



St John's Catholic School

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 John's Catholic School
Richmond
Kindergarten - Year Six
Current enrolment -332

St John's Catholic School is a safe place for students because we are focused on providing an environment that is positive, inclusive, diverse, respectful and joyful for all members of our community, students, families and staff. The commitment to ensuring the values and expectations of the school are upheld is obvious in the actions of all that we do.

We welcome families who seek the education we provide. Our families also come from a broad geographical area with over 60% of our student population arriving by bus. Many of our families are generational, with a fifth generation student beginning Kindergarten this year. We work hard at communicating with our families and engaging them in the school process. Our online communication system ensures families can access information in a timely manner. In recent years we have returned to face to face meetings to talk about student progress. These meetings are known as 'Learning Conversations' emphasising the importance of relationships, not just information sharing.

We have zero tolerance for bullying. We use the following program/s to encourage respect, courtesy and consideration for others. Positive Behaviour Support is the key pillar for supporting behaviour at St John's School. PBS emphasises understanding the reasons behind a child's behaviour and then using proactive strategies to support positive change. Teaching effective PBS strategies begins by articulating what challenging behaviour we want to see less of, then setting the scene for success and fostering an inclusive environment. This program is delivered in an explicit manner with ongoing support for children to succeed. St John's Positive Behaviour Support model is based on a statement that was developed within the community and after intensive work with the students. *We are... respectful, responsible learners* is not only a statement that is well known by our students, it can be found around the school. Each part of the statement is regularly taught and discussed. Questions such as What is respect? What does this look like? What can you do to be more respectful? are unpacked with the children. We also teach using RULER. RULER is a social and emotional approach developed by YALE



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University. This approach teaches children to identify emotion and then encourages them to build strategies to support the emotion. The approach is rich in discussion and a growing independence of owning emotions, choices and behaviour. In 2023 there were many incidents of behaviour expectations not being met, ranging from minor to more serious incidents. There were two incidents of bullying behaviour that meet the criteria of repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment

We use Rumbles Quest to track the wellbeing of our students. We use this data to implement new initiatives as needed, change approaches and to ensure that what is established is still relevant. Data gathered in August 2023 show that 75% of children are on track or in the high range of overall well being. This same data shows 75% of students are on track or in the high range in the area of school attachment. 77% of children are on track or in the high range of social confidence. This assessment will be undertaken again in August this year, as we once again seek to understand our student body and their wellbeing.

We welcome families from the margins as a priority. Our student cohort consists of 40% of children with a disability of varying degrees. It is the case that some of these children and families would be marginalised without the support of St John's. We also support families with financial assistance. We regularly share information with families promoting this support and urging them to speak to us if there is any way we can support their family.

We provide fee assistance for families in genuine need. These families are offered confidential support based on what they can afford. If circumstances change for families we also can be flexible to their needs. Once again we regularly share information on how to access support from St John's Catholic School.

We believe that student well being comes from being accepted and welcomed and from experiencing success in learning. All of our education programs are aimed at these goals. Specifically, we utilise the following programs and structures. Our curriculum is led by the Australian Curriculum and in Kindergarten; Being, Belonging and Becoming. These are core documents in our school. We use a range of English programs to support learning. These include Initial Lit, Mac Lit, Spelling Mastery and Writing Revolution. We also use Mathematics programs supported by Shaping Minds and Rocket Maths to support automaticity. We are fortunate to work with our local council to utilise a local area so that the children can experience Nature Play. This focus on the environment and on creative and curious play is an important feature at St John's Catholic School.

Our religion classes teach everyone about God's plan for our happiness and the importance of every person. Our motto of 'Love one another as I have loved you' *John 13: 34-35* underpins all aspects of St John's. Our Religious Education classes are inclusive and encourage students to ask questions, discuss ideas and grow in knowledge. The learning is age appropriate and built upon as children learn and develop.



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We support pastoral care in our school by ensuring all children and families are seen and heard. We are fortunate to have access to a counselor four days a week who works extensively with children and families. We also utilise the Chaplain program with our Chaplain support initiatives such as Breakfast Club and being a visible presence of support for children throughout the school. Due to the size of our school and the connectedness of the community, senior staff are always available to provide pastoral support.

St John's Catholic School works hard to provide a safe and happy place for our children, where they can play and learn.

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Jacqui Lawless
Principal
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