



A Catholic boys school in the Edmund Rice tradition

28 August 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.

St Virgil's College is a Kindergarten to Grade 12 school with two campuses. Junior campus is located at Hobart and Senior campus located at Austins Ferry, educating a total of 830 students.

Our school is a safe place for students because we commit to words and deeds that uphold the College values. We understand that we are accountable for our words and deeds and commit to restoring and repairing relationships when our behavior does not meet our values. Our Mission states that we strive to build a Catholic learning community where we can become people of faith, generosity, excellence and integrity, connected in our desire to serve and care for each other, the marginalised and our environment.

We welcome families who seek the education we provide by focusing on our four touchstones:

- Liberating Education - *We open hearts and minds, through quality teaching and learning experiences, so that through critical reflection and engagement each person is hope-filled and free to build a better world for all.*
- Gospel Spirituality - *We invite all people into the story of Jesus and strive to make his message of compassion, justice and peace a living reality within our community*
- Inclusive Community - *Our community is accepting and welcoming, fostering right relationship and committed to the common good.*
- Justice and Solidarity - *We are committed to justice and peace for all, grounded in a spirituality of action and reflection that calls us to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised and the Earth itself.*

We have zero tolerance for bullying. We use the following program/s to encourage respect, courtesy and consideration for others

At St Virgil's College, we provide students with multiple opportunities to engage and develop their understanding of bullying and its impact on others. These include programs such as Year 7 orientation & induction program, Headspace, Speak Up! Stay ChatTY!, Getting the Monkey Off Your Back, Learn360, Extended Pastoral Care Program, Open Parachute, Linewire – Pulse Application, Get it Right Program, Canteen Program, Tasmanian Police, Student Intervention – Bullying, Bandana Day and RUOkay?

Secondary Campus

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In the Junior Campus, we use our Virgilian Way Values to help form and support our Behaviour Management Policy and assist in the zero tolerance of bullying. Like at the Senior School we engage in Restorative Practices between our students, for students to understand the wrong that has happened and the importance of restoring relationships and making amends. Behaviour formation sessions take place with offenders/bully with the Head of Junior School or member of the Leadership Team. Follow up conversations are also held with parents/guardians if required.

A key part of St Virgil's College bully prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bully incidents as well providing assurance to students who experience bullying that their concerns are heard and actioned. It is made clear to students that bullying is not tolerated within our college community, their concerns will be taken seriously and that clear strategies are put in place for dealing with bullying issues. Programs provided to students who have engaged in bullying is provided by our Welfare Team. The focus is to understand their behaviour and adapt their actions moving forward.

Bully Incidents can be advised to the college verbally, in writing or online. The following avenues are also provided: informing a trusted teacher such as Pastoral Care Teacher, Head of House, College counsellor or Psychologist.

We welcome families on the margins through our inclusive enrolment policy. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are supported to apply and fee assistance is provided as necessary to ensure access to our college programs. A case management approach is provided to students at risk by the Welfare Team and ongoing monitoring and support are provided to ensure students have access to all educational programs, events and activities as required.

We provide fee assistance for families in genuine need by offering two types of assistance

1. Concession Card Discounts (for eligible card holders)
2. The College Fee Assistance – This is income based and is assessed on individual family circumstances. Any family is welcome to apply. Approximately 7% of our families access the College Fee Assistance Scheme.

We believe that student well-being comes from being accepted and welcomed and from experiencing success in learning. All our education programs are aimed at these goals. Specifically, the College utilises a range of academic and pastoral data for each student. This data is reviewed regularly and interventions put in place for those students to ensure they achieve success.

The college also engages in external providers such as Think U Know, White Ribbon, RUOkay Day and Polished Man.

Our religion classes teach everyone about God's plan for our happiness and the importance of every person by focussing on the dignity of the human person and our Catholic Social Teachings. This is supported by our Pastoral Care and Wellbeing framework at St Virgil's which has at its foundation what it means to be a true Virgilian. Our behaviour formation model, *The Virgilian Way*, seeks to form our young men through our core values and through following in the footsteps of Blessed Edmund Rice. We expect a high standard from our young men and we expect to see in their deeds our values of community, kindness, learning, integrity and justice on display.

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Our Religion curriculum covers such topics as “What did Jesus teach about social justice and how are we called to respond?”, “What does it mean to be a Man of St Virgil’s?”, Human Rights, the charism of Edmund Rice and how this translates to our modern school context and how the Catholic Social Teachings can be lived out in our college community. All of these pertain to how we relate to one another, and exposes how bullying doesn’t meet our expectations, Mission or The Virgilian Way.

We support pastoral care in our school by striving to educate and form our young men through our Pastoral Care Program providing awareness, ways of adapting, dealing with challenging times, support mechanisms in a variety of challenging and diverse social and emotional issues. Ultimately, we want to create in our students a strong sense of moral and ethical behaviour and decision making, resilience and self-belief with a focus on right relationships as men of integrity.

The College has a dedicated pastoral care team who work with and for our young men each day. Their roles are to ultimately support, encourage, troubleshoot and guide our students through all that is associated with school life. From our Pastoral Care Teachers, Junior School Class Teachers, who knows each child in their pastoral care the best, meets with them each morning, to our Heads of House, Student Support Team and Director of Student Wellbeing we strive to give our students every opportunity to be the best version of themselves.

Bully Report Statistics

Within the 2023 school year, using our bully report online system, we recorded 80 bully reports from students in Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Junior School Statistics: 2023: School population: 206

These statistics are gleaned from a summation of incidents as recorded by teachers (not students) at the Junior Campus in 2023 and recorded on Simon (Student Management System) where students did not live up to our value of kindness and can be deemed as bullying.

There are three tiers: 1, 2 and 3.

14 Tier 3 reported incidents

60 Tier 2 reported incidents

These are lower-level incidences that don't always live up to the true definition of bullying which is sustained, deliberate and involve a power imbalance between students. They are still deemed as unacceptable behaviour between students.

St Virgil’s College undertakes an annual survey to assist the College Advisory Council and College Leadership Team in determining the quality of the educational experience provided. The following results were obtained from the 2023 student and parent annual survey.

Student Results

- 89% of students confirmed that teachers and students at St Virgil’s College care about each other
- 78.5% of students indicated that they enjoyed being at school
- 74% of students confirmed that St Virgil’s teaches them values that can help make a positive contribution to society.
- 79% of students strongly agreed/agreed that St Virgil's strives for high academic standards.
- 72.85% confirm that their teachers make schoolwork interesting and enjoyable.

Parent Results

- 93% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that St Virgil's promotes the Catholic teachings that families want their boys to know and understand.
- 92% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that social justice opportunities encouraged a lifelong awareness of the poor and marginalised.

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- 94% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that St Virgil's encourages a sense of pride in achievement.
- 88% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that teachers and students at St Virgil's care about and respect each other.
- 88% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that St Virgil's has a positive school identity.
- 90% of parents strongly agreed/agreed that St Virgil's is a safe and secure school.
- 93% of parents strongly agree/agree that St Virgil's strives to develop a sense of self-worth in boys.
- 89% of parents strongly agree/agree that St Virgil's strives for high academic standards.
- 87% of parents strongly agree/agree that they are satisfied with their son's educational progress at St Virgil's.

Student Voice

The best thing about my school is I am able to receive more direct and one on one learning with my teachers.

The teachers at my school ... Most teachers I believe are good at teaching all students and I think most do want the best for us.

I feel safe at St Virgil's College because ... There really isn't any reason to feel unsafe, in my grade at least. Nobody has any real issues with each other and people tend to get along.

The teachers at my school ...Are one on one based and the high up staff act on behaviour very quickly and fairly.

I feel safe at St Virgil's College because ...Due to the fact that behaviour is acted on promptly in a safe manner.

In our school we are kind to each other because ...We respect one another.

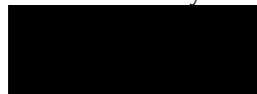
I like my school becauseIt's a great learning culture and great teachers.

The teachers at my school ...They are all kind and including in everything.

I feel happy at St Virgil's because ...I have made many great friends and I love my subjects.

I feel safe at St Virgil's because ...Teachers act on something as soon as it doesn't seem right.

Yours sincerely



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PRINCIPAL

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