ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

St Thomas’ School 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 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

The national definition of bullying for Australian schools developed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group states that:

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents or conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying (Retrieved from https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/WhatIsBullying/Documents/definition-of-bullying.pdf)

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 repetitive
- 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
• Involves intimidation, harassment or unwanted physical contact

Forms of bullying:

• Physical – any form of violence or threat, intimidation.
• Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, intimidation, racist remarks, verbal abuse.
• Social – Lying and spreading rumours, social exclusion, menacing looks, nasty jokes, damaging reputation, mimicking unkindly.
• Sexual – unwanted physical contact, abuse, comments, intimidation.
• Cyber – Abusive or hurtful use of digital technologies such as social media, instant messaging, text messages, websites and emails. Can include: deliberately excluding someone online, spreading rumours, intimidating others online or using their login.

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 details school rules and procedures for responding to inappropriate behaviour.
• Any student behaviour identified as bullying will be dealt with under the Behaviour Support Plan.
• This policy establishes an expectation and intent that bullying concerns will be dealt with confidentially, and with dignity and respect for all parties involved.
• Relevant BCEC and QCEC policies and Child Protection are referenced and utilised.
• Privacy, Anti-discrimination and Harassment, Health and Safety (including Bullying) legislation is referenced and adhered to.
• 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.

LAST REVIEWED
May/June 2017

NEXT REVIEW DUE
May/June 2018