



## MANAGING CONFLICT - POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### INTRODUCTION

At St Francis Xavier we work with a program called MJR (Making Jesus Real in our Lives). The central premise of this program is the belief that each of us is the image of Jesus to all those people around us. Through this program and the school's religious education program, we teach values: care and compassion, respect, honesty, trustworthiness, understanding, tolerance and inclusion. These values encourage students to do their best; treat others fairly; take responsibility for their actions; follow principles of moral and ethical conduct and to stand up for the rights of others. These values apply to children, staff and parents.

Another key aspect of teaching and learning at St Francis Xavier emphasises, explores and practises ways to support, encourage and compliment others. The message is clear for each of us: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40. Therefore, if you like what you see, say so. Furthermore, build positive relationships by finding the time to say thanks.

We are a large school family that regularly faces challenges and despite our striving for the opposite, there will be times when we are in conflict. As Christians we have an obligation to work at resolving conflicts peacefully and with due respect for the dignity of all people involved. At St Francis Xavier, we encourage conflict resolution strategies which promote and support the dignity of parents, staff and children. We have an obligation to restore relationships broken or affected by conflict. Through open, honest and respectful communication, we fulfill our obligation to avoid initiating or escalating conflict situations.

## **PROCEDURE/PRINCIPLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION - PARENTS**

As co-educators of their children and vital members of the St Francis Xavier school community, parents have a right to be involved in their child's learning, to be informed about their child's progress and to voice their concerns when issues arise. Parents have a responsibility to adopt the spirit and actions of conflict minimization.

### **What do I do if I have a concern?**

1. Reflect on the issue or concern - Jotting these concerns down on a piece of paper may be helpful in clarifying the problem for you.
2. As the initial point of contact regarding an issue should always be the teacher concerned, contact the office to arrange a mutually convenient time to discuss the concerns or send a note/email asking for an appointment with that teacher.
3. At the meeting, identify and communicate your feelings about the issue in a non-threatening way.
4. Do not approach other children to discuss or investigate your concerns.
5. After an issue is raised with the teacher, wait for the teacher's verbal report on what has been done to address the issue.
6. If dissatisfied with the outcome, contact the school office and make an appointment with a Leadership Team member, indicating the concern to be discussed.
7. Check that the steps have been followed as outlined above - The Leadership Team will support this process and remind parents to follow the steps in order.
8. Participate in a meeting convened by the Leadership Team for those involved.
9. Should a parent have a concern of a serious nature about a teacher's professional behaviour e.g. physical or sexual abuse of a child, the parent should put the complaint in writing addressed to the Principal. This could happen before or after an appointment with the Principal or delegate.

## **PROCEDURE/PRINCIPLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION - STAFF**

The concept of accepting, understanding and celebrating differences, along with negotiation and respect underpin some of the units of work we teach. When it comes to real life community situations, we are regularly challenged to show genuine tolerance and open-mindedness. We are also challenged to be part of a forgiving and reconciling community which demonstrates maturity in the handling and resolution of conflict. As staff in a Catholic school there is an expectation that we will model exemplary behaviour.

### **What do I do if I have a concern?**

1. Deal with the problem as soon as possible.
2. Be clear about the issue. Writing it down can be helpful. Talk it out with a third party to clarify the issue(s) and to receive confirmation and feedback.
3. Separate the problem / issue from the person. Try to avoid the pitfall of the conversation shifting focus from issues to personal attack/abuse.
4. Identify and communicate your own feelings about the issue in a non-threatening way.
5. Listen sensitively to the other point of view and be open-minded.
6. Be prepared to negotiate and compromise when such is possible.
7. Be forgiving should there be admission of fault or neglect.
8. Be willing to be reconciled.
9. Seek mediation if the issue cannot be resolved amicably.
10. Personal conflicts and disagreements are matters to be worked through by the parties concerned and cannot be allowed to interfere with professionalism in the school environment.
11. Complaints regarding the professional integrity of another staff member need to be substantiated. The Principal will exercise professional discretion as to how matters are dealt with.

**PROCEDURE/PRINCIPLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION – CHILDREN**

As students of St Francis Xavier we are always learning about how to care for and love others as God loves each of us. It is our right to feel safe and our responsibility to be Welcoming, Encouraging, Sorry, Thankful people – WESTIES.

**What do I do if I have a concern?**

1. Try to deal with the problem yourself by talking and aiming to “Work It Out” to reach a Win-Win situation. Use “I Statements” to speak confidently to individuals involved. Avoid using Flight or Fight responses.
2. If problems cannot be resolved, get help from an adult such as a Teacher, School Officer, Peer Mediator, Buddy or your Parents.
3. Tell your parents about the problem and what you have tried or would like to try to do in order to solve it.
4. If you are being bullied or you see someone being bullied report it. See our school brochure “Bullying at SFX – No Way! for other ideas.