

## Rationale

Bayview College is committed to creating an environment that values good relationships and open communication. Our College values of Compassion, Integrity, Respect and Responsibility compel us to manage situations of conflict as they arise in our school community. Conflict is a basic ingredient for growth and change in an individual and in a community or an organisation. As Christians, however, we have an obligation to work at resolving conflicts peacefully, with due respect for the dignity of all people involved. We have an obligation to restore relationships broken or affected by the conflict. We have an obligation, through open, honest and respectful communication, to avoid initiating unnecessary conflict.

## Policy Statement

The resolution of conflict within schools and their communities is vital to the well-being and success of students and staff. The intention of this policy is to describe procedures for the effective and early resolution of disputes. The School acknowledges that parents, students and staff have a right to raise concerns and have them addressed by the appropriate authority.

Differences in opinion might lead to conflict if there is no room for negotiation or little attempt from either person or group to listen to and respect the rights of another to express a point of view. As Christians we are compelled to broaden our understanding and acceptance of difference. In fact, we are called to celebrate difference.

To maintain good relationships, grievances or conflicts are resolved so that all parties achieve satisfactory outcomes. We encourage conflict resolution strategies which promote the dignity of all.

Issues of conflict are sensitive. And out of respect for the individuals involved confidentiality are strictly observed by all participants and at all stages of the grievance resolution procedure.

The Principal ensures that accurate records of all disputes and proceedings are maintained and copies of documentation are filed, and copies held by all parties involved.

According to the DEECD guidelines schools aim to resolve issues of conflict within 20 working days. At Bayview College we maintain that it is the responsibility of all parties to deal with a concern as promptly and amicably as possible. In some cases where external personnel are involved, resolution may take longer.

This policy applies to our School community – Bayview staff, students, volunteers and parents.

# Procedures for implementation

## Good Relationships/Practices

The college values the relationship that we have with families, students, community members and colleagues. It is the responsibility of all employees and other members of the school community to take all reasonable steps to develop and maintain good relationships and to deal with issues in a positive, constructive, practical and professional manner. Employees and other members of the school community try to resolve difficulties at the earliest opportunity without having to use a formal process and in such a way as to have the minimum impact on the education of the students, the school, employees, and members of the school community.

The AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers describes the expectation for collaborative working and the relationships between colleagues in schools. There are similar expectations for support staff in schools.

Resolving issues in a sensible and sensitive way will require all parties to recognise their part in the issue/difficulty and how their behaviour may be contributing to the circumstances. Employees and other members of the community are willing and open to looking at ways of resolving issues without resorting to formal processes, for example by using:

- An informal setting to discuss the matter with the respondent
- A more senior staff member as a facilitator
- Formal Mediation arranged through the Principal
- An external facilitator arranged through the Principal

All members of the School community can resolve issues professionally and respectfully by agreeing that when discussions take place we ensure:

- **Effective listening** - so that each person fully understands the issues at hand and each other's view;
- **Effective understanding** - so that each person is able to respond, knowing what the issues are
- **A calm environment** - no raised voices or inappropriate body language
- **Common Ground** – identifying and agreeing common understanding;
- **The taking of responsibility** – each person admits when he/she is wrong, if appropriate, and takes steps to make professional relationships work
- **Resolving** – saying sorry if appropriate, agreeing the way forward; agreeing to meet again, if appropriate

Every attempt is made to resolve the complaint informally between the parties involved and only if the matter cannot be resolved by way of professional dialogue should this policy and the formal procedure for resolving grievances need to be used.

Where it is unsuccessful or impossible to resolve grievances by professional dialogue then the Complainant raises his/her complaint formally with the Principal.

The parties may still agree to resolve the issue by means other than following this Policy e.g. mediation. This must be agreed in writing by the Complainant and the respondent and does not exclude the Complainant from using this Policy at a later stage if other means do not bring a resolution.

## Making a complaint

All grievances regarding students and/or staff are raised directly with the school. Students and Parents present their complaint to any one of the following staff members, preferably in writing:

- The teacher concerned or involved
- Care Group Teacher
- Year Level Co-ordinator
- Learning Team Advisor
- Principal, Deputy Principal or Director of Teaching and Learning
- Principal
- Chair of the College Board

Where the grievance is with the Principal this matter is addressed to the Chair of the Board.

Staff members present grievances, preferably in writing, to their Supervisor, Business Manager, Deputy Principal, or Principal.

Where relevant, the complainant may at any stage of the grievance procedure approach the following people for advice and / or support.

- Principal, Deputy Principal, or Director of Teaching and Learning
- Staff Association Representative
- Clergy from the member Churches

The respondent, if an employee, may approach a member of the Leadership Team or Staff Association representative for advice and support if required.

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the grievance procedures, he/she may request that an independent external authority review the complaint.

## Grievance Procedures Framework

There are stages in the grievance resolution process. Grievances may be resolved at any one of these stages.

The parties undertake the following steps:

### Step 1

Every attempt is made to resolve the matter by confidential discussions between the affected parties involved at the school. This does not preclude the right of either party to seek independent advice, nor does it necessitate such an approach where this is impracticable.

## Step 2

Where the matter is not resolved by Step 1, the affected parties may each seek the assistance of an independent third party in order that a further attempt may be made to resolve the matter in the strictest confidence.

## Step 3

Where the affected parties are unable to resolve the matter, they may refer it to a mutually acceptable independent mediator for resolution. Either party may seek the assistance of a representative. All discussions are conducted confidentially.

## Associated Documentation

Harassment and Workplace Bullying policy

Equal Opportunity Policy

Pastoral Care Policy

Positive Relationships Policy

Student Code of Conduct

## References

Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria

Victorian Institute of Teaching

DEECD Dealing with complaints

## Appendix

### Definitions:

**Complainant** – Person who lodges a grievance.

**Grievance** – Any unresolved dispute or complaint.

**Grievance Procedure** – A prescribed set of actions to be followed when a grievance is presented.

**Respondent** – Person who allegedly undertook the behaviour which resulted in the grievance.