

# Conflict Policy

## Herlufsholm School

*"A conflict is a disagreement that creates tensions between people."*  
(Center for Conflict Resolution, The Crime Prevention Council)

### **Why do we have a conflict policy?**

Where people come together, conflicts arise. The ability to handle conflicts is therefore crucial for the well-being of the students and thus for our further development of Herlufsholm as a school.

### **Conflict Escalation**

The seven steps of the conflict escalation schema schematize the development of a conflict: 1. Disagreement, 2. Personalization, 3. Problem growth, 4. Reduced conversation, 5. Enemy images, 6. Open hostility, and 7. Polarization. Although not all conflicts (fortunately) include all stages, there is a risk if action is not taken. It is therefore important that we as a school, as teachers, as mentors, or other staff identify and help manage conflicts before they escalate – but it is also important to recognize that disagreements between people cannot be avoided – that conflicts can also contain important developmental potential – and that they do not necessarily escalate and involve all stages.

### **When should we intervene?**

We intervene when we assess that the parties involved (usually the students) cannot resolve the disagreement themselves, and when we assess that the conflict has a negative impact on one of the parties' situation.

### **At what level should the conflict be addressed?**

In general, we should intervene at the "lowest possible level". A number of disagreements in the classroom, in the playground, or elsewhere where students are together are resolved on the spot or within a very short time with the help of the adult present.

If one assesses that the conflict cannot be resolved here and now, and that one cannot handle it oneself, one informs higher up in the system. Depending on one's own role, this may involve contacting, for example, the boarding teacher, study counselor, or team/mentor.

If one – as a boarding teacher, study counselor, team/mentor – assesses that one is not able to handle the conflict oneself, one contacts the management. The contact may either consist of pure information, so that the management knows what is happening, or one asks the management to intervene in the conflict. The management must always be informed if parents are involved in the conflict, and if one therefore experiences pressure.

### **How should we intervene?**

No matter how different conflicts may be, conflict management typically involves four key points:

- What has happened? What is the problem?
- What emotions has the conflict aroused?
- What would you/they like to happen to resolve the conflict?
- What can you/they actually do?

The method we initially use is mediation – which, however, presupposes that both parties want to resolve the conflict. In mediation, the following phases are normally operated:

Acceptance of rules of the game, such as: not interrupting, speaking politely, conveying one's own experience.