectfully treating others as they would like to be treated.
- Refuse to bully others or to be a bystander to acts of bullying.
- Actively participate in schoolwide and classroom anti-bullying initiatives and programs.
- Report all acts of bullying they may encounter or observe to appropriate school personnel honestly and accurately.
- Stand up for the student being bullied, and refrain from joining in bullying behavior.

SMCS Staff Members are expected to:

- Remain alert to signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it according to the school's discipline policy.
- Report incidents of bullying to the principal or teacher in charge, who will determine if further disciplinary action should be taken, and/or if parents should be notified.
- Offer support and encouragement to students being bullied, including notifying parents, principal, and/or support staff as needed.
- Encourage all students to refrain from bullying behavior, and encourage reporting of any bullying behaviors they witness.

SMCS parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged to

- Report concerns of bullying behavior to their child's appropriate teacher as soon as possible following the incident(s).
- If concerns are not handled sufficiently at this level, a report should be made to the school administration.
- Support the school's anti-bullying policy and actively encourage their child to avoid bullying behavior.