

27 August 2024



Response to Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

St Brigid's Catholic School, New Norfolk, caters for students from Kindergarten to Grade Six. Our current enrolment is 215 students. We are the only Catholic school in the Derwent Valley.

This submission addresses the particular areas of (b) and (d) of the terms of reference: (b) inquire into and report upon the measures necessary to prevent and remedy discrimination and bullying in Tasmanian schools in regard to students and staff (d) examine and recommend what efforts are being made and should be made towards meeting those obligations by Tasmanian schools in regard to students and staff.

At St Brigid's Catholic School, New Norfolk, we are a welcoming, spiritually-filled community that strives for high standards of learning, development, and excellence for all. Our staff acknowledges the needs of each student to develop their self-confidence, self-esteem, and respect for others. We are committed to providing our students with a nurturing Catholic learning environment supported by an atmosphere of respect, compassion, inclusion, and equity.

Our school is a safe place for all students. Respectful relationships infuse everything we teach and every exchange we model. Students are taught to ensure they respect each other and speak up when something is not right.

In speaking to some Grade 6 students, they explained that they feel safe at school for the following reasons: *"We know that if anything goes wrong, we can rely on the staff to help us"..." We get taught how to respond to different situations and to ask for help if we need it" and "We get taught how to respond in a fire drill, a lockdown... and on devices (eg cyber safety). Safety is important at our school".*

We have zero tolerance for bullying. We use a variety of programs to encourage respect, courtesy, and consideration for others. Students at St Brigid's Catholic School, New Norfolk, are encouraged to participate in positive behaviour through goals to: Be respectful, Be your best, and Be safe. Our Positive Behaviour Support Program seeks to support all students at all stages of their primary school education.

The RULER approach to Social and Emotional Wellbeing is implemented throughout the school. This approach promotes emotional literacy, which includes Recognising,

Understanding, Labelling, Expressing and Regulating emotions. Four 'anchors' of emotional literacy are taught to help both adults and students develop skills of self and social awareness and empathy and to foster a healthy emotional climate in the school. Of the four anchors, we employ class charters and mood meters in each classroom.

We welcome families from the margins. We strive to live out our evangelizing mission by being available for all families who desire a Catholic education for their children. We cater to students from different cultural and religious backgrounds; our current Catholic student population is 24%. We provide fee assistance for families in genuine need. This year we have given a combination of thirty-four concession card discounts and fee remissions.

We currently have seventy-four students on the NCCD, each receiving varied educational and emotional support. We believe that student well-being comes from being accepted and welcomed and from experiencing success in learning. Intervention programs for students with specific learning needs and disabilities include literacy, motor skills, speech, play programs, and social and life skills programs.

We support pastoral care in our school in many different ways. We have a daily check-in for students who require it, breakfast club three times a week, fruit available for students, and toasted sandwiches available at lunchtime for students who need it. We undertake PEEC (Positive Education Enhanced Curriculum) lessons and Circle Time in our classrooms. The well-being of our students, families, and staff is enriched by the presence of our School Chaplain. Our Chaplain facilitates programs to support School community members in dealing with complex life experiences. Our Chaplain supports students during break times, playing cards, knitting, and having conversations with them.

Some feedback from parents about the care and support we provide is as follows:

I feel that having the breakfast program makes the students feel welcomed into the school, knowing that they can have something to eat without any questions being asked and for the parents to know that in the worst case that they can't afford (cost of living) to feed their child/children that meal for the day. Just a simple piece of toast could make a world of difference.

We have counseling support for our students three days a week. At present, we have fifteen students receiving individual support. We have one group of four students working together. We also have four students awaiting allocation and we are awaiting the paperwork for another four students.

Some further feedback from our Grade 6 students is as follows:

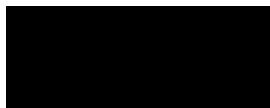
I like my school because we have a variety of opportunities - specialist lessons, incursions and excursions. We value our Aboriginal culture and this is obvious in the celebrations we have and the experiences we undertake.

The best thing about my school is the teachers! They are encouraging and they help us; they play sports with us (eg staff vs Grade 6 student games). I love our PE lessons; sports carnivals are fun!

The teachers at my school are encouraging and they help us. They are fun and supportive; if we do not understand something one way, they try to help us understand another way.

I feel happy at our school because we have sporting opportunities. I also like the new way we are learning. It is faster and we are learning our Maths better this way. I like to get to spend time with my friends, at playtime, and working on projects together.

In our school, we are kind to each other because we respect and value people as they are. It makes me happy to be kind to others.



Mrs Dianne O'Rourke

Principal

St Brigid's Catholic School - New Norfolk