



Willows Academy

Bullying Policy

(Effective September 30, 2021)

Bullying

The Willows Academy strives to promote and maintain a healthy, safe, and orderly learning environment for all students. We are acutely aware of the fact that bullying substantially interferes with a positive educational experience and is contrary to State law. Therefore, The Willows Academy has a ZERO tolerance policy regarding bullying incidents. The Willows Academy policy on bullying is not 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.

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

Specific and unprovoked acts of bullying may include but are not limited to: physical confrontations (attacks), verbal taunts, threats, intimidation, extortion, hazing, harassment, stalking, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, retaliation and cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is any harassment or intimidation which is accomplished by means of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation: e-mail messages, text messages, instant messages, social networking sites, video sites, and/or blogs. Cyber-bullying includes the creation of a webpage 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 definition of bullying

It is beyond the school's jurisdiction to regulate off-campus bullying. However, The Willows Academy reserves the right to investigate these incidents and take appropriate action when such activities threaten violence against another Willows student or otherwise disrupt the learning environment or orderly conduct of the school. Any off-campus incidents of this nature that come to the attention of The Willows Academy will be reported to the parents of the involved student(s).

Application of the Policy

This policy is in force:

- While in the school building before, during, or after school hours
- While on any bus or other vehicle as part of a school activity
- While traveling to or from school and waiting at any bus stop before or after school
- During any school function, extracurricular activity, or other school activity or event
- While enrolled at The Willows Academy

Procedures for Reporting an Act of Bullying

All members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are strongly encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Any student who believes she has been the target of bullying, or witnesses any acts of bullying, should immediately report the alleged acts to the Dean of Students. Teachers or staff members who witness or receive individual reports of bullying are **REQUIRED** to immediately report these to the Dean of Students. Any individual who reports an act of bullying should do so without fear of reprisal or retaliation. The Dean of Students can be reached at 847- 824-6900.

School Response to a Report of Bullying

Each reported incident of bullying is taken seriously. When the alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy, the Administration will determine the appropriate disciplinary consequence. The Willows Academy may promptly inform parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying. Communication will be consistent with Federal and State laws regarding student privacy.

Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated within five school days of receipt of a report and completed within 10 school days, unless the Administration grants an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The investigation shall include:

- a. Identifying the perpetrator(s), target(s) and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
- b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged perpetrator and target. The alleged perpetrator and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews shall also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders.
- c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior and whether the target's education was affected.
- d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety, and assigning school staff to create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety for the target and other students who have been impacted.
- e. When appropriate, preparing a Misconduct Report identifying the Administration's recommendation for individual consequences.
- f. Comprehensively documenting the details of the investigation.

During an investigation, the Administration will take into consideration that a part of healthy growth is developing new friendships and becoming less close with existing friends. Though it can be confusing and even painful to have relationships shift, this is a normal experience in adolescence.

Consequences

Violation of this policy may result in suspension, expulsion, or any other consequence that the Administration considers appropriate. Students making false claims of bullying will be subject to disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions, as well. Retaliation or reprisal against any person who reports a bullying incident will result in additional disciplinary consequences. Any student who violates this policy for a second time during the school year will be subject to review by the

Administrative Council.

Any student who is suspended for a violation of this policy will be allowed to return to The Willows Academy after serving the suspension and having a meeting with the Administration. The meeting will also include the parents of the suspended student.

Interventions to Address Bullying

The Willows Academy advising program may be utilized to address bullying. The purpose of the advising program is to provide an adult mentor who acts as a role model and advocate for the student. The advisor is the adult who gets to know the student well and is able to guide her through academic struggles and successes, study habits, friendship, personal improvement, and other issues relating to the student's growth and development. Each student meets with her advisor a minimum of once a month.

Review and Evaluation the Policy

The Willows Academy Bullying Policy is posted on the school website and will be reviewed and evaluated by the Administration every two years. To assess policy effectiveness, the Administration will take into consideration the frequency of victimization, student/staff/family observations of safety at school, identification of areas where bullying occurs, types of bullying being utilized and information or guidelines issued by the Illinois State Board of Education. The policy will be revised as necessary in light of such review and the information developed as a result of the policy evaluation will be made available on the school website.