A GRIEVANCE PROCESS FOR PARENTS

When Parents Have a Concern

There are times when things can go wrong in any school. Teachers and staff members are human beings and suffer the same frustrations, inadequacies and weaknesses as other members of our species.

A parent or caregiver may be aware of what seems to be an act of significant insensitivity or even injustice; an inappropriate punishment or inadequate learning opportunities – and feel that he or she must do something about it. Here are some ideas that may be worth considering when about to approach school with a problem of some kind.

1. Keep an open mind. You may not have all the facts. The first task is to seek clarification.
2. Don’t begin your search for a solution by sending an angry letter to the teacher or principal. The normal human response to this is to be defensive.
3. Make an appointment, or at least think carefully about the best time to make contact. For example, it would be most inappropriate to interrupt a class or to catch the teacher while he or she is busy supervising students.
4. Approach the teacher or principal in a friendly manner. Adopt the attitude that there is a misunderstanding we need to clear up or a problem we should solve together.
5. Begin by expressing an overall appreciation of the work being done or, at least, an understanding of the difficulties.
6. Remember the challenge is for two people, with shared hopes for this particular student, to solve a problem in a way that benefits everyone.
7. Try to avoid ‘going over people’s head’ with a complaint. Once you have done this, it is very hard to re-establish a trusting relationship.
8. If, after a little time, it appears that everything has been sorted out, you might like to write a note of appreciation to the teacher or principal and offer continuing support. This strengthens the partnership between home and school.

Written by Barry Dwyer – Director of Catholic Education, Sydney

At St Joseph’s Payneham, if parents have a concern or query:

Step 1: Make an appointment to see your child’s Class Teacher(s).

Step 2: If necessary, make an appointment to see the Principal and Class Teacher together (if there is a need for further clarification and discussion).

Step 3: If not completely satisfied, present the issue or concern to the School Board (through Damian Farrell, our School Board Chairperson or any of our School Board members).

Step 4: Parents can then approach Human Resource Services in the Catholic Education South Australia (CESA), if the matter has not been resolved.