



# **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Last Reviewed: 9/24/2025

Bullying is a behavior that intentionally causes emotional or physical harm to another person or group of people. Bullying is often expressed by the following behaviors: Spreading rumors, excluding, tormenting, pushing, kicking, physical contact, and teasing.

## **Prevention of Bullying**

The following strategies may be used to prevent bullying:

- Writing and implementing a set of school rules.
- Using Art, Drama or Music to build social and emotional intelligence in students.
- Using literature to increase awareness about bullying.
- Having frequent discussions about bullying and consequences.

According to 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7:

"Bullying" includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (1) Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- (2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- (3) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- (4) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the non-sectarian nonpublic school and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of this Section [free exercise of religion]. Nothing in this Section is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

### **Initial Support for Victims and Families**

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately.
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be reported on an Incident Form by the lead teacher and reviewed with the Director.
- Parents will be kept informed.
- After consultations with all parties concerned, an appropriate action plan will be implemented.

### **Ongoing Support**

- Staff will endeavor to restore self-esteem and confidence.
- Staff will model conflict resolution strategies within the classroom community.
- Staff will consistently engage in grace and courtesy lessons with students.

### **The following disciplinary steps can be taken:**

- Official warnings to cease bullying behavior
- Minor fixed-term exclusion
- Major fixed-term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion

## **TO REPORT BULLYING:**

Send an email to Ann Phillips, the head of school, at [vgmschool@icloud.com](mailto:vgmschool@icloud.com) or call (847) 281-9911. Upon receiving a report of bullying, the school will investigate whether such reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction.

## **RESPONSE TO BULLYING REPORTS:**

In accordance with federal and state laws and regulations governing student privacy rights, the parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged bullying incident will be notified. This includes any threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying. Notification will occur within **24 hours** of the school's administration becoming aware of the incident.

As appropriate, the school will also inform families about the availability of social work services, counseling, psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

The school will make diligent efforts to contact a parent or legal guardian using available contact information or any that can be reasonably obtained within the 24-hour period.

The school will promptly investigate and address the bullying report by doing the following:

(A) Make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.

(B) Involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

(C) Notify the Head of School or his/her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received. (If the person receiving the report is not the Head of School or administrator).

(D) Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, provide parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the Head of School or his/ her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is strictly prohibited. Any individual who engages in such acts may be dismissed from the program.

Any individual who is found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying will receive appropriate interventions. Possibilities include classroom lessons surrounding bullying, lessons designed to build empathy, or in extreme cases, possible dismissal from the program.

The Head of School or designee may implement interventions to address report of bullying. This includes, but is not limited to, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, psychological services, and community-based services. Additionally, the school shall provide the victim with information regarding services and other programs.

#### **POLICY EVALUATION:**

The Board of Directors will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The Anti-Bullying Policy is in accordance with policies of the Board of Directors and is consistent with the requirements set forth by the American Montessori Society.

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school. The policy shall be posted on the school website and is included in the staff and parent handbook. It is distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired. As part of the process of reviewing and re-evaluating the policy under subsection (d) of this Section, contains a policy evaluation process to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the policy that includes, but is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The non-sectarian nonpublic school may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the Internet website of the school. If an Internet website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.