

HILLCREST SCHOOL

Student Protection Policy

May 2015

Introduction

Intent

Hillcrest School takes seriously its responsibility to protect students and to create a safe and positive environment for them to grow. We believe that it is never acceptable for any child to experience abuse of any kind, in agreement with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Articles 19 and 34. Protection of students is the responsibility of every person within our school community. Hillcrest School, called by God, recognizes:

- each student's unique value.
- our responsibility to shepherd and love those who are precious to God.
- our duty, through good administrative process, to provide protection and justice to all parties.
- our role to help bring healing to those who are vulnerable and have been hurt.

Commitment

As an organization, we are committed to:

- valuing and respecting each individual Hillcrest School student.
- seeking to establish and maintain a safe environment for all students emotionally, physically, and spiritually.
- providing regular and adequate Student Protection Training for all staff and volunteers.
- maintaining an established framework and clear procedures for dealing with concerns about possible abuse of or inappropriate behavior towards students.

Responsibility

The Board of Governors gives the Administration the task of managing student protection in fulfillment of Board and Administrative policy.

Screening

The Board of Governors will screen the Superintendent, School Principals, Financial Administrative Officer, and the Youth Pastor for suitability for employment. The Administration will screen all other staff and volunteers according to their responsibilities. The Administration will screen students and families to determine their capacity for being good community members.

Eligibility for Service

Anyone who has been convicted of any offense related to child abuse is not eligible for service or work with Hillcrest School. Any other criminal convictions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Training and Education

All staff and volunteers will be required to successfully complete annual Student Protection Training according to their job description. All students will receive age-appropriate instruction that will educate them on how to be part of a healthy school community and how to protect themselves and others. All parents will receive information about the Hillcrest School Student Protection Policy through the school handbooks.

Code of Conduct

Hillcrest School expects moral and ethical conduct towards all students in all circumstances. Hillcrest School requires that all staff, casual staff, and volunteers be informed of our Student Protection Policy, complete annual Student Protection Training, and sign a Student Protection Code of Conduct.

Hillcrest School requires that all parents and students be informed of our Student Protection Policy and sign a Student Protection Code of Conduct included in the School Covenant Form.

Campus visitors will be informed of Hillcrest School's Student Protection Code of Conduct for Campus Visitors, which will be available to all visitors at the front gate and in the Main Office, and will be informed of the School's right to refuse entry, to remove an individual from the campus, and to deny future entry.

1. Standard Definitions of Student Abuse and Inappropriate Behavior

The following definitions of abuse and inappropriate behavior will be applied to reports involving any Hillcrest School staff, casual staff, volunteers, parents, guardians, family members, campus visitors, or others regarding incidents affecting Hillcrest students that occur on Hillcrest School campus and/or at Hillcrest School sanctioned events, or that have a significant negative impact on the educational environment of Hillcrest School.

Definitions of student-to-student incidents are also included.

It is recognized that local and/or national definitions of student abuse and inappropriate behavior may vary, and there are cultural, religious, and ethnic differences in student rearing. These definitions have been written with an awareness of the various cultures represented in Hillcrest School.

These standard definitions will be applied to all Hillcrest School staff, volunteers, parents, guardians, family members, campus visitors, students, and others regardless of their individual culture. These standard definitions are designed to help people of differing cultures work together to prevent student abuse and inappropriate behavior.

Definition of Abuse

Student abuse is the maltreatment of any student, often in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power, which endangers or impairs the health or welfare of a student. This includes sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, as well as grooming.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the involvement of a student in sexual activity by an adult or student, and can include, among other things, sexual remarks, visual exposure, physical touching of a student, or electronic communication of a sexual nature.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury. Physical discipline by parents of their own student, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable, not done in inappropriate anger, and does not significantly injure the student.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another to harmful behavior that may result in significant psychological trauma, including isolation, anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. It includes acts of commission and acts of omission.

Grooming

Grooming is a pattern of behavior consistent with drawing a student into a sexual relationship. Indicators of grooming behavior may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Developing an inappropriate special relationship with a student or group of students
- Inappropriately allowing a student to overstep rules
- Crossing boundaries of appropriate behavior with a student, either physically, verbally¹, or emotionally
- Inappropriately extending a relationship with a student outside of the assigned environment
- Sexualizing the relationship with a student, either physically, verbally², or emotionally
- Isolating the student from other relationships
- Deliberately using strategies to maintain the secrecy of the relationship or part of the relationship

^{1,2} Verbal communication includes, but is not limited to, spoken word, written word, or electronic communication

Grooming behavior may be present when some, but not necessarily all, of these indicators are met. The determination of when grooming has occurred will be made at the discretion of the Student Protection Inquiry Team. If the team determines that grooming has occurred, then it will be found that abuse of a student has occurred.

