Communication Policy

