

## **Bullying**

Bullying in any form IS NOT tolerated at St. John the Baptist School. According to Indiana law, bullying is “overt, repeated acts or gestures, including: verbal or written communications transmitted; physical acts committed; or any other behaviors committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other student.” It can be targeting one victim over and over or it can be targeting a series of victims. Bullying is done to someone who is less powerful. Power can be either **physical**, as in bigger and stronger, or power can be **social**, such as being perceived to have higher social standing or to be more popular. Bullying behavior takes many forms. It can be **physical**, such as fighting, shoving, or other violent behaviors. It can be **verbal** such as name calling, insults, and threats. It can be **psychological** such as spreading rumors or shunning, or excluding the target/victim. It can be nonverbal such as using gestures or social exclusion body language such as turning away, not responding, acting as if the target is invisible, etc.

Bullying is violent behavior that has lasting effects on the victims. Bullying behavior interferes with school; it is against school rules and goes against criminal and civil laws. Bullying does not toughen a child nor does it prepare students for the real world. Being bullied causes academic problems, social isolation, and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. Being bullied at school causes young people to dislike and even fear going to school. A victim of bullying is often forced to “go it alone” as his/her friends desert them or join in the bullying because they are afraid of being targeted themselves. Bullying is not a joke! Bullies will claim it was “just for fun”, but the victims do not see it as funny.

The motivation of the bully is all about **power**. Bullies lack empathy for others; and believe their victims deserve it. Because of this imbalance in power, a victim of bullying may not be able to stop the bullying on their own. Ignoring the bullying denies the seriousness and seems rather passive. Fighting back usually provokes the bully to escalate the violence. Bystanders can make a difference by being willing to take a stand by following these simple steps:

1. Calmly and firmly, tell the bully to stop.
2. Report the bully to an adult.

Doing nothing or laughing only empowers the bully. Targets of bullying can take a stand. Be confident. Stay calm. Get away from the situation as soon as possible. Adults need to be ready to intervene and stop bullying behavior whenever they see it or it is reported to them. All students and staff should know and follow these four rules:

1. We will not bully others.
2. We will help students who are bullied.

3. We will include students who are left out.
4. If we know somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

In an effort to stop all types of bullying at Saint John the Baptist School, all staff members will take a strong stance and disciplinary referrals will be issued for bullying.

## **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is bullying done using electronic means. It includes rumors, slander, and threats of violence that are posted on social networks, sent in text messages, through instant messaging, emails, and comments on blogs. Such comments, whether posted inside or outside of school that result in the disruption to normal school operations and detrimentally impacts a fellow student, faculty or staff member, the school and/or the school's reputation, will be subject to disciplinary action by the school administration. Cyberbullying is especially harmful because of the speed with which it spreads and the illusion of anonymity. Once posted on the internet, the harmful humiliating comment or picture can be instantly viewed by anyone who has access to that internet site; and they can also download it or copy and forward it to others. Additionally, due to the illusion of anonymity, the messages that are posted are often more harmful than what the bully would ever say to someone's face. Therefore, the impact on the one being bullied is often devastating.

## **Some Tips:**

Set social network sites to private, delete from profiles and messages any information that is too specific, and block or unfriend anyone who is not known face to face. Print and report any bullying messages or pictures.

Bullying messages that involve sexual connotations may invoke further disciplinary actions. Sexting is the sending or receiving of electronic messages or pictures that are of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome word or action which in any way makes a distinction because of one's sex, or implicitly or explicitly invites or suggest sexual activity. Both are unacceptable behavior that may result in expulsion and law enforcement agencies to be notified.