



Response to Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools
Submission: St. Therese's Catholic School
27 August 2024

*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*

St. Therese's Catholic School is a Kindergarten to Grade 6 Primary School with eight classes and a total of 237 students. St. Therese's Catholic School is a welcoming and inclusive community. Our vision is to be a 'Christ centred, welcoming community that prepares our students to be lifelong learners'. We welcome students from many cultures, faiths and backgrounds. Religions represented in our community include students who are Anglican, Buddhist, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Muslim, Orthodox and Sikh. In our current enrolment of 235 students, we have 39 English as an additional language (EAL) students (16.39%) and 9 Humanitarian Entrants (3.78%). We have 11 Indigenous students who are supported through both cultural and targeted literacy and numeracy programs.

Humanitarian entrants are fully supported by Catholic Education Tasmania for their first three years in a Catholic School and pay no fees, levies or costs for uniform and books. They are also offered transport to and from school if they are not close enough to walk. As a school, we welcome and show a preference for the poor and marginalised. This year alone we have written off over \$60,000.00 in fees due to family, hardship and concession card discounts.

'St. Therese's Catholic School has a strong focus on developing and creating respectful relationships between students, staff and parents. The focus on open-honest relationships creates a welcoming environment for all involved. The school parish, led by Father Bartha, celebrates meaningful religious experiences and helps students embed these learnings into their everyday lives. St. Therese's school creates an environment where students can grow and build resilience in preparation for life's challenges.' (Parent, 2024)

We support pastoral care in our school in many ways. We have a counsellor who works four days a week, a chaplain who works one day a week and we explicitly teach SEL (Social Emotional Learning) with classes from Prep to Grade 6, engaging in weekly lessons with a specialist teacher to reinforce the ongoing learning in the classroom.

"I feel safe at school because...there's always a teacher around to help me with different problems". (Student, 2024)



Our PC (Pastoral Care) team consists of our counsellor, chaplain, SSC (Student Support Coordinator) and principal. We meet fortnightly to discuss students and families who need support and triage referrals together. Our counsellor currently has 32 children on her list and our chaplain has another 10 who she regularly checks in with. This service is provided free of charge and available to all our students. We also provide welfare support to families through regular grocery drops with food items we have collected from Food Bank. We offer a breakfast program that supplies a nutritious start to the day for any children who would like to access it. This is also provided free of charge.

"St Therese's is a welcoming community which I am proud for my children to be a part of. Communication channels are always open and any concerns are dealt with in a timely manner. I am particularly grateful for the way the school has supported not only our children but our family during more challenging times". (Parent, 2024)

We have zero tolerance for bullying. When incidents occur, they are followed up promptly and thoroughly. Parents are fully informed and kept updated of what has happened. Class teachers form strong relationships with students, parents and carers and they regularly update parents and carers to ensure this high level of communication is maintained.

In our school we are kind to each other because ...we don't want people to feel unsafe, sad or feel as if they are being bullied in our school so we treat each other with kindness and respect to avoid that. (Student, 2024)

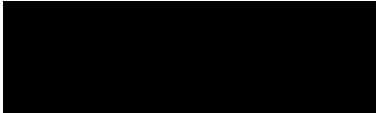
We use the RULER approach to social and emotional learning and the grow your mind program to support student SEL (Social Emotional Learning). These programs are evidence based and teach the students how to recognise and understand their emotions, how their brains work and how to self-regulate. We also offer Information Sessions for our families on topics to help educate them on our approaches and so we can work together with a consistent approach. We value families and parents and carers as our students first and most important teachers and we promote strong, authentic relationships and communication.

As a school we work closely with our parish, St. Therese's Catholic parish, and our parish priest, Father Bartha, and parish Deacon, Deacon Michael Hangan. All students participate in Religious Education learning which celebrates each child as unique and celebrated as a child of God who is loved and special. We also focus on values education through the MJR program (Making Jesus Real). Our guiding values as a school are empathy, respect, kindness and gratitude.

"I can confidently say that having a wellbeing program that is taught universally throughout the school to not only the children but to parents, has only helped my children understand the perspective of their peers and how they may be feeling. I believe this has eliminated an element of bullying and discrimination within the school because children, teachers and parents alike are all aware of how to navigate, at times, potentially new and uncomfortable feelings. And this results in a more welcoming and understanding approach, rather than not acknowledging



someone feelings or making fun of something, simply because we are not sure of how to process those feelings ourselves and or how to respond appropriately. As a parent it has been easier for me to navigate my children's feelings because St Therese's provides an educational program for all the grades, and they are consistent with their teachings". (Parent, 2024)



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