Support for schools setting up a charter/handbook

“Parent groups need and like to have documents which provide some context for those new to the groups, and some ‘rules of engagement’ or statements of the current culture and practice in the group.

The kind of document we recommend is usually a Charter or set of guidelines for the group which situates the parent group in relation to other key groups in the school community and sets out details of when, who, where and what the group does.

The exercise of developing a Charter (or similar) is a good one for a group, I believe, as it really gets people thinking about who we are and why we are here.

Most schools embark on this task with the knowledge that they can be supported by the Federation at any time. Sometimes this can be face to face and at other times it may be email contact using the track changes function on Word documents.

The process can take months - sometimes up to a year but it is great because everyone works out where they all stand in relation to one another. Usually there is a group of writers and those people put the drafts out for consultation as they go along. The School board would obviously be involved in the consultation process - in fact I would recommend starting with a meeting between members of the Board and P&F together to have an initial conversation about how people perceive the roles of these two important groups in the school.”

Anne Rhodes

These suggested headings/sections can be adapted to suit your school’s context. These are:

- Brief introduction stating the purpose of the charter/handbook
- Who you are (P&F committee or broad parent community)
- Vision statement (You may include both the school’s vision statement as well as the vision statement for the P&F/parent group)
- Guiding principles/values statement (what are the principles that underpin what you do and why you do it (eg benefits of parent participation/involvement for the school, the children and the parents) *
- Goals and objectives of the group (eg build a sense of community, fundraising, pastoral care, parent education and support etc)
- Membership (who can be members)
- Committee structure (ie executive positions and general membership positions)
- Role of committee members including specific roles of each executive members and the broad role of other committee members)*
- Name and role of any sub-committees
- Meetings structure – when, where, agenda outline*
- AGM

Other ideas you may consider

- Having a Q&A section covering questions commonly asked by your parent community.
- Examples of ways parents can be involved in your school (other than on the P&F committee)
- A section on the responsibilities of parent volunteers (ie OH&S, Child Protection/mandatory notification, Police checks, confidentiality)
- Information on the Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities*
- A section outlining the group’s handover strategy (succession planning)

For those areas marked *, you will find resources on our website www.parentfederation.catholic.edu.au. Go to the link resources for schools.