

27/8/2024



Response to Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

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

Sacred Heart Catholic School sits on the outskirts of the township of Geeveston and serves families within the Huon Valley in providing education for children from Kindergarten to Year 6. In 2024 we have an enrolment of 168 students.

At Sacred Heart Catholic School we embrace everyone seeking a Catholic education and welcome families from diverse backgrounds across our community in the Huon Valley. The region boasts a rich tapestry of individuals with varied perspectives, backgrounds, and life goals, and our school population reflects this diversity. We embrace families seeking our educational offerings, irrespective of their religious beliefs, family situations, or backgrounds. Families joining our school become part of our community. While we prioritize Catholic families in line with our enrolment policy, we also warmly welcome students from diverse backgrounds.

We uphold a strict anti-bullying policy, utilizing various programs to promote respect, courtesy, and empathy among students:

- We implement programs such as Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms, and our unique social skills intervention program 'SuPeR Kids!' to foster a positive environment.
- We cultivate a culture of 'bucket filling' instead of 'dipping' and address bullying promptly.
- Extra support and time are provided to students struggling with positive communication.
- Various confidence-building options are explored to boost self-esteem.

- Our pastoral care referral system helps connect students with necessary support in challenging social situations.

In the event of any bullying incident, our staff collaborates to address it. Parents and guardians, as primary educators, are involved in discussions to support the students. To prevent bullying, we instil positive behaviour habits early, starting in Kindergarten. Students are taught to stand up against behaviour they find unacceptable, while educating those exhibiting such behaviour on its impact.

We embrace families from underserved communities by offering fee relief, addressing individual requirements, supplying uniforms, and providing learning resources. Our families are distributed across different socioeconomic quartiles: 39% in the bottom quartile, 49% in the middle two quartiles, and 13% in the top quartile. Additionally, 30% of our students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while 6% come from non-English language backgrounds.

We offer fee assistance to families in genuine need through our comprehensive fee reduction program and by addressing individual needs as they emerge. This support may involve additional reductions in fee payments (such as extending payment schedules), providing uniforms, supplementing lunch boxes, facilitating access to camps and excursions. Additionally, our breakfast club serves toast, a warm drink, and fruit to all children each morning to ensure they are well nourished and ready to learn.

We believe that student well-being is nurtured through acceptance, inclusion, and achieving success in learning. Our educational initiatives are designed with these objectives in mind. Here are the programs and structures we implement:

- Explicit Direct Instruction throughout the curriculum to ensure consistent delivery of content and provide ongoing feedback for teaching enhancement and improved learning outcomes.
- Incorporating research-based quality programs like Multi-lit products and Spelling Mastery.
- Utilizing mathematics resources developed in partnership with Shaping Minds.

Our religion classes aim to educate everyone about God's plan for our happiness and the significance of each individual, emphasizing the acceptance and respect for differences and the value of each person being created in the image of God.

In Catholic schools, Religious Education is grounded in catechesis, which is a deeply personal connection between God and the individual. God initiates these faith-filled moments, while the religious educator plays a vital role in fostering an environment conducive to these experiences. The Directory for Catechesis (DC) outlines three pivotal aspects of catechesis:

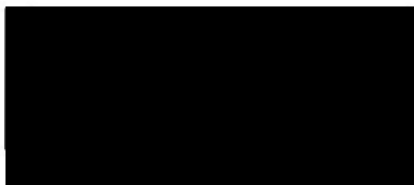
- Knowledge: Understanding the teachings and traditions of the Catholic faith, showing curiosity in the Gospel, exploring, questioning, seeking, and progressing towards faith.

- Conversion: Encountering Jesus, longing to deepen the relationship and follow His path.
- Response: Demonstrating faith through prayer, daily life, and the bond with God, culminating in the profession and expression of faith.

Reference: Directory for Catechesis (DC), Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 2020, 55-7, 66, 73.

At Sacred Heart Catholic School, we promote pastoral care through a comprehensive system that begins at the classroom level and includes a referral and triage process for students requiring additional support. Teachers establish clear routines, structures, relationships, and personalized responses to cater to each student's needs. Annually, Rumble's Quest is conducted to gather data on student well-being. We provide various pastoral care and psychology services and programs at an intervention level, managed by the Student Intervention Team. These include the chaplaincy program, Peaceful Kids, SuPeR Kids, Seasons for Growth, psychological counselling, CatholicCare Counselling, onsite counselling by the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and social skills coaching groups. Moreover, we assist families in accessing external community services when our school's resources are insufficient. Our proactive efforts in mental health and well-being were acknowledged in 2021 when we received the 'Lifeline Tasmania Communities in Action for Suicide Prevention LiFE Award'.

The Vision of Sacred Heart Catholic School is to enable everyone in our community to cultivate a connection with God and embody Christ's teachings by embracing Gospel values, while fostering peace and tolerance. Together, we aim to create a secure, nurturing, supportive, and inclusive atmosphere. Recognizing parents and guardians as the main educators of their children, we endeavour to uphold a school environment that honours and celebrates Christian virtues.



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