<u>Bullying Prevention Policy</u>

Effective Date: July 1, 2023

Bethany Christian Academy is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. This Bullying Prevention Policy aims to define bullying, outline prohibited behaviors, and communicate the school's commitment to preventing and addressing bullying incidents. We aim to prevent and address bullying incidents effectively while promoting a positive school climate that fosters empathy, understanding, and the well-being of all students.

Definition of Bullying:
Bullying is defined as repeated aggressive behavior, whether physical, verbal, written, or electronic, that involves a power imbalance and causes harm, distress, or fear among students. It includes actions such as teasing, taunting, spreading rumors, excluding others, physical aggression, cyberbullying, and any other behaviors that undermine the well-being and safety of individuals within the school community.

Prohibited Behaviors:
a. Physical Bullying:
   - Hitting, kicking, pushing, or engaging in any form of physical violence or intimidation.
   - Taking or damaging another person's belongings.
   - Forcing others into unwanted physical contact.

b. Verbal Bullying:
   - Name-calling, insulting, or using derogatory language towards others.
   - Threatening, harassing, or intimidating through words or gestures.
   - Spreading rumors or engaging in malicious gossip.

c. Social Bullying:
   - Excluding, isolating, or intentionally ignoring others.
   - Deliberately damaging friendships or social relationships.
   - Manipulating or exerting social pressure to control or harm others.

d. Cyberbullying:
   - Sending or posting mean, threatening, or derogatory messages or images through digital platforms.
   - Spreading rumors or making hurtful comments online.
   - Impersonating others or invading someone's privacy online.
e. Retaliation:

- Retaliating against individuals who report bullying incidents or participate in the investigation process.

Reporting Procedures:

a. Encouraging Reporting:

   - Students, and parents are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying promptly to a staff member or the administration team (Cheri McCutchen, Susan Pfeffer, Cristina Romeiro)

   -Staff members are required to report any incidents of bullying reported to them by a parent or student immediately to the administration (Cheri McCutchen, Susan Pfeffer, Cristina Romeiro)

b. Confidentiality:

   - All reports of bullying will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality while ensuring a thorough investigation by the administration.

c. Non-Retaliation:

   - Individuals who report bullying incidents will be protected from retaliation.

   - Any retaliation observed or reported will be addressed and subject to disciplinary action.

Investigation and Response:

a. Thorough Investigation:

   - Designate trained personnel responsible for receiving and investigating reports of bullying incidents.

   - Conduct prompt and thorough investigations to gather relevant information and interview involved parties.

b. Support for Students:

   - Provide support to students who have experienced bullying, including access to counseling services and a network of trusted adults.

   - Take necessary measures to ensure the safety and well-being of victims and witnesses during and after the investigation.

c. Disciplinary Actions:

   - Apply disciplinary measures that are fair, consistent, and age-appropriate to address bullying incidents.

   - Disciplinary actions may include counseling, warnings, loss of privileges, parental involvement, restorative practices, and, in severe cases, suspension or expulsion.

Education and Prevention:

a. Bullying Prevention Programs:

   - Implement comprehensive bullying prevention programs that educate students about empathy, conflict resolution, and positive relationship-building.

- Incorporate age-appropriate instruction on digital citizenship and online safety.

b. Staff Training:
   - Conduct regular professional development and training sessions for staff members on recognizing, addressing, and reporting bullying incidents.
   - Equip staff members with the necessary skills to effectively intervene and support students involved in bullying situations.

Communication and Collaboration:
a. Communication with Parents:
   - Regularly communicate with parents about the school's bullying prevention efforts, reporting procedures, and available resources.
   - Encourage parents to partner with the school to address and prevent bullying incidents.

b. Community Partnerships:
   - Collaborate with local law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals, and community organizations to leverage external support and resources.

Policy Review:
a. Regular Evaluation:
   - Assess the effectiveness of the Bullying Prevention Policy through data collection, feedback from stakeholders, and periodic reviews.
   - Use evaluation results to make necessary adjustments and improvements to the policy and prevention strategies.

b. Policy Updates:
   - Stay informed about the latest research and best practices in bullying prevention to ensure the policy reflects current knowledge and addresses emerging challenges.