Buxton School

Sexual Harm Policy

At Buxton, we believe that no student should take unfair advantage of any other student. In keeping with that philosophy, we believe that all students deserve to have an education that is free of sexual harm, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.

Sometimes, though, harm occurs. We take this seriously, and have a process through which we deal with sexual harm in a way that is as student-centered as possible. There are two areas of action when dealing with sexual harm: the first is to care for the harmed student; the second is to develop and enact an appropriate disciplinary response toward the student who caused the harm.

To focus first on care for the harmed student:

1. We post resources for victims of sexual violence in bathrooms throughout our campus. We have put these resources in private places so students can access them privately. These include hotlines, nearby mental-health clinics, and local crisis centers.
2. We have a school counselor who is available 24/7 to support students who have been harmed.
3. We hope that a harmed student can come forward to share their story with a trusted member of our faculty. At that point, our guiding philosophy is to give the student as much agency and support as possible, as instances of sexual violence and sexual harm, by their very nature, can cause feelings of powerlessness.
   1. The faculty or staff member who is entrusted with this information will first ask the student what resources they need and help the student access those resources.
   2. If the student only wants to share *that* they were harmed, but not the nature of that harm, the faculty/staff member will explain that it is the student’s decision whether or not to share details of that harm, but will also help the student understand that our focus will necessarily remain on the care and comfort of the harmed student, but that we will not be able to proceed with disciplinary action at that time.
   3. If the student would prefer to share details with another trusted adult (a therapist, a parent, a staff member of a local mental-health group, etc.), they can give that trusted adult permission to share the details with the administration of the school
   4. The faculty or staff member (or outside trusted source) will share key information about the incident with a member of the administration of the school.
   5. Depending on what is revealed to the faculty or staff member, further decisions will be made about further action inside or outside of the school.
4. It is school policy to contact the parents or guardians of students who report that they were harmed, whether that harm occurred at the school or not. The adults in the school will work with the student to make that reporting as comfortable as possible for the student. Together, the team of parents, administrators, faculty, and counselors can decide on a treatment and support plan for the student.

To focus on the disciplinary action toward the student causing harm:

1. In order to investigate incidences of sexual harm, the school needs to know who perpetuated the harm as well as a description of the harm that was done.
   1. We acknowledge that this can be difficult and painful for victims. We will be flexible and creative as possible in creating as-safe-as-possible spaces for students to tell us what happened.
   2. As mentioned above, a student can talk to:
      1. a trusted member of the faculty or staff—and they can bring that report to the administration
      2. the school counselor
      3. a trusted therapist—who can be given permission to share with the school
      4. a parent or guardian
2. Depending on the nature of the harm, the faculty and/or the administration will decide what action to take, taking into full account the experience of the victim.
3. The range of responses to a perpetuator of sexual harm can range from mediated conversations and intervention to suspension to expulsion—and other remedies depending on the situation.
4. Depending on the nature of the harm, the school may choose—or be required—to contact the Massachusetts Department of Children and Family Services and/or the police. We will not do this without fully explaining the reasons to the victim of the harm and their parent or guardian.