1. **Our Relationship Policy – The St Agnes Way**

1.1. St Agnes Catholic School Community is a faith learning community striving to live out the Gospel through education. We believe in the sacredness of each person, born in the image of God. Our aspiration is that deep respect, justice, compassion, reconciliation, celebration and hope will nurture our interactions as we shape and enrich our changing world through education.

1.2. In the light of our Vision Statement and our Relationship Policy we are committed to building life giving relationships and to interact with each other with dignity and respect. These are reflected in the St Agnes Way of being:

   Cooperative,
   Respectful of ourselves, others and the earth,
   Self aware,
   Safe
   and Active learners.

1.3. Therefore we promote a number of programs and processes both within the classrooms and the whole school to build positive relationships. These include the living out of the St Agnes Way, positive classroom management, award systems, Let Your Light Shine awards, social skills and relationship building strategies.

2. **Our Vision Statement**

   *In the light of the Gospel,*
   *“To Let Our Light Shine”*
   through
   *Life long teaching and learning*
   *Life enriching relationships and a*
   *Life giving spiritually*

3. **The Purpose and Object of this Policy**

3.1. Because we in the St Agnes School Community value healthy relationships, we believe that effective partnerships between parents, carers, students and staff are important in building a positive atmosphere in our School. The focus of this partnership is the well being of the children in our joint care.

3.2. There will be times when a member of our School Community has a genuine grievance. Such times are an opportunity for information gathering and sharing, reflection and evaluation, which lead to new knowledge and understanding. We need to talk with each other in trust and openness, so that issues can be worked through appropriately and confidentially.
3.3. Experience suggests that policies and formal procedures are sometimes needed to resolve issues that arise from time to time. At St Agnes School we encourage conflict resolution strategies which promote the dignity of all.

3.4. The procedures in this Resolution Policy apply to students, staff members, parents and carers, and other members of the School Community who raise a grievance requiring resolution.

4. Guiding Principles and Desired Outcomes

4.1. The School’s Vision Statement and Relationship Policy, and our commitment to building life giving relationships and to interact with each other with dignity and respect form the foundations of this Resolution Policy.

4.2. When resolving any grievances that arise, the following guiding principles will be followed:

(a) our children’s best interests remain the primary focus of any discussion or outcome;
(b) it is recognised that each of us may have different perceptions of the same reality;
(c) people’s feelings about what happened are important, and need to be communicated;
(d) we must each listen to one another’s accounts, to understand one another’s perspectives, in order to develop new knowledge and understanding about what happened;
(e) each party has a right to natural justice at all times;
(f) confidentiality must be maintained at all times;
(g) the right to support from a third party is to be respected and available.

4.3. Consistent with our Relationship Process, the desired outcomes of this Resolution Policy are:

(a) the promotion and maintenance of the dignity of those involved;
(b) everyone concerned having accountability for their actions;
(c) the restoration of “right” relationships amongst members of our School Community;
(d) that natural justice is achieved;
(e) the resolution of the issue(s), to the satisfaction of all involved.

5. General Procedures and Understandings

5.1. Parents and carers are encouraged to raise any concern firstly with the student’s class teacher or specialist teacher, by making an appointment to discuss the issue. Similarly, a teacher may raise an issue of concern with a parent or carer by letter, phone, email or by personal contact.

5.2. All parties must be calm and non-threatening when discussing the grievance with each other.
5.3. When an issue is raised with the class teacher or specialist teacher, it should be followed through by that teacher. The teacher will summarise the main points, and explain school policy and procedure on the issue, and work with the parties concerned to adopt an appropriate course of action.

5.4. If parents or carers are dissatisfied with the process, they are encouraged to contact the school office and make an appointment with the Principal or the Assistant to the Principal – Religious Education, in order to voice their concerns.

5.5. The Principal or the Assistant to the Principal – Religious Education will consult with the teacher concerned, and negotiate with all parties an appropriate course of action to move the matter forward. Some possible scenarios include:

(a) a meeting involving the teacher, the parent or carer, and the Principal/Assistant to the Principal;
(b) a meeting with any other person involved in the matter to negotiate a way forward; and
(c) a "mediated" meeting, where an outside person becomes involved to assist the parties to agree to an outcome.

5.6. If the matter is unable to be resolved at the school level, the Principal may request that the matter be referred to the Area Supervisor at Brisbane Catholic Education (“BCE”). A parent or carer may also request that the matter be referred to the Area Supervisor. If the complaint has not yet been considered by the Principal, then the Area Supervisor will refer the issue back to the Principal in accordance with the BCE Policy.

5.7. Should a parent or carer have a concern of a serious nature about a teacher’s professional behaviour, the first point of reference should be by the parent or carer making an appointment with the Principal or the Assistant to the Principal. Some possible scenarios include:

(a) serious matters will require further investigation and, if this is the case, a decision will be made by the Principal or Assistant to the Principal about how a concern will be handled;
(b) all parties must be aware that the person who is being complained about usually has the right to be made aware of the complaint;
(c) under no circumstances should a parent or carer touch or approach a child other than their own, in the course of discussing their concerns. It is never appropriate for parents or carers to clarify their issues with children of other parents, nor should parents or carers enter a classroom without the presence and permission of the teacher;
(d) criminal allegations will be handled as outlined by the Brisbane Catholic Education Procedures, including reference to the police.

6. Specific steps to be followed (as recommended by BCE)

Stage 1
The aggrieved person arranges to meet with the other party to discuss the grievance, in the presence of an independent facilitator such as a teacher, the Principal, or their nominee.

6.1. It is important that a sense of mutual respect, honesty and a willingness to search for an equitable resolution be uppermost in the minds of all who engaged in seeking solutions to a problem. The role of the independent facilitator is to assist the resolution process and ensure there is no imbalance of power between the parties.

6.2. The following guidelines should be used when meeting to discuss a problem or complaint:

(a) establish the facts of the matter and isolate the problem;
(b) focus on the facts and offer solutions to the problem;
(c) listen to concern, answer questions, and don’t jump to conclusions;
(d) remain calm and work to resolve the problem;
(e) decide on a solution; and
(f) agree on the implementation and on a review date.

6.3. It is important that communication is commenced as soon as possible so that the issue can be resolved at the earliest possible stage. If no resolution is achieved through Stage 1, then either of the parties involved may contact the Principal.

Stage 2
The School Principal is contacted

6.4. The Principal or the Principal’s nominee will determine whether or not Stage 1 has been engaged. If Stage 1 has not been engaged then the aggrieved person will be referred back to Stage 1 if appropriate and facilitation will be offered as appropriate. If Stage 1 has been engaged then the Principal will determine whether Stage 2 needs to be engaged.

6.5. To engage Stage 2, the Principal or the Principal’s nominee will investigate the grievance and facilitate a resolution using one or more of the following three formal procedures:

(a) the Student Protection Reporting Processes, Brisbane Catholic Education;
(b) Grievance and Dispute Procedures. Administrative Index 673 on Brisbane Catholic Education Intranet. (These procedures apply to grievances relating to working environment, pay, conditions of service etc).
(c) The Assessment of Teachers with Special Needs Procedures. Administrative Index 675 on Brisbane Catholic Education Intranet. (These procedures apply to grievances relating to working performance).

6.6. The following questions may be asked of the party claiming to have been aggrieved:
(a) What did you think/feel when you realised what had happened?
(b) What impact has this incident had on you and others?
(c) What has been the hardest thing for you?
(d) What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

6.7. The following questions may be asked of the party accused of causing the grievance:

(a) What happened?
(b) What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
(c) What have you thought about/felt since?
(d) Who has been affected by what you did?
(e) How have they been affected?
(f) What do you think you need to do to make things right?

6.8. The agreed outcome in relation to the final question leads to accountability for each party. If no resolution is achieved through Stage 2, then either of the parties involved may contact the School’s Area Supervisor by telephone.

Stage 3
The Area Supervisor is telephoned

6.9. The Area Supervisor, or their nominee, will facilitate a resolution using the following Complaints about Schools Procedures (Administrative Index 024.0, on the Brisbane Catholic Education Intranet).

6.10. If the caller/complainant has not yet approached the school, then they are asked to contact the Principal or the school.

6.11. If the complainant has already approached the Principal, then the Area Supervisor will:

(a) respond to the complainant;
(b) contact the Principal to inform them about the complaint;
(c) work with the Principal to develop a strategy for dealing with the issue;
(d) ensure the complainant is appropriately involved in, and informed of the outcome;
(e) create and file all documentation in relation to the complaint in an appropriate central file.

6.12. If no resolution is achieved through Stage 3, then either of the parties involved may contact the Executive Director in writing.

Stage 4
The Executive Director is contacted in writing

6.13. The Executive Director, or their nominee, will initiate a review of the course of action adopted to date in the management of the grievance.