



EMMAUS

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CANBERRA

General Policy GEN2-0

Dispute Resolution

Updated

February 2017

Vision/Purpose

Emmaus exists to partner with parents, in providing a Christ-centred, Biblically-grounded and academically-rigorous education, which enables students to grow in wisdom and character, to the glory of God.

Values

1. Caring for Others

At Emmaus, we value, care for and respect each other because we are all made in the image of God. We partner with parents to care for and develop the whole person- body, soul and spirit. We foster a sense of belonging, celebrate one another's achievements and choose to be grateful for our school and each other. We are a community that learns in a fun, creative, encouraging and generous environment.

2. Striving for Mastery

At Emmaus, we encourage students to strive for excellence in all aspects of life: in study, work, and in relationships with God and with people. We believe God equips every person with gifts and abilities. We seek to instill in our students a strong desire to apply their utmost to what they do, an attribute that will long outlive their school years. Students are encouraged to master and apply academic and life skills in order to make the most of their opportunities in later life. Our goal is to equip students with the necessary skills and understanding to make wise and Godly choices, and to live resilient, fulfilled, and productive lives.

3. Equipping for Service

At Emmaus, our motivation for service is the love that Christ has shown us: his life of servant leadership is the example we seek to follow. Staff at Emmaus model integrity, accountability and the value of excellence in our work. We strive to equip students with both the desire and the skills to make a difference in the lives of others. We aim to grow students who are rich in Godly wisdom and noble character, and find their security in the love of Christ.

General Policy GEN 2-0

Dispute Resolution

Prepared by	Erik Hofsink (Principal)
Date prepared	June 2016
Date approved by the Board:	August 2016
Monitored by	Board and Principal
Review by	Erik Hofsink (Principal), Mr Dave McClennan (Board Director), Rachel McClure (Director of Studies), Eugene Roodt (Head of Secondary, Caroline Orr (Head of Primary) & Charlotte Kruger (Business Manager)
Date for review	September 2019
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Policy Pertains to:	All staff, students and parents
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Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	Sept 2016	Prepared by WH&S Committee
1.1	Mar 2017	New policy number, moved from HR to General, updated format by Wendy Morris
1.2	March 2017	Updates from legislative compliance review

Reference:

Legislation - Education Act (ACT) 2004 Section 94

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Rationale

For the resolution of grievances of employees and for the resolution of grievances against employees of the NCCEA arising from parents, students and the general community

The aim of this policy is to bring resolution and solutions to the various issues that arise in the course of operating a school while keeping relationships alive and well.

A concerted effort is to be made by all parties concerned to communicate with love and respect for the benefit of our school community. We are an example to our children. The healthy resolution of issues helps to refine our school and make it a better place for all.

NOTE: *The protocols in this policy are not applicable where there is an alleged serious breach of the [ACT Teacher Quality Institute Code-of-conduct](#) and e.g. an allegation concerning criminal conduct. In such cases, the government-mandated reporting protocols will be followed.*

See: <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Key Principles

The Christian school is a community in the Biblical sense. Covenant, not contract builds community in the Christian school. Trust and cooperation characterise student, staff and community relationships.

The principle of community - Christian love in action - means worshipping, sharing, encouraging and celebrating with Christian joy and hope.

As a community we cannot expect to be spared disputes and grievances. This is clearly acknowledged by our Lord who teaches us to first go to the fellow Christian who offends us before we take the matter any further (*see Matthew 18: 15 – 20*).

In any event we must always act in love - out of concern for the spiritual, physical, emotional and material wellbeing of all concerned while seeking just and Christ honouring outcomes.

The Grievance Response Process

The existence of a problem does not always mean that someone has a grievance. In a healthy school community there will be many instances where different parties will work together in seeking the best way forward.

A grievance exists when one person or party has a complaint about another person's decision, action, or failure to act.

The following is a four step process to be applied where one person has a complaint against a person who is employed by or acts on behalf of the School.

Once a grievance has been received (preferably via e-mail to the appropriate teacher/party) an acknowledgement of receipt will be issued – usually within 24 hours.

Step One Informal Discussions (Staff Member Concerned)

- In the first instance, informal and private attempts at resolution or reconciliation are sought between the parties concerned.
- In the situation where a parent has a concern relating to the actions of a teacher, it is understood that the parent will raise their concerns, in the first instance, with the teacher involved.

Step Two Formal Discussions (Head of School and/or Principal)

- In the event that an issue between a parent and teacher is not able to be resolved by Informal Discussions the matter will be referred to the respective Head of School and/or the Principal for Formal Discussions.
- Formal discussions will then be held between relevant parties and the appropriate Head of School (or in rare cases, the Principal) and a record kept. Others may be involved for support or as informal mediators.
- The Principal may inform the Board if needed.

Step Three Formal Mediation (Board)

- The Board shall investigate complaints about the administration or management of the school.
- In the event that the grievance is not able to be resolved by Formal Discussions, Formal Mediation will be entered into.
- Consistent with our goal of dealing with concerns speedily, a mediator (see 'Panel of Recommended Mediators'), agreed by each party, will be engaged promptly – if possible, within three working days of the cessation of the failure of Formal Discussions.
- A mediator will listen to sides, documenting points of agreement and disagreement and seeking reconciliation or a solution acceptable to both – and doing so in a prompt manner.
- The cost of mediation will be borne equally between parties.
- The Board is kept informed of progress.

Step Four External Arbitration (Court)

- Through the courts in civil matters, or the Industrial Relations Commission in staffing matters. The solution is no longer in the hands of the disputants

Panel of Recommended Mediators

If Formal Mediation (step three) is reached, both parties shall agree on a mediator from the following list:

- Conflict Resolution Service - www.crs.org.au
- Third Party Mediation - www.thirdpartymediation.com.au
- Conflict Services - www.conflictservices.com.au
- Peacewise (a Christian mediation service) - www.peacewise.org.au

Shared Understanding

To aid the process we require that relationships be treated with the utmost care and we must always respect and value the personhood of all involved.

Writing the issues down can help clarify them so that the parties involved can work on the issues side by side.

Many of the issues or concerns that arise in the school are the results of mistakes, poor communication or expectations not being met (and usually not communicated).

In pursuing an issue we ask that all parties read Colossians 3: 12 – 17 and agree to work with each other accordingly.

All parties must agree to work towards a solution that brings LIFE to each other and our school as a whole.

In working through the resolution process it is understood that:

- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained, as far as is possible, by all parties concerned. While all parties have a right to seek advice in confidence, no party will canvass - within the school community or beyond - to support or defend an allegation;
- The school, through its teachers, its Heads of School, the Principal and the Board will be open to the concerns of parents and pupils;
- Complaints will be received in a positive manner;
- Information that will assist in the resolution of a complaint will be clear and readily available;
- Concerns will be dealt with speedily and those who have raised them will be kept informed about progress;
- Students will not receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint;
- Clear confidential files and logs will be kept;
- Resolution of the matter will be sought;
- Staff training will cover the handling of complaints.