Definition of Inappropriate Behavior

If behavior is identified that raises concerns regarding the treatment of a student, but does not meet the Hillcrest School definition of abuse, a conclusion of inappropriate behavior will be reached. This may also lead to a more specific conclusion of bullying or neglect.

Bullying

Bullying is any action that significantly hurts or threatens another person, either physically or emotionally. Bullying can be the use of position to dominate, intimidate, or harass another person or group. Bullying may include any hostile or offensive word or action against another person because of skin color, cultural or religious background, ethnic origin, or other reasons. Bullying is a form of inappropriate behavior, but bullying may meet the definition of abuse if it is severe and/or becomes prolonged. School Principals will handle reports of bullying and will ensure that the Student Protection Officer is kept fully informed of all reports of bullying.³ Discipline for bullying will be handled through the school discipline policies. However, if the School Principal and/or Student Protection Officer suspect that the bullying meets the standards of abuse, a Student Protection Inquiry Team will be formed. The determination of when bullying meets the definition of abuse will be made at the discretion of the Student Protection Inquiry Team.

Neglect

Neglect is maltreatment by significant and unreasonable failure to provide a student with basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and shelter, safe living conditions, emotional and physical security and protection, medical and dental care, cleanliness, education, and appropriate supervision reasonably available to the family or caretakers. To be considered neglect, the failure to provide these needs must also cause, or have a high probability of causing, significant harm to the student's health or physical, emotional, spiritual, or social development. Neglect is a form of inappropriate behavior, but neglect may meet the definition of abuse if it is severe and/or becomes prolonged. The determination of when neglect meets the definition of abuse will be made at the discretion of the Student Protection Inquiry Team.

Student-to-Student Incidents

Student-to-student abuse and inappropriate behavior can include all the types of abuse and inappropriate behavior defined above.

Cases of a sexual nature between students will be considered on a case-by-case basis with a focus on trying to understand the motivation of the behavior.

³ Anti-Bullying Policy (Policy 8.3)

2. Standard of Appropriate Screening for Professional and Support Staff

This standard applies to all professional staff and support staff.

Anyone who has been convicted of any offense related to child abuse is not eligible for service or work with Hillcrest School. Any other criminal convictions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

As a part of normal screening procedures, Hillcrest School requires that the following four screening processes be applied to all staff, prior to commencing work at Hillcrest School:

1. Completed Application
2. Background Check, when possible
3. Personal References
4. Interview

3. Standard of Appropriate Screening for Volunteers and Casual Staff

This standard applies to all volunteers (parents and non-parents) and to casual staff (hourly paid staff, e.g. coaches and referees).

Anyone who has been convicted of any offense related to child abuse is not eligible for service or work with Hillcrest School. Any other criminal convictions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

As a part of normal screening procedures, Hillcrest School requires that all volunteers and casual staff sign the Hillcrest School Casual Staff and Volunteer Information Form, including a disclosure regarding any previous convictions of child abuse or other criminal activity and/or any involvement in an investigation regarding child or student safety.

All volunteers and casual staff will also be required to submit two personal references. Coaches and referees must submit these references to the Physical Education teacher. All other volunteers or casual staff must submit these references to the appropriate School Principal.

4. Standard for Training in Student Protection

Student Protection Training Courses

Hillcrest School will utilize two separate, annual training courses:

Training Course A: This training course equips individuals to work safely with students within the School environment and at School sanctioned events. This training course is for all professional staff.

Training Course B: This training course equips individuals to work safely with students within the School environment and at School sanctioned events. This training course is for all support staff, casual staff, and volunteers.

The specifics of each training course are outlined in the Student Protection Training Manual.

Age-appropriate Student Protection education will be embedded in the School curriculum for all students from Kindergarten through to Grade 12.

All parents will receive information about the Hillcrest School Student Protection Policy through the school handbooks.

5. Standard for Administrative Action regarding a Student Protection Report

Process for Reporting a Potential Student Protection Issue

Staff members are required to report suspected abuse of or inappropriate behavior towards students.⁴ Failure to do so may result in termination of the staff member's contract.

