

A Christ-Centered, Principled Approach to the Treatment of Others

God instructs us to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” Mean behavior does not comply with this instruction - and it does not reflect God’s love and grace. The bullying of any student, therefore is unacceptable behavior at Our Savior Lutheran School

If a student or parent believes there has been bullying behavior involving an Our Savior student, he or she should report it to a teacher or the principal and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

A Christ-Centered Approach

Our Savior Lutheran School is committed to providing a safe, loving and forgiving environment. We strive to protect our students and at the same time encourage them to mature in their walk with Christ, even as they stumble ~ as we all stumble.

It can be difficult for school leadership to pinpoint specific acts of bullying. These acts usually occur beyond direct supervision. Most bullying is done between classes, in hallways, on the playground, at lunch, before or after school, and on social media during non-school hours. Identifying acts of bullying will require vigilance by staff and the support of parents in a compassionate pursuit of truth and mentoring our students. Therefore,

1. All staff will lead by example as they seek to love others as image bearers of God and will teach that a proper understanding of one’s self is found in their identity in Christ. We encourage the promotion of positive - Christ-like - interpersonal relations between members of the school community.
2. We will take an active role in resolving conflicts and encouraging students to resolve conflict in a God-pleasing way.
3. Our Savior teachers will be vigilant in watching for signs of bullying. We expect students to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their level of development and maturity. Accordingly, teachers will instruct and intervene as appropriate to keep our students safe and encourage our students’ growth as followers of Christ.
4. Our Savior leadership will partner with parents to discover and verify acts of bullying and to take appropriate corrective measures. Developing an

atmosphere that encourages students to grow in Christian self-discipline and the demonstration of genuine respect for all people must be a cooperative effort between and among the school parents.

Principles

The principles below guide the administration and staff regarding bullying and indicate the behavior that they will seek to model.

1. We are made in the image of God therefore every person has intrinsic worth, value, and dignity and each believer should ensure that others are treated accordingly.
2. Jesus identified the most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:18). Bullying behavior is rebellion against God's character and command. Therefore, Our Savior Lutheran School takes bullying seriously. Our Savior will support all involved when bullying is reported and verified. Bullying will be forgiven and corrected - but it will not be excused, permitted or tolerated.
3. God helps us learn how to love others through the example and instruction of godly teachers (1 Timothy 4:11-12). The primary responsibility to model and teach how to love others as God commands falls to the parents of children (1John 3:23; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4). Therefore, we expect parents to equip their children with the appropriate training and tools to live lives of love and encouragement and to hold their children accountable for children's failures to exhibit such behavior.
4. Through the scriptures, we are taught that relationships inevitably involve conflict (Luke 6:27-28; James 4:1-3). Conflict may be caused by our sinful nature, including selfishness, jealousy, greed, arrogance, and rivalry. Individuals may become resentful, sullen, or angry when they do not get what they want. Each student can expect such sinful behavior to be confronted and corrected.
5. Humility and brokenness are essential to life in a Christ-centered community and will be encouraged and expected of staff, students and parents.
6. God calls individuals to overlook minor offenses as we love one another (Proverbs 19:11) and to seek justice (Micah 6:8).

7. Individuals can sin in word, action and thought (Matthew 5-7; Ephesians 4-5). Bullying is sin.
8. Humans should not seek revenge (Leviticus 19:18; Romans 12:19).
9. Words have power and reflect the condition of one's heart (James 3:1-2). When another person sins, the goal of leadership ought to be restoration and reconciliation. This involves a Spirit-directed discerning of the heart. Restoration involves ownership of the sinful behavior, acknowledgement of the hurt, asking forgiveness and repentance. Love requires gentle confrontation or a firm rebuke and correction when sinful behavior is identified.
10. Sometimes the context of restoration must be outside of the student population for the safety and health of others (Matthew 18:15-20).
11. Prayer accomplishes much (James 5:16).
12. The objective of this policy is not to merely maintain a safe community but to develop one that is transformational and life-giving through the Holy Spirit.

Definitions

“Bullying” is engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at school - sponsored or school - related activity, or in a school vehicle and that:

1. Exploits an imbalance of power between the offending student and the victim student through written or verbal expression or physical conduct;
2. Interferes with student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of the school; and either
 - a. Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property; or
 - b. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for a student.

Proper Reporting and Response

1. All bullying incidents should be reported immediately to a teacher or the principal. Any student who believes he or she has been bullied should immediately report the situation to a teacher or the principal. These reports will be treated seriously.
2. Teachers to whom incidents are reported will immediately notify the principal.
3. The teacher and the principal will promptly investigate any report of bullying and take interim steps to prevent bullying during the investigation. The investigation may include, but is not necessarily limited to, interviewing the accuser, interviewing the accused, and interviewing potential witnesses and by-standers.
4. The principal will review the evidence obtained during the investigation and determine if bullying has occurred. If the principal finds that bullying occurred, prompt and appropriate remedial action will be taken. The students involved will be informed that the behavior must stop immediately. Consequences for students who bully will be tailored to the specific incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the age of the offending student, and the student's history of behavior. Consequences will be consistent with the Parent-Student Handbook. Responsive measures, taken through the lens of the principles set forth above, are designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior, and protect the student who was bullied.
5. If the situation warrants, parents of the students involved will be informed by email or a phone call and may be summoned to the school to discuss the problem.
6. The one guilty of the bullying behavior may be asked to genuinely apologize to the student victim seeking reconciliation and forgiveness from the student victim.
7. After investigation/conferencing with students there may be a range of punitive responses up to suspension or expulsion of the offending student.

8. After the incident has been thoroughly investigated and dealt with, faculty and administration will monitor both students (including regular “check-ins”) to ensure that bullying does not resume or reoccur.
9. All substantiated incidences that are reported and result in a suspension or expulsion will be documented in the offending student’s behavioral record.
10. In severe instances, local police may be notified.

Confidentiality

Every reasonable effort will be made to maintain confidentiality during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.

Retaliation

Retaliation or false accusations against any person who reports an incident of potential bullying is prohibited. Retaliation against any person suspected of bullying is also prohibited. Students should report bullying behavior instead of retaliating. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as the alleged bullying behavior, Retaliation is subject to disciplinary action.

False Reports

Falsely accusing another of bullying behavior is in direct contravention of God’s command to not bear false witness. Such false accusations are prohibited and will subject the accuser to disciplinary action.

Bystanders

Bystander support of bullying can cause the behavior to continue or increase. The school prohibits both active and passive support for acts of bullying. The staff and students should encourage bystanders to either walk away from these acts when they see them or constructively attempt to stop them, and report the behavior to a staff member.

The report taken from witnesses and by-standers (submitted by staff) will document the answers to the following questions:

1. Who was involved?
2. What happened?
3. Where at school did it happen?
4. When did it start? How long has it been going on? How often?
5. Who are witnesses? Who saw or heard what happened?

Responsibilities for Implementation

The principal is responsible to ensure that this policy is implemented.

Publication

This policy will be included in the Parent-Student Handbook and copies will be available in the school office.