

BCCS ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Board of Education, administration, and faculty of Byron Center Christian School, in partnership with parents and their churches, seek to develop individuals who are growing toward maturity in Jesus Christ. This maturity is demonstrated in the life of a disciple who follows Christ by loving God, loving others, seeking justice, propelling outwards, surrendering him/herself, pursuing knowledge and anticipating a future reunion with their Savior. The essence of this Kingdom orientation is shalom. It is the wholeness and peace that God offers. As we develop maturing disciples, we recognize that we live in a fallen, broken world which stains our daily experiences. Therefore, we resolve to create a counter-cultural environment that is encouraging and conducive to the growth of the entire person. We battle against the “survival-of-the-fittest” and consumerist mentality that permeates society.

Harassment and Bullying Policy

The harassment and bullying of any student is considered unacceptable behavior at Byron Center Christian School without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus. Aggressive and mean behavior does not reflect God’s love and grace. We are to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” If a student or other individual(s) believes there has been harassment or bullying behavior involving BCCS students or staff, regardless of where it occurs or whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

Principles

These principles below are the lens through which the administration and staff of Byron Center Christian School view harassment and bullying and shows 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 assure that others are treated accordingly.
2. Jesus identified the most important commandment is to love God with everything and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:18). Aggressive/harassing behavior is rebellion against God’s character and command. Therefore, students and parents should be assured that the school takes bullying seriously, and will support victims and their families when bullying is reported and verified. Bullying will not be excused, permitted, or tolerated.
3. God helps us to 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. (I John 3:23; Deut. 6:6-7; Eph 6:4). Therefore, we expect parents to equip children with the appropriate training and tools to live lives of love and encouragement and then hold them accountable to such.
4. Through the Scriptures, we are taught that relationships inevitably involve conflict (Luke 6:27-28; James 4:1-3). Some conflict is caused by our sinful desires of selfishness, jealousy, greed, arrogance, and rivalry. Individuals may become resentful, sullen, or angry when he/she does not get what he/she wants. Sometimes these are good desires with sinful demands. When this happens, the desire has become an idol or god ruling his/her life. Each student can expect such sinful behavior to be confronted.

5. Humility and brokenness are essential to life in a Christ-centered community and will be encouraged and expected of staff, students and parents alike.
6. Pride is the root of sin. (Genesis 3; James 4: 1–12)
7. God calls individuals to overlook minor offenses as we love one another (Proverbs 19:11) and to seek justice (Micah 6:8)
8. Individuals can sin in word, action, and thought. (Matthew 5–7, Ephesians 4-5) Bullying is sin.
9. Humans should not seek revenge. (Lev. 19:18; Rom. 12:19)
10. Words have power and reflect the condition of one's heart. (James 3: 1–12). 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 and/or a firm rebuke and correction.
11. Sometimes the context of restoration must be outside of the student population for the safety and health of others. (Matthew 18)
12. Prayer accomplishes much. (James 5:16)
13. The objective of this policy is not to merely maintain a safe community but to develop one that is transformational and life-giving.

A Christ-Centered Approach

We understand that it can be hard for school leadership to pinpoint the specific acts of harassment or bullying as they usually take place beyond direct supervision. Most harassment or bullying is done between classes, in hallways, on the playground, at lunch, and before or after school. This will require vigilance by staff and the support of parents in a compassionate pursuit of truth and mentoring of 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 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. Teachers will be vigilant in watching for signs of aggressive behavior, bullying and teasing that might surface within the classroom. We expect students to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their level of development and maturity. All staff should intervene immediately when they witness mean or aggressive behavior. Staff will confront and stop the behavior immediately.
4. School leadership will partner with parents to bring out the truth of each situation and correct unacceptable behavior of students participating in any bullying act. The development of an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline and the demonstration of genuine respect for all people must be pursued cooperatively between the school and parents.

Definitions

“Harassment or bullying” is difficult to define and requires judgment and application of cultural norms in light of the circumstances and ages of the individuals involved. The verbiage in this section is meant to describe harassing and/or bullying, but cannot possibly capture every situation or scenario that is covered by this policy. Whether conduct rises to the level of harassment or bullying will be determined at the discretion of the administration.

1. Mean behavior is when anyone inflicts or threatens to inflict physical or emotional discomfort upon another person's body, feelings, friendship, reputation, or possessions. Generally, harassment or bullying is repeated aggressive or mean behavior or actions. Harassment or bullying typically involves an imbalance of power that are directed at one or more students and adversely affects the ability of the student(s) to participate in or benefit from the school's spiritual or educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the person, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive or threatening as to have this effect.
2. Harassment or bullying can take many forms, such as:
 - inappropriate oral or written communication (i.e., sexual, racial or other offensive jokes, derogatory comments, rumors, name-calling, using words to attack, threaten, or insult, verbal taunts, racial slurs, put-downs,)
 - visual conduct (i.e., leering, sexual gestures, suggestive pictures),
 - electronically transmitted acts of cyberbullying (i.e. internet, cell phones, social media, wireless electronic communication device),
 - extortion of money or possessions,
 - physical conduct (i.e., touching, assault, impeding passage, threatening conduct, pushing, tripping, exclusion from peer groups or any sort of violence against a victim)
3. As used in this policy, harassment and bullying includes sexual harassment and hazing. “Sexual Harassment” may include, but is not limited to:
 - Verbal harassment or abuse;
 - Pressure for sexual activity;
 - Repeated remarks with sexual or demeaning implications;
 - Unwelcome touching;
 - Sexual jokes, images, posters, cartoons etc; or
 - Suggesting or demanding sexual involvement, accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, safety, job, or performance of duties
4. “Hazing” refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group (or to maintain full status in a group) that humiliates, degrades, or risks emotional and/or physical harm regardless of the person's willingness to participate.

Proper Reporting

1. All bullying incidents should be reported immediately to a staff member. Any student who believes s/he has been or is the victim of harassment or bullying behavior should

immediately report that situation to a staff member, such as the teacher, bus driver, playground supervisor, or principal. These reports will be treated seriously.

2. In addition, parents can submit an incident report via email to reporting@bccs.org. These emails should contain the senders name and contact information as well as detailed explanation of the incident. Complaints with sufficient detail will be thoroughly investigated by the principal or the principal's designee. A response will be provided to the person who submitted the incident.
3. Intentionally false reporting harassing or bullying behavior is prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action.

Investigating an Incident

1. Staff members will document all harassment or bullying incidents of which they become aware (whether the staff receives a report from someone or witnesses the behavior). All reports will be promptly shared with the principal and/or the principal's designee of the students involved.
2. If the situation warrants, parents of both victim and perpetrator may be informed by email and /or a phone call and summoned to the school for a meeting about the problem.
3. 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.
4. Since bystander support of harassment or bullying can cause the behavior to continue or increase, the school prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment and bullying. Reports will be taken from witnesses and bystanders (submitted by staff) and shall be asked to document the answers to questions such as: Who was involved? What happened? Where at school did it happen? When did it start? How long has it been going on? How often? Are there other witnesses (who saw/heard what happened)?
5. The bullying behavior or threats will be investigated quickly and fully by the appropriate staff member and/or principal, with both victim and perpetrator informed that the behavior will/must stop immediately.
6. In severe instances, local police may be notified.

Incident Resolution

1. If the investigation finds that aggressive behavior occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial action.
2. Consequences for students who commit acts of violence, including but not limited to harassment and/or bullying, shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance both at Byron Center Christian School and any discipline record prior to enrollment.
 - a. Responsive measures are designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior, and protect the victim of the act.

- b. In some instances, remediation may include a written or verbal apology from the student(s) demonstrating inappropriate behavior to the victim seeking reconciliation and forgiveness.
 - c. There may be a range of punitive responses up to suspension or expulsion for the perpetrator. A component of each response should be a decision outlining future interactions and expectations for ongoing/future contact between the affected parties.
3. All substantiated incidences that are reported will be documented in the student information system in the student's behavioral record (RenWeb).
4. After the incident has been thoroughly investigated and dealt with, faculty and administration will monitor both students (including regular "check-ins") to ensure that harassment or bullying does not resume or reoccur.

No Retaliation

Retaliation or false accusations against any target of bullying, a witness or a person for good faith reporting any suspected harassing or bullying is prohibited. Retaliation against any person for harassing or bullying is also prohibited. Students should report harassing or bullying behavior, not retaliate or try to get even themselves. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as the alleged harassing or bullying behavior. Retaliation is also subject to disciplinary action.

Communication & Ongoing Policy Education

The administration or their designee are responsible to ensure that this policy is implemented. The policy shall be published on the school website, in the parent/student handbook and copies are to be available in the school office. The administrator will ensure that there is ongoing and regular training for administrators, school employees, and volunteers who have significant contact with students for preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.