POLICY STATEMENT

St Thomas’ is committed to providing a supportive school environment that values the rights and individuality of each student, whilst ensuring dignity, respect and safety for all. This policy complements existing policies and procedures and confirms our school’s strong position of not tolerating bullying behaviours.

RATIONALE

Following Christ’s example in treating all people with justice and compassion, staff and parents/caregivers work together to make our school a safe and nurturing place. St Thomas’ recognises the existence of bullying and harassment in today’s society and believes that proactive interventions on the part of schools can help reduce the incidence of bullying.

As an educational institution we have an obligation to provide a safe learning environment, while promoting behaviour that is consistent with expectations and standards of the broader community. As a Catholic school, the expected behaviour reflects our mission statement and gospel values.

SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, students, parents/caregivers, volunteer workers and persons having any association with St Thomas’. Bullying and harassment behaviours are not only unacceptable during school hours, but in any school-related event, or a context including, but not limited to, conferences, functions, camps, social events, sporting events, or trips.

DEFINITION

A person is bullied when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative action on the part of one or more other persons (Olveus, 1984).

At St Thomas’ we openly talk about bullying – what it is, how it affects us, and what we can do about it.

Bullying involves:

- A desire to hurt
- A hurtful action (physical, psychological or social)
- A power imbalance
- Typically repetition
- An unjust use of power
- A sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim (Rigby, 1996)
- It may also involve enjoyment of the aggressor

Forms of bullying:

- Physical – any form of violence or threat, intimidation.
- Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, intimidation.
- Emotional – excluding, tormenting, ridicule, humiliation, intimidation.
- Racist – taunts, graffiti, gestures, intimidation.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, intimidation.
- Cyber – unwanted text messages, emails, IT, intimidation.

In keeping with the above definition, "one-off" incidents involving social isolation, conflict, random acts of aggression/intimidation or meanness are not defined as bullying, but would be regarded as harassment. Continued and persistent harassment is regarded as bullying.

Bullying is recipient defined – it is not a defence to say “it was only a joke”.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We have documented school rules which reflect and support the rights and responsibilities of each student member of our school community.
- The school rules will be communicated, understood and consistently applied.
- St Thomas’ Behaviour Support Plan is developed and implemented by the school Principal and staff, and details school rules and procedures for responding to inappropriate behaviour.
- Any student behaviour identified as bullying or harassment will be dealt with under the Behaviour Support Plan.
- This policy establishes an expectation and intent that harassment and bullying behavioural concerns will be dealt with confidentially, and with dignity and respect for all parties involved.
- Relevant BCEC and QCEC policies are referenced and utilised.
- Privacy, Anti-discrimination and Harassment, Health and Safety (including Bullying) legislation is referenced and adhered to.
- The St Thomas’ School Responsible Behaviour Policy is referenced and utilised in conjunction with this policy.
- St Thomas’ School engages in proactive preventative programs to develop knowledge and skills to support social learning.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITY

The Principal has responsibility for implementation and administration of the policy.

REVIEW

The Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy will be reviewed every two years.

February 2012