

Saint Nicholas of Tolentine Cyberbullying Policy

Cyberbullying is defined as intentional cruelty to other by sending or posting hurtful and hate-filled messages and material using digital and social media technologies. This includes direct and indirect harassment and activities that are intended to damage the reputation and relationships of the intended student target. Cyberbullying encompasses any action that is intended to cause harm to another student via electronic means. Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School will continue to define cyberbullying as any act that takes place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school provided transportation, at an official school event off campus, via the school Internet network, via a personal digital device on or immediately adjacent to school property, or off campus activities that cause or threaten to cause substantial disruption at school or interferes with the right of students to feel secure. By sending hurtful text and picture messages, or posting hurtful comments and information on message boards, blogs, Twitter feeds, or by impersonating that student with the intent to harm his or her reputation, students are engaging in cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is bullying. Bullying is harassment and it is **NOT** okay.

Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to cyberbullying. Our school welcomes all students as children of God. Students who engage in cyberbullying activities are indirect violation of Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School's mission and philosophy. It is important for everyone to know that cyberbullying in its many forms, whether occurring at school or at home, is serious. It causes serious emotional harm to the intended target and students may present a danger to themselves or others.

The legal standard supported by the courts for cyberbullying that takes place away from the school campus is that school may enforce formal disciplinary action when such speech cause or threatens to cause substantial disruption at school or interferes with a student's right to feel secure and safe at school (*Tinker* standard). The *Tinker* standard reflects an appropriate balance between a students' right to free speech and a school's interest in ensuring student safety.

When students use school computers and networks Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School reserves the right to govern student speech and actions. When students use school technologies to engage in cyberbullying, Saint Nicholas of Tolentine will take swift and immediate action to stop the behavior as it causes serious emotional harm to all students involved.

When students engage in cyberbullying after school hours or using equipment that is not part of the Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School network (cell phones, Internet, social networks, and email), Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School reserves the right to take swift and immediate action to stop the behavior. Any form of bullying, electronic or physical, disrupts the school day and interferes with the rights of our students to learn and feel safe in the school building.

Each Saint Nicholas of Tolentine student and parent must understand the seriousness of cyberbullying and the consequences surrounding their participation. It is in the interest of every child enrolled in our school that we enforce this cyberbullying policy.

When our student are found to be engaging in behavior that is believed to be cyberbullying, the offending student and hi/her parents will be asked to school for a meeting with the principals to define the

seriousness of this situation. IN certain instances, both the offending party and the intended target may be brought together for a meeting. For the first offense the offending student will be given a detention. For the second offense, the offending student will be suspended for a time period to be determined by the principals. Any subsequent offense will be met with serious action, including the possibility of expulsion from Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School. In all cases when possible, student and parents will be provided with downloaded copies of the offending material and a copy will be placed in a student's permanent file.

In ALL cases of cyberbullying the offending and harmful material must be removed, a formal apology written to the intended target, and all harmful activities must cease immediately. It is also understood that there is to be NO retaliation by the student or by others for the student. Retaliation for an incidence of cyberbullying will be considered a second offense and proper disciplinary measures will be taken.

In cases where cyberbullying falls under the category of sexual harassment, students and families are to understand that this falls under the Archdiocese of Chicago's sexual harassment policy and it will be dealt with appropriately. Consequences of detention, suspension, and expulsion may still apply.

If a case of cyberbullying is found to be severe, Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School reserves the right to involve the proper authorities, in the Chicago Police Department.

We encourage all parents to talk with their children about cyberbullying and its seriousness. We ask that all students who feel victimized or witness the online victimization of another student come forward. Saint Nicholas of Tolentine School is committed to providing a safe place for all students to learn and grow into responsible teenagers and it is with that commitment in mind that we pledge our dedication to keeping our students safe, both on- and offline.