Reports of a potential Student Protection issue should be made as soon as possible to the Student Protection Officer, once all immediate threats have been removed. Any reports of suspected bullying should be made to the appropriate School Principal. The Principal will work in conjunction with the Student Protection Officer to address any suspected bullying issues.

When a report is received, the Student Protection Officer will ensure the report is appropriately documented and, in collaboration with a school administrator, will evaluate whether the report seems to meet the standards for student abuse and/or inappropriate behavior. If, in the opinion of the Student Protection Officer and school administrator, the standards for student abuse do not seem to be met, a review will be initiated. If, in the opinion of the Student Protection Officer and school administrator, the standards for student abuse seem to be met, an inquiry will be initiated. The Superintendent will be informed of all reviews and inquiries.

Henceforth, the term respondent will be used for the individual against whom the reported allegations have been made.

Review Process

In collaboration with a school administrator, the Student Protection Officer will evaluate the report and determine the appropriate response. If the respondent is a staff member of Hillcrest School, there is no option of resignation or retirement of the respondent during the time of a review once a review has been initiated. The Student Protection Officer may choose to call in additional staff member/members from an approved list to assist with the review process. At any point during the review process, the need for an inquiry may become apparent, at which point the review process would be terminated and the inquiry process initiated.

The guidelines for conducting a review are outlined in the Student Protection Officer Manual.

Inquiry Process

After consultation and agreement with the Superintendent and another school administrator, the Student Protection Officer will activate an inquiry team that is led by an approved, external team leader. The respondent will be placed on administrative leave. If the respondent is a staff member of Hillcrest School, there is no option of resignation or retirement of the respondent during the time of an inquiry once an inquiry has been initiated.

The guidelines for conducting an inquiry are outlined in the Student Protection Officer Manual.

Outcomes of a Student Protection Review/Inquiry

The findings of an inquiry could result in one of five outcomes:

- 1) A finding that abuse of a student has occurred
- 2) A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred but that inappropriate behavior has occurred
- 3) A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred and inappropriate behavior has not occurred
- 4) A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred, inappropriate behavior has not occurred, and a false report has been made with malicious intent
- 5) An inconclusive finding

The findings of a review could result in the above-mentioned outcomes 2, 3, 4, or 5.

⁴ Reporting Suspected Abuse of/Inappropriate Behavior towards Students Policy (Policy 8.28)

Action Plan in Response to a Review/Inquiry Outcome

Depending on the outcome of the review/inquiry, the following action plans will be implemented:

1) ***A finding that abuse of a student has occurred***

In response to a confirmed case of abuse of a student, the plan will vary based on the role of the offender.

- a) *Staff Members*: The individual's contract will be terminated with immediate effect, the individual will be banned from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events, and Hillcrest School reserves the right to impose additional, appropriate sanctions and to alert the appropriate authorities.
- b) *Casual Staff*: The individual's responsibilities will be terminated with immediate effect, the individual will be banned from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events, and Hillcrest School reserves the right to impose additional, appropriate sanctions and to alert the appropriate authorities.
- c) *Volunteers*: The individual's responsibilities will be terminated with immediate effect, the individual will be banned from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events, and Hillcrest School reserves the right to impose additional, appropriate sanctions and to alert the appropriate authorities.
- d) *Parents, Guardians, and Family Members*: Hillcrest School reserves the right to impose appropriate sanctions, including, but not limited to, banning the individual from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events. Hillcrest School also reserves the right to alert the appropriate authorities.
- e) *Campus Visitors*: The individual will be banned from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events. Hillcrest School also reserves the right to impose additional, appropriate sanctions and to alert the appropriate authorities.
- f) *Others*: The individual will be banned from Hillcrest School campus and all Hillcrest School sanctioned events. Hillcrest School also reserves the right to impose additional, appropriate sanctions and to alert the appropriate authorities.

Counseling will be made available to the student(s) involved.

2) ***A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred but that inappropriate behavior has occurred***

In response to a confirmed case of inappropriate behavior, a plan will be put in place to provide accountability, mentoring, and counseling to overcome both the inappropriate behavior and its causes. The Team will be responsible for developing the details of the plan on a case-by-case basis. Counseling will be made available to the student(s) involved, when necessary.

Repeated findings of inappropriate behavior by an individual may result in the same actions as for a finding of abuse of a student, as determined by the Superintendent and Board of Governors.

3) ***A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred and inappropriate behavior has not occurred***

In response to a finding that neither abuse nor inappropriate behavior have occurred, the plan will involve a meeting between the Student Protection Officer, the appropriate school administrator, and the respondent of the review/inquiry to inform the respondent of the Team's findings. Counseling will be made available to the individuals involved, when necessary.

4) ***A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred, inappropriate behavior has not occurred, and a false report has been made with malicious intent***

In response to a finding that neither abuse nor inappropriate behavior have occurred, and a false report with malicious intent has been made, the plan will involve a meeting between the Student Protection Officer, the appropriate school administrator, and the respondent of the review/inquiry to inform the respondent of the Team's findings. A meeting will also be held with the reporter to determine the reasons for the false report with malicious intent. Counseling will be made available to the individuals involved, when necessary, and appropriate sanctions may be taken against the reporter.

5) *An inconclusive finding*

In response to an inconclusive finding, the Team will present their findings to the School Administration.

Documentation of all Student Protection reviews and inquiries will be held by the Student Protection Officer and kept in a secure location.

Student-to-Student Incidents

The reporting and review/inquiry process for student-to-student incidents will follow the same procedures as outlined above. Restrictions will be applied to prevent interaction between the respondent and alleged victim, with the purpose of ensuring that both parties are protected.

Cases of a sexual nature between students will be considered on a case-by-case basis with a focus on trying to understand the motivation of the behavior.

The potential outcomes of a Student Protection review/inquiry could also be the same as outlined above, however the action plan in response to the outcomes will be as follows:

1) *A finding that abuse of a student has occurred*

In response to a confirmed case of abuse of a student, the plan will involve expulsion of the offending student. Counseling will be made available to the abused student.

2) *A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred but that inappropriate behavior has occurred*

In response to a confirmed case of inappropriate behavior, a plan will be put in place to provide accountability, mentoring, and counseling to overcome both the inappropriate behavior and its causes. The Team will be responsible for developing the details of the plan on a case-by-case basis. Counseling will be made available to the other student(s) involved.

Repeated findings of inappropriate behavior by an individual may result in the same actions as for a finding of abuse of a student, as determined by the Superintendent and Board of Governors.

3) *A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred and inappropriate behavior has not occurred*

In response to a finding that neither abuse nor inappropriate behavior have occurred, the plan will involve a meeting between the Student Protection Officer, the appropriate school administrator, and the respondent of the review/inquiry to inform the respondent of the Team's findings. Counseling will be made available to the students involved.

4) *A finding that abuse of a student has not occurred, inappropriate behavior has not occurred, and a false report has been made with malicious intent*

In response to a finding that neither abuse nor inappropriate behavior have occurred, and a false report with malicious intent has been made, the plan will involve a meeting between the Student Protection Officer, the appropriate school administrator, and the respondent of the review/inquiry to inform the respondent of the Team's findings. A meeting will also be held with the reporter to determine the reasons for the false report with malicious intent. Counseling will be made available to the students involved and appropriate sanctions may be taken against the reporter.

5) *An inconclusive finding*

In response to an inconclusive finding, the Team will present their findings to the School Administration.

Standard of Evidence

A review/inquiry is carried out by an organization to determine if a policy or standard has been met so the organization can come to a conclusion and then carry out administrative actions according to its policies. Hillcrest School's review/inquiry process is not designed to result in a legal finding of guilt or innocence according to the

law. It is designed to result in a finding of whether or not “on the balance of probability”⁵ a standard has been met and thus certain administrative actions are appropriate. This is the standard used in civil lawsuits.

6. Standard for Evaluation of the Hillcrest School Student Protection Policy

The Student Protection Officer will hold bi-annual meetings in August and April of each school year with the School Principals and the Superintendent to evaluate the current implementation of the Hillcrest School Student Protection Policy. The Student Protection Officer will hold and chair these meetings. The August meeting will address issues related to training, recruitment, curriculum, and policy implementation for the current school year. The April meeting will address an evaluation of recruitment, curriculum, policy implementation, and a report by the Student Protection Officer regarding the types of cases handled throughout the school year.

The guidelines for these meetings are outlined in the Student Protection Officer Manual.

⁵ "On the balance of probability," which is the standard used in civil lawsuits. This means “more likely than not,” or “more than 50% likelihood” that the action in question has occurred. This is the standard of evidence that Hillcrest School uses for Student Protection inquiries and reviews and any subsequent administrative actions.