Rational

St Thomas’ Primary School believes that every student has the right to feel safe and as such, bullying, harassment, aggression and violence will not be tolerated. The policy is developed on the principles of the Australian Governments’ National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) and adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing.

The National Safe Schools Framework is based on the following overarching vision:

All Australians Schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote the student wellbeing.

St Thomas’ policy exists to minimise the risk from all types of harm, values diversity and promotes a community where all members feel respected, included and confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.

Every person at St Thomas has the right to:

- feel safe and be safe at school.
- learn and grow in a community free of verbal, physical, social, psychological or cyber abuse.
- work in a safe and positive learning environment.
- be supported to develop understandings and skills to keep themselves and others safe.

Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence challenge these rights. At St Thomas’ we do not accept or support bullying, harassment, aggression or violence.

Definitions

**Bullying** is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, an imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt).
Its nature may be:

- verbal – name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken, written, electronic or cyber bullying which may also apply to the following points)
- physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing, sexting, engaging in or identity theft
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions, demeaning someone on social networking sites.

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately; however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of ‘difference’. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status. (Bullying. No Way! website cited in the National Safe Schools Framework, 2003)

Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, cited in the NSSF, 2003).

Principles

1. St Thomas’ School is a safe and supportive environment where the 6 guiding principles and key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practised.

2. St Thomas’ owes a duty of care to all students.

3. St Thomas provides a supportive environment for all children, where it promotes respect for self and others, physical/emotional wellbeing and positive mental health.

4. St Thomas has a whole school approach to dealing with bullying, harassment, aggression and violence.

5. If bullying, harassment, aggression and violence occur outside of the school, and these behaviours impact on a student’s learning and behaviour in school, St Thomas will take action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.

6. All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. Bystanders (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.

7. While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, our policy and procedures contain clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration will be given to other circumstances, which may have bearing, such as family or mental health matters.

8. All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.
Proactive Procedures

Education:
(a) Staff: Conflict Resolution Training
Mediation Training
1-2-3 Magic Programme
National Safe Schools Framework

(b) Parents: Policy made available to parents and on the school website
Information sessions for parents.
1-2-3 Magic Programme

(c) Students: Conflict Resolution Skills
Friendly Schools Programme
Problem Solving Skills
Confidence/Assertiveness Training
1-2-3 Magic Programme
Resiliency skills development via Bounce Back Program
Gender Equity Education from Kindergarten

(d) Regular facilitated Class lessons to develop social skills and explore
relevant aspects of school life.

(e) Rainbows program on offer for selected students in need.

Awareness Campaign:

National Safe Schools Framework Posters
School Rule: “hands and feet to yourself”
Bullying Pamphlet – “It’s OK to Tell”
Buddy System
Whole School approach to 1-2-3 Magic

Supervision: Clear guidelines on yard duty
Clear ICT guidelines for school and home
Encourage co-operative rather than competitive games
Clear guidelines for games
Skill development for team games
Punctuality of students and staff in arriving at classrooms

BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN REGISTER

A behaviour of concern which would warrant being dealt with as per the following steps 1-3
is defined as: a behaviour which requires a staff member to spend more than a few minutes
dealing with the behaviour of concern. For example, having to find another teacher to
supervise the class while the incident is dealt with: having to spend more than a couple of
minutes with the bully/or victim; having to seek assistance from other staff when dealing with
a particular incident whilst in class or on duty.

- All incidents are to be recorded.
- Incidents in the playground are to be recorded in the duty book. Teachers to view the
duty book on a regular basis and note regular offenders.
- Regular offenders are to be referred to the Principal or members of the Leadership
team.
RESPONSE PLAN/PROCEDURES

Step One - First Offender

- Isolate perpetrator
- Allow cooling off period
- Collaborative problem solving
- Clear verbal warning of consequences if behaviour is repeated
- Apology to victim
- Support to victim - as necessary
- Record in 'behaviours of concern' register
- Phone call to parents (latter two included if considered appropriate)

Step Two - Repeat Offender

- Repeat of the above, plus
- An appropriate consequence
- Referral to interview with Principal (if appropriate)

Step Three - Continual Repeat Offender

- Interview with Principal
- Parents notified
- Relevant consequence
- Referral to Non-government psychologist services (support agency if required).
- Incident to be recorded in 'behaviours of concern' register.
- Support for victim

Step Four - Continual Repeat Offender

- may include exclusion at Principal's discretion

PHYSICAL ASSAULTS - Causing Injury

Steps One and Two are automatically omitted.

This policy works in conjunction with 'It's OK to Tell - Bullying' pamphlet for students, parents and staff which outlines guidelines for dealing with bullies and offering support to victims.
Appendix

Guiding Principles

1. affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school;
2. promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity;
3. implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment;
4. recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment;
5. develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community;
6. ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated;
7. recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive environment;
8. have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships;
9. focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention;
10. regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvement; and
11. take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect.

The six key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare.
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures.
3. Provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents.
5. Providing support for students.
6. Working closely with parents.

EVERYBODY at our school has the right to feel safe, respected and supported. We recognise and appreciate that God made people different. Everybody has a right to enjoy their time at school and bullying or harassment will not be accepted.