

POLICY

Lake Center Christian Schools
Policy Title: Bullying Policy

Code No. 4370
Adoption Date: December 15, 2011

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Introduction

Bullying is prohibited in Lake Center Christian School. It must not be tolerated during the school day nor during any school sponsored activities on or off the school grounds. Bullying and intimidation are actions that are contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. This behavior is against the fundamental tenet of “love your neighbor as yourself,” and destroys respect for the dignity of the student, undermines the Christian atmosphere of the school, and deprives the student of a safe and caring learning environment.

Scope of Policy

The bullying policy is to be applied to Kindergarten through Grade Twelve at Lake Center Christian School. It addresses bullying and does not replace any policies that deal with individual student misconduct or behavior. Student behavior is already addressed in the Student Life Handbook. This policy will not apply to the Pre-school program. Unkind acts that occur at the Pre-school level will be handled by the child’s teacher. The teacher will work with the student, family and principal (as needed) to address these situations.

Definition of Bullying

Ohio law [Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3313.666(B)(E)] defines bullying, harassment and intimidation in Ohio schools as any intentional written, verbal, graphic or physical act that a student or group of students exhibits toward another particular student more than once, and that behavior both 1) causes mental or physical harm to the other student; and 2) is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for the other student.

Bullying includes but is not limited to physical intimidation or assault, extortion, oral or written threats, teasing and putdowns, name calling, threatening looks, gestures or actions, cruel rumors, false accusations, and social isolation.

Cyber Bullying is defined as electronically transmitted acts i.e., Internet, cell phone, personal digital assistance (PDA) or wireless hand-held device that a student has exhibited toward another particular student more than once and the behavior both: 1) Causes mental or physical harm to the other student/school personnel; and 2) Is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for the other student/school personnel.

In accordance with this definition, the following factors should be considered before identifying conduct by a student or group of students as bullying in violation of school policy. The determination that conduct does not constitute bullying under state law and school policy,

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however, does not restrict the right of the administration to impose appropriate disciplinary consequences for student misconduct.

Location

Bullying in violation of school policy must occur on school grounds, or at a school-sponsored activity (which includes transportation services). Conduct that occurs off-campus, e.g. harassment over the Internet or cell phone, or physical intimidation in the community, is not bullying under this policy unless it has direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school.

Repeated Misconduct

Bullying in violation of school policy must be repeated "more than once" against the same student. An isolated incident, however egregious, is not "bullying" under state law and school policy. While serious, both isolated incidences of bullying behavior and numerous acts of misconduct against different students will be appropriately addressed under the school's discipline policy and will be entered in a log to ensure a pattern of bullying behavior does not develop.

Ridicule, harassment, humiliation, and/or intimidation

Bullying is more than misconduct. Bullying is marked by the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the victim. In evaluating whether conduct constitutes bullying, special attention should be paid to the words chosen or actions taken, whether such conduct occurred in front of others or was communicated to others, how the student accused of bullying interacted with the victim, and the motivation, either admitted or appropriately inferred, of the alleged violator.

Complaint Process

Formal Complaints

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file written reports of conduct they consider to be bullying. These written reports shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. These reports can be filed with any teacher, who will forward them to the principal, or directly to the principal, for review and action.

Informal Complaints

Students may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be bullying by verbal report to a teacher, counselor or administrator. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably

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specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of the suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. The individual who receives the informal complaint shall promptly forward a written complaint, including the information provided to the principal for review and action.

Anonymous Complaints

Students who make an informal complaint as set forth above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the teacher(s), counselor(s), or administrator(s) who receive the complaint. Should anonymity be requested, the principal or his/her designee shall meet with the student to review the request for anonymity and the impact that maintaining anonymity of the complaint may have on the investigation of the complaint and/or possible remedial action. At such meeting, the student shall be given the choice as to whether to maintain the anonymity of the complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the complaint and is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying.

Staff responsibilities and intervention

Teachers, administrators and other professional staff such as teacher's aides, paraprofessionals, playground monitors, the school nurse, and librarians who witness bullying, as defined above, shall promptly notify the principal of the events observed, and shall promptly file a written incident report concerning the events witnessed.

Teachers and other professional staff members are encouraged to address the issue of bullying in other interactions with students. They may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior. Teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly (unless intervention would be a threat to the staff member's safety) whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, harassing, humiliating, or intimidating another student, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying."

Investigation of Complaint

Once a complaint has been reported, the principal shall promptly investigate to determine if bullying has occurred. The principal will review the log to see if there is a pattern of bullying behavior and will use that as a tool of investigation. Investigation of alleged bullying may also include interviews and conversations with students (including witnesses, the victim(s), and the

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student(s) accused of bullying), parents, faculty, staff and school records. Parents of children filing a complaint and named in the complaint will be made aware of the investigation.

An investigation of an anonymous complaint shall be limited as appropriate. Such limitation of the investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint, discussing the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged violator) subject to further receipt of information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition his/her report be anonymous.

A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying were verified, and a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action.

Consequences of Actions

Once the investigation is complete, the school principal shall determine the consequences for the individual(s) on a case-by-case, age appropriate basis. Bullying can take many forms and can vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying. While conduct that rises to the level of “bullying,” as defined above, will generally warrant disciplinary action against the student responsible for bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action is a matter for the professional discretion of the principal. It is the goal of the administration, faculty, and staff to have the child learn and stop the bullying and achieve restoration. The following are possible interventions to enforce the prohibition against bullying.

Non-disciplinary interventions

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when acts do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying.

Disciplinary interventions

When acts of bullying are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences within our restorative discipline approach. Students who participate in bullying acts will be issued an age appropriate consequence, and may be asked to perform some type of community service within our school and make amends with the students that are victims of the bullying acts. Punitive acts may include the loss of recess, lunch detention, before or after school detention (grades 9-12), in-school suspension, suspension

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at home, and expulsion. Parents of all disciplined students will be notified of the consequences.

Depending on the severity of the situation, the administrator may also take steps to ensure student safety. These may include implementing a safety plan, separating and supervising students involved, providing staff support for students as necessary, requesting a parent conference, requiring that a student/family obtain professional counseling, developing a supervision plan with parents, and notifying law enforcement in the most severe cases.

Reporting Obligations

Report to the parent or guardian of the student involved in acts of bullying

If after investigation, acts of bullying by a specific student are verified, the principal shall notify the parent or guardian of the student in writing of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against the student, a description of the discipline shall be included in the notification.

Reports to the victim and his/her parent or guardian

If after investigation, acts of bullying against a specific student are verified, the principal shall notify the parent or guardian of the victim of such finding. In providing notification, the statutory privacy rights of the person responsible for bullying must be respected. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the violator, as reflected in the student's educational records, shall not be disclosed to the parents or guardians of the victim, except as provided by law.