School Community Grievance Policy

Rationale
Good relationships within school communities give children greater opportunities to succeed. It is natural that parents and community members at one time or another will have concerns about what happens at school. To maintain good relationships, grievances or conflicts should be resolved so that all parties achieve satisfactory results.

The welfare of children is paramount. Open criticism of any parties in a dispute does not support children’s education. To this end, fair and open communication conducted within the procedures framework outlined here ensures that the rights and responsibilities of all parties are respected and consensus achieved.

Aim
The resolution of conflicts between schools and their communities is vital to the well-being and success of students. The intention of this policy is to describe procedures for the effective and early resolution of disputes.

Implementation

Procedures
These procedures are designed to assist with ‘general concerns’

First contact the school
- All personal matters, such as concerns regarding student, parent or staff relationships should be raised directly with the school.
- If the matter relates to an individual student and/or an issue of everyday class operation, the child’s teacher will be the first point of contact. Teachers are usually available to discuss minor issues in the 15 minutes after school.
- Appointment times, for more involved issues, are to be made at mutually agreed times.
- If the matter cannot easily be satisfactorily resolved, it should be referred to the school principal.
- Where the issue relates to school policy or matters beyond an individual classroom, the principal should be the first point of contact.
- Grievances should be kept as confidential as possible.

The following outlines refer to grievances, which are not easily solved or are of a more serious nature.
- At a mutually agreed time, a meeting is organised with the principal, and as necessary, other relevant parties.
- Each person
  - Listens
  - Identifies the facts
  - Lists the issues
  - Generates solution options
  - Acts and evaluates
- Any party to a dispute has the right to be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at any meetings convened to discuss a resolution of that dispute.
- Accurate records of all disputes and proceedings should be maintained and current copies held by all parties involved.
- Where disputes are referred to the parish priest or to the Director of Catholic Education, Melbourne or other offices or persons outside the school, the concerns should be documented and covered by a letter, which confirms that each of the steps outlined in this set of procedures has been followed.
It is not the role of the Parent bodies such as the School Education Board and the Parents and Friends Association or members to have disputes referred to them.

**Time Frame**
It is the obligation of all parties to deal with a concern as promptly and amicably as possible. In most cases, a reasonable time for resolution might be one month. In some cases where external personnel or factors are involved, resolution might take longer.

All disputes are to be settled in a calm and reasonable matter, with a respect to people’s dignity. Aggressive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated. If a meeting degenerates it will aborted. If suitable, another meeting may be arranged for a time when parties affected have gathered their composure.

**Summary**
Issues relating to an individual student or everyday class operation:

- 1st point of contact – Class teacher
- If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, it should be referred to the principal.

Matters relating to school policy or matters beyond an individual classroom:

- 1st point of contact – Principal

**Evaluation:**
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s review process by staff and School Education Board Members.

**Initial Policy:** 1992
**Last Review:** May 2013
**Next Review:** 2017