



## Bullying Policy

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### Related Policies

Student Welfare and Management Policy  
Exclusion Policy  
Code of Conduct Policy  
Child Protection Policy  
Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices Policy  
ICT Policy

### Definition

Bullying consists of repetitive and persistent behaviours of an ongoing nature that are used to upset or hurt another person. Bullying involves an abuse of power between the victim and the student exhibiting inappropriate behaviours. Bullying can be systematic (involving a method or plan) and refer to a range of behaviours over time. Bullying results in risks to health and safety including risks to a person's emotional, mental and physical health. Allegations of bullying are investigated and analysed according to the circumstances for each individual case.

### Examples of bullying include:

- Any form of repeated physical violence such as hitting, punching or kicking others.
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it.
- Using offensive names or spreading rumours about others and their families.
- Using put downs, belittling others' abilities and achievements.
- Writing offensive notes about others. This includes writing offensive words.
- Using ICT to spread rumours about others, or to threaten others.
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group.
- Using intimidation in order to force others to act against their will.
- A group of students, operating as a unit, verbally or physically harassing another student. This behaviour might not need to be repeated to be considered an example of bullying.

### Steps to counter bullying: Preventative Measures

In order to ensure that St Thomas' is a safe and happy environment, the following preventative measures exist. They are implemented as proactive measures to minimise opportunities for bullying to occur.

### Teachers:

- **Duty of Care, school wide:** Teachers are positive role models. They model inclusiveness, compassion, respect and good conflict-resolution skills. They play a major part in ensuring that classrooms are environments in which the harassment of others does not take place and collaborative, respectful interactions between colleagues and students are encouraged.

- **Duty of care, playground:** teachers are aware of the need to look for signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying by actively patrolling areas during playground duty. Teachers report supervision concerns and address issues as they arise engaging in restorative justice practices. Teachers need to ensure they arrive to class lines on time. Many incidents of verbal or physical abuse take place in the few minutes at the end of lunch or recess, before classes begin formally. Arriving promptly at class lines reduces the likelihood for tensions to escalate towards an unfortunate outcome. It is a teacher's responsibility to assume duty of care promptly after supervision ends at recess or lunch.
- **Duty of Care, classrooms:** The Staff at St Thomas' will teach the Protective Behaviours Program in the first term of each year. Included within this program are lessons that skill children in identifying bullying, reporting bullying, resilience and dealing with bullying when confronted. Strategies to solve conflict situations are explored, including role playing scenarios that might be considered examples of bullying. Students will be taught the 'Three Steps' approach to dealing with an unwanted situation, which comprises of 'Talk', 'Walk' & 'Tell'.  
Teachers will encourage students to follow these steps on the playground as a first attempt to deal with an unwanted situation.

**Talk:** 'Do not XXX to me. I don't like it. It makes me feel XXXX when you say that to me.'

**Walk:** Students walk away from the offending party and say, 'I have asked you to stop XXX. I don't like it. I am now going to tell an adult.'

**Tell:** The student informs a teacher of what has happened.

**Note: this strategy applies to low level behaviour (i.e. a student taking, as a one-off occasion, another child's ruler). Any act of actual physical violence, is to be dealt with immediately by telling a teacher. Students are NOT to employ the Talk, Walk & Tell strategy in situations that involve violence. They are to seek immediate help from a teacher.**

### Examples of School Anti-bullying Practices

- Assisting children to develop the skills required to solve problems by enacting role plays in class.
- The Peer Support Program, which takes place in Terms Two and Three, is a program that recognises the responsibility children have for each other, especially older children for younger children, in so doing children learn the importance of friendship and community building skills. Peer Support gives the children the confidence to approach other children for help if they are in a difficult situation and assists them to break down feelings of isolation
- Children negotiate class rules and consequences at the beginning of the year in line with the school wide positive behaviour practice of **MATES** and often remind students of rules.
- St Thomas the Apostle is a Catholic school that strives to live by the values of Jesus. Foundational to these values is the sacredness of the human person. St Thomas' liturgies incorporating class, grade, and school prayer times, as well as grade and school Masses emphasise values of acceptance, fairness, respect and love. Continual exposure to and participation in class and school liturgies helps to form in children the values that St Thomas' seeks to express in everyday life.
- As in all matters of school life, parents are invaluable in the assistance they can give teachers to prevent bullying from taking place. Consequently, parents are informed at the beginning of each year about the school's bullying policy. They are informed of warning signs that may indicate that their child is being bullied, or is doing the bullying. Parents are encouraged to contact the school immediately if they think that their child is the victim or perpetrator of bullying.

## **Students**

- Students are encouraged to inform adults when they are being bullied or see a bullying incident.
- Students are encouraged to be positive role models to others, particularly younger students. Through the Peer Support Program and the class Protective Behaviours Program, they will learn how to best lend assistance to children they think are being bullied.
- Students are to tell someone on their 'safety network' of any incidents. A student's safety network is a social network of adults with whom the child feels safe. The student nominates the members of his/her own safety network. Typically, a model such as a hand is used to demonstrate the network: for each finger and the thumb, the student nominates one adult with whom they feel safe. The adults on a child's safety network are adults whom the child can confide in, or express fears and anxieties that include feeling bullied. This idea is explored in Term One of each school year.
- Students will explore themes in Religious Education Programs and make connections between the values of St Thomas' Catholic faith and the way in which we treat others at school and in the wider community.
- Students are reminded of the term 'no put downs'. This includes any verbal comments designed to put down or humiliate the victim. Calling the victim names, swearing at the victim, using threatening language and using language in order to ostracise or exclude, all come under the heading of 'no put downs'.
- Role playing incidents to give practical examples can assist students to understand bullying.

## **Steps to counter bullying: Management Measures**

St Thomas the Apostle Primary School prides itself on healthy & positive relationships. This reflects the school's Catholic ethos and spirituality and the belief that all people are sacred. In this light, the Bullying Policy seeks to restore relationships that are damaged by bullying. St Thomas undertakes a restorative approach to incidents of bullying. However, in the event that an incident of bullying is found to have taken place, there are also consequences for the student using inappropriate behaviour. These consequences may include the student addressing ways that he/she can mend the relationship. Depending upon the frequency and seriousness of the bullying, consequences may also include the student being excluded from the playground for a period of time.

## **Playground Incidents**

Any acts of physical or verbal abuse or violence (verbal violence here means swearing at a child or calling him/her a name) that take place on the playground will result in the student being sent to the Time Out room. The Time Out teacher will deal with the situation accordingly, as per the St Thomas the Apostle SWAMP policy. He/she will determine if the incident is a 'one off' incident or part of a wider pattern of repeated abuse (i.e. bullying). If the incident is determined to be a case of bullying, follow the steps listed in this policy (see Steps to Manage Bullying).

If a teacher judges that a playground incident is not of sufficient seriousness to warrant being sent to the Time Out room, but is nonetheless serious to some degree, the teacher informs the Assistant Principal.

This is to ensure that knowledge of incidents are evaluated to determine if they are indicative of a wider pattern of constant harassment to be recorded. The Assistant Principal will keep a record of this information and make decisions in consultation with the School Leadership Team to determine when repeated incidents warrant a case of bullying.

### **Classroom Incidents**

Classroom incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with by the class teacher (see SWAMP policy). Any incidents that involve violence of any description directed from one student to another, while still being dealt with by the class teacher, are also recorded as per the SWAMP Policy. The classroom teacher, having dealt with the incident as per the St Thomas the Apostle SWAMP Policy, also records the incident on a time-out form and sends it to the Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal, in consultation with the School Leadership team will assess incidents and determine if a case of bullying exists.

### **Steps to Manage Bullying**

If the Assistant Principal in consultation with the School Leadership Team determines that an act of bullying has taken place, the following steps are followed:

#### **Clarification**

1. The alleged victim is interviewed separately. The interview is recorded in written form. Students are provided a copy of the written record and have a chance to make changes or additions.
2. The student/s alleged to having been engaged in bullying behaviours are interviewed. If there is more than one student involved, they are interviewed separately. The interview is recorded in written form. Students are provided a copy of the written record and have a chance to make changes or additions.
3. Consultation with all parents occurs at this stage. It is important that the parents' perspective is heard and acted upon.

#### **Consequences**

1. The student who has acted inappropriately has a lunchtime Time-Out (if he/she has not already spent lunchtime in the Time-Out room).
2. The parents of all parties are contacted by the Assistant Principal.
3. A restorative approach is adopted where appropriate. St Thomas the Apostle Primary School values right relationships and consequently time is made available for the student and victim to mend the relationship if it is determined that such a process is in the best interest of all parties. However, this takes place within a context that values above all else, the feelings and sensitivities of the victim. The possibility of a meeting only takes place if the parents of the victim, the Principal and the Assistant Principal believe that the victim is ready to meet the student who has acted inappropriately. Any attempt to bring the victim and student together only takes place with both sets of parents understanding the process that is taking place. The student who has acted inappropriately is encouraged to take the initiative in developing solutions to mend the relationship.
4. If bullying occurs again between the same parties then steps 1 – 3 are followed. In addition: parents are contacted again and discussion ensues pertaining to consequences and behaviour, such as the following:

- (i) If the bullying has taken place on the playground, the student will be excluded from the playground at recess & lunch for a period of no longer than 5 school days.
  - (ii) If the bullying has taken place in the classroom, the student will be withdrawn from class for an In-School suspension for a period of time.
5. Parents of the student who has acted inappropriately are asked to meet with Assistant Principal and Principal.
6. The parents will be asked if the student can see the Counselor (if not already involved).
7. At the discretion of the Principal, and after consultation with the Catholic Education Office, the student may be suspended from school. Any action that goes further than a suspension will take place under the conditions set out in the St Thomas the Apostle SWAMP policy.
8. The Principal, Assistant Principal and classroom teacher will design a plan of positive action and this will be monitored daily.

### **Victim**

1. Parents are informed of the situation and kept informed of steps taken by the school.
2. The victim meets with the student who has acted inappropriately. A restorative approach is taken with the all parties with the emphasis on mending the relationship. This only takes place if the parents of the student, the Principal and the Assistant Principal believe that the victim is ready to meet with the student. Any such meeting only takes place after both sets of parents have been informed.
3. The victim is encouraged to develop strategies that rely on assertive behaviour. A support network of friends is developed for the victim.
4. Class teacher, Coordinator and the Assistant Principal monitor the situation regularly.
5. Parents are kept informed at all times of the process.
6. A dialogue book may be kept by the victim to record incidents over the ensuing weeks.
7. A follow up interview will take place after two weeks with parents and victim.

### **Passive Participants**

1. Discuss expectations e.g. reporting to teacher etc.
2. Invite them to be part of the victim's support group (if appropriate).

### **References**

<http://www.michaelcarr-gregg.com.au/>

McGrath, H & Noble, T; Bullying Solutions, N.S.W., Pearson Education, 2006.

### **Forms**

Nil

<b>Approved by:</b>	Principal
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