

Former St. Frances Academy teacher accused of inappropriate relationship with student

A former teacher at St. Frances Academy in Baltimore was accused of engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a student.

The school received the allegation May 10, and the accused, Ryan Penalver, was immediately relieved of his duties in accordance with Maryland law and the school's policies.

Penalver, 27, had been a history teacher at St. Frances Academy since 2012, according to an email sent to parents by Deacon B. Curtis Turner, principal. It is believed the relationship occurred during the current school year.

"Please know that we do our absolute best to make sure that our teachers and staff are of high moral quality and that they embody the values treasured by this community," Deacon Turner wrote in the email. "As the head of this school, know that I am wholly committed to making sure that the school environment is always a safe one."

Current and prospective families, as well as alumni and alumni parents with updated contact information, were sent the statement through email Friday. Letters will be mailed to alumni from the classes of 2012-17.

Students were notified Friday and were encouraged to share any information or concerns with the school and/or authorities.

"It is indeed disturbing to receive this news," Deacon Turner said in the letter. "Let us, as a school family, pray for all of those involved."

Penalver is charged with sexual abuse of a minor, third-degree sexual offense, fourth-degree sexual offense (as a person in a position of authority), second-degree child abuse, perverted practice and fourth-degree sexual offense (sexual contact),

according to court records. A preliminary hearing is set for June 12.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore is committed to protecting children and helping to heal victims of abuse. We urge anyone who has any knowledge of any child sexual abuse to come forward and to report it immediately to civil authorities (Baltimore City, Child Protective Services: 410-361-2235). If Church personnel is suspected of committing the abuse, we ask that you also call the Archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection Hotline at 1-866-417-7469.