



# Assumption College

## Procedure

### ISSUE RESOLUTION

#### RELEVANT POLICY

OH&S Policy

#### INTRODUCTION

At Assumption College we are committed to providing a positive work environment for all community members, based on our Core Values. We acknowledge, however, that people can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school, or have concerns about how a relationship is developing. A Procedure to assist with the resolution of relationship break-downs or where there are concerns about how a matter has been handled, can assist all parties to feel confident that their concerns have been raised, heard and responded to. Most importantly, the promotion and development of right-relationship and forgiveness can be enacted.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

An employee, student or parent/guardian can, from time to time, have a concern or complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission that he/she feels aggrieved about. The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which employees, students and parents can have such issues addressed. If you believe that you are being harassed or discriminated against, the Equal Opportunity Procedure is a more appropriate Procedure to utilise.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Grievance:** A grievance could be defined as a complaint about a wrong that causes resentment and is seen as grounds for action; such a complaint could be judged eventually as justified or not.

**Contact Person:** A suitably qualified person with a designated Position of Leadership at Assumption College. Usually a member of the College Leadership Team, but another staff member if this proves inappropriate within the particular grievance situation.

#### RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Impartiality.** If you raise an issue or grievance, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgements or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to have your side of the story heard.
- **Confidentiality.** You can feel secure that if you do raise an issue or grievance under this policy, it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint, and those deemed absolutely necessary by the Contact Person. Often, this will be determined in conjunction with yourself.
- **Timeliness.** Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period as possible. The process should as far as possible be finalised within one month.

- **No Victimisation.** The Assumption College Leadership Team will make every reasonable effort to ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.
- **Forgiveness.** As a Catholic school, we promote and expect that in difficult relationships, everyone is open to forgiving and being forgiven.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STEPS**

Members of the school community should not instigate issues or grievances that are frivolous or malicious. All individuals are expected to participate in these procedures in good faith.

### **What to do if you have a complaint:**

#### **1. If possible, approach the person involved.**

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first, is to speak to the person who is the cause of the issue or grievance, about how you feel. This should be undertaken in a respectful professional manner. Sometimes it is good to practise what you want to say with a trusted friend/mentor. If the issue or grievance is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is an issue that requires attention. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

#### **2. Go to the Principal or the Contact Person**

If you don't feel as if you can approach the person directly, go to a Contact Person or Principal and explain the problem. They can help you decide on an appropriate next step.

### **What happens next?**

- Once you have raised an issue or grievance, the Contact Person or Principal will consider whether there are any reasons why she/he should not proceed to deal with the matter. For example, the person you complained about may be a personal friend. If there is such a reason that indicates it is inappropriate for the Contact Person or Principal to deal with your issue or grievance, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.
- The Contact Person or Principal will then meet with you. You may bring someone with you. During this meeting a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the issue or grievance is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to be not supported by the evidence. You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the school is dealing with the complaint. The Contact Person or Principal will then take a written record of the complaint.
- The Contact Person or Principal will arrange to talk to the person about whom the issue or grievance is made, to hear that side of the story. They may bring someone with them to the interview. Any witnesses will also be interviewed.
- These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).
- The Contact Person or Principal will report on what the other people said and discuss what should be done to resolve the situation. You may wish to discuss with the Contact Person or Principal what action you would like taken
- It is possible to request the services of a mediator in resolving the situation. Mediation can be an extremely positive step in helping all parties to air grievances and establish right and professional relationships. The school may offer to support the engagement of a mediator external to the school (eg. Centacare or the Victorian Mediation Centre), or utilise its own resources such as the Marist and Catholic Education Office staff.

## **Possible outcomes**

If the issue or grievance is proved, the following are possible outcomes:

- An apology (written or verbal)
- Changes to work practices,
- An official warning
- Counselling
- Disciplinary action, including dismissal; or
- An undertaking that the behaviour will not be repeated
- Reversal of action or decision or substitution of a different action or decision
- Mediation
- Training

If the issue or grievance is unproved (not enough evidence), possible outcomes are:

- Relevant training for all staff; and/or
- Monitoring of behaviour of employees.

If the issue or grievance is proved not to have happened at all, the following are possible outcomes:

- An apology (written or verbal)
- Changes to work practices,
- An official warning
- Counselling
- Disciplinary action, including dismissal; or
- An undertaking that the behaviour will not be repeated
- Reversal of action or decision or substitution of a different action or decision
- Mediation
- Training

The Contact Person or Principal will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. She/He will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome from time to time.

## **Review**

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by the Principal who will make a final decision as to the outcome of the issue or grievance. *(This review step will only be possible if the Principal has not been acting as the Contact Person).*

The Principal or other designated person will look at the way the issue or grievance was handled and examine the outcome. If she/he believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate she/he will take no further action. If she/he thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, she/he will organise for the complaint to be promptly looked at again.

The appeal will be dealt with by someone other than the person who first handled the complaint.

If you feel that the Issues Resolution procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Principal (if the Principal is not involved in the Complaints Procedure) or to the Marist Schools Australia Regional Director on 03 9389 3100. Marist Schools Australia is the governing body of the school.