

St Thomas the Apostle Primary School	System Update: 01.05.2020	
Version 0.2	Date of Next Review: 01. 05. 2023	

Anti-bullying Policy

Introduction:

At St Thomas the Apostle School bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All members of our school community are committed to providing for our children a safe and secure environment in which the children in our care can reach their potential. All members of the school community have a right to feel safe, the right not to be intimidated, abused, threatened or physically hurt. With the Gospel values underpinning the ethos of our school we strive to live out those values and treat all members of our school community with dignity and respect.

Definition: What is Bullying?

Bullying is an action that causes pain to another individual. It is usually deliberate. Bullying can occur over a short or long time frame. Bullying can take a number of forms: verbal, physical, extortion and exclusion.

“Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour which is usually hurtful and deliberate: it is often persistent, sometimes continuing for weeks, months or even years and it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Underlying most bullying behaviour is an abuse of power and a desire to intimidate and dominate: (Sharp & Smith, 1994).

Rigby (1996) states that bullying contains seven key features. These are:

1. An intention to be hurtful
2. This intention is carried out
3. the behaviour harms the target
4. the bully overwhelms the target with his or her power
5. there is often no justification for the action
6. the behaviour repeats itself again and again
7. the bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target.

Bullying comes in many forms.

Physical bullying:

Physical bullying is fighting, kicking, punching, hitting, shoving, pinching, abusive gestures and moving in close on the target's personal space.

Verbal bullying:

This is when the bully uses words in a malicious way to cause distress to another and thus feels powerful. Such forms of verbal bullying are teasing, swearing, using putdowns, spreading nasty

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rumours, and using standover tactics. Another form of verbal bullying is making repeated, abusive phone calls, which is not only distressing for the target but also for the entire family.

Extortion:

Students in primary school are generally not familiar with the term “extortion”, they usually say that bullies blackmail and threaten you, forcing you to give them your money, toys or food.

Visual bullying:

Visual bullying is also hurtful and degrading for the target. It can take the form of insulting letters from student to student or from student to student about another student whether by text message, e-mail, on a social networking internet site (Facebook etc) or in a hard copy written letter, as graffiti etc.

Exclusion:

Exclusion is when students are deliberately left out of a game or group. For many younger students at a primary school this is the most difficult form of bullying to report as it has many subtle expressions. Students will generally describe exclusion as when they are ignored, not allowed to play, made to feel invisible, given the worst job in the group (consistently) or when the group runs off and hides from them.

Sexual Bullying:

Sexual bullying consists of obscene drawings and gestures, rude jokes about the target, brushing up against the target, touching when the target does not want to be touched and asking her or him questions of a sexual nature to shame and embarrass.

Racial bullying:

Racial bullying can be expressed physically, socially or psychologically when one is labelled negatively as being different from others according to one’s race (Besag, 1989). Students at primary school who come from another country often share that they are teased with remarks such as “your lunch stinks”, “your skin looks dirty”, etc.

Bullying is not one off acts of aggression by which one child may be hurt, physically or otherwise, by another child.

How to deal with a Bullying incident:

At St Thomas we realise that the bully/victim problem is the responsibility of the whole community, staff, students and parents. This approach requires that each section of our community have their particular part to play in eliminating bullying from our school.

Staff will: -

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1. Be a role model for assertive rather than aggressive approaches to interpersonal interactions.
2. Be observant to signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying.
3. Be punctual to their yard duty and supervise the playground vigilantly.
4. Be punctual to class and to collect their classes from their lines.
5. Take steps to help victims, listen to concerns and offer support and assistance.
6. Follow designated intervention procedures.
7. Take heed of parental concerns.
8. Follow up any reports of bullying.

Students will: -

1. Refuse to be involved in any bullying incidents.
2. Not to stand and watch any bullying incidents but rather fetch help.
3. Tell a staff member if they know of any bullying incidents.
4. Show bullies that you disapprove of the bullying behaviour.
5. Tell Parents and their class teacher if they believe that they are being bullied.

Parents are advised to: -

1. Watch for signs of distress in their children, for example, unwillingness to attend school, bedwetting, “clingy” behaviour, equipment or money disappearing, requests for money.
2. Advise your child to report any bullying incidents to you, the parents and the teachers or Principal.
3. If possible allow your child to report and deal with the problem him/herself.
4. Inform the school if bullying is suspected.
5. Do not encourage your child to retaliate.

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6. Attend interviews at school to help with the problem.
7. Reassure your child that they will have the full support of parents and the school.
8. The school will deal with the issues. Parents should not approach children on the playground.
9. It is important to note that Privacy Laws prohibit us from sharing information on action being taken with individual children. We acknowledge that this may be difficult for some parents of victims to accept.

How do we go about reporting bullying?

- It is the responsibility of those who witness bullying (in any form) to make a report. All students are encouraged to report to a staff member, parent or trusted friend, any instance that makes them feel unsafe.
- Students can report bullying to any teacher. The teacher will ask the students to complete a Student Bullying Report Form.
Note: If the bullying occurs on the playground while a teacher is on duty, the child/ren concerned need to report to that teacher directly after recess to complete a report. If the report indicates other parties who are involved, these students are to be sent for to also complete a report.
- Parents can report bullying to the class teacher, Principal or Deputy. This must be in writing and a “Bullying Report Form” must be completed by the person receiving the report.
- When a student or parent makes a report to a staff member, or if a staff member witnesses inappropriate behaviour, he/she needs to consider whether bullying has taken place.
 - If it **is not** deemed to be bullying, the staff member will deal with the incident as he/she would any serious incident. The class teacher is to be informed of the incident.
 - If it **is** deemed to be bullying or may possibly be bullying, the report should be referred to a member of the School Leadership Team.
- Teachers need to follow up on all student reports by completing a “Bullying Report” by the end of the day. This will ensure that consequences can be implemented the next school day. The completed Incident Reports should be handed to a member of the Leadership Team upon completion of the process.
- The Leadership Team member will meet with those involved, including witnesses, using the Bullying Report Form(s) to clarify what has happened. The Leadership Team member

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will meet with the alleged perpetrator of the bullying and have them complete the Restorative Practices Affective Questions on the “Bullying Incident Report” Form to clarify with the perpetrator the nature of the bullying, who has been affected and what needs to be done to make things right. These forms and a record of the meeting will be placed in the “Bullying Register” kept in the Principal’s Office and two copies sent home to be signed by the parents and one signed copy returned to the school. The signed copy will replace the unsigned form in the “Bullying Register”. A meeting with the parents of the perpetrator will be optional at this stage of the process. A phone call will be made to the parents of the recipient of the bullying to inform them of the process being taken.

- If the behaviour is repeated, those involved will meet with a member of the Leadership Team (preferably the same one) and the perpetrator(s) will complete a yellow copy (signifying second occurrence) of the “Bullying Incident Report” and sent home for the parents to sign and return to the school. **A meeting will be mandatory** for the parents of the perpetrator(s) at this stage of the process.
- If the behaviour continues, a Student Support Group will be established, consisting of the child, parent(s), class teacher, Student Wellbeing Coordinator and any others involved. This group will investigate strategies, resources and/or outside agencies that may be implemented to assist in developing appropriate behaviours. If necessary, this group will also be established for the recipient of the bullying as a means to build skills and strategies for dealing with aggressive behaviour.