St Thomas More's
BULLYING POLICY

Definition:
At St Thomas More's, we believe that a person is bullied when they are intentionally exposed regularly and over time to negative or harmful actions by one or more other people. Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which involves technology. Bullies are people who deliberately set out to intimidate, exclude, threaten and/or hurt others repeatedly. Bullying is a clear form of harassment.

Rationale:
Work in this area is guided by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Policy - Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools. Pastoral Care has as its focus the Life of Jesus Christ and it is concerned with the dignity and integral growth of the person. It is a responsibility entrusted to all members of the faith community and is a force for healing, reconciliation and liberation. It is an expression of and commitment to justice. The emotional and physical wellbeing of our students is pivotal to their success at school, as adolescents, and in their future lives. Physically and emotionally healthy students are happy, able to deal positively with life's challenges, experience a sense of connectedness with the school and others, and are well placed to develop into well-balanced and successful young adults.

St Thomas More's school will provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted, and in so doing, all will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment.

Aims:
- To reinforce within the school community what bullying/ cyberbullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- Everyone within the school community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to have a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

Implementation:
- Parents, teachers, students and the community will be aware of the school's position on bullying and cyberbullying.
- The school has developed an e-Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy which promote Safe Internet Use
- The school will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying.

A. Primary Prevention:
- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and the strategies that counter-act them.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response.
- To provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- A bullying survey and yard survey will be administered and acted upon at least once every two years, or as deemed necessary.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify at the start of each year the school policy on bullying.
- Student Representative Council, peer support delegates, staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- Electives and structured activities available to students at recess and lunch breaks.

B. Early Intervention:
- Promote children reporting bullying incidents involving themselves or others.
- Classroom teachers remind students on a regular basis to report incidents, and that reporting is not dobbing.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.
- Children who exhibit inappropriate behaviour e.g. physical or verbal assault will be removed from the group, either inside the classroom or a designated safe and quiet place for children to access at recess and lunchtimes e.g. office areas.

- When a child repeatedly offends and is posing a danger to him/herself or others, a period of suspension will occur.
- The suspension time will usually be until the next school day but may extend to two or three days. The parent will be notified and will be asked to collect the child and take him/her home or the suspension can take place at school i.e. in-house suspension.
- Expectations for behaviour will be reviewed upon the child's return and agreed to before the child re-enters the classroom or the playground.
- Parents will be closely communicated with and a copy of the Incident Report may be provided.
- Recognition and encouragement for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will be given.
- School Council may be informed of bullying incidents, if it is deemed to be an issue requiring clarification or intervention.

C. Intervention:
- Those identified through the Bullying Survey, as either victims or perpetrators, will be counselled and/or supported.
- Once identified, bully, victim and witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented.
- If bullying is ongoing, parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's discipline policy.

D.   Post Violation:
- Consequences may involve:-
    -         exclusion from class.
    -        exclusion from yard.
    -        school suspension.
    -        withdrawal of privileges.
    -        ongoing counselling from appropriate agencies for both victim and bully.
- Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies.
- Encouragement and recognition for positive behaviour.

  Evaluation: This policy was reviewed by the staff in June 2017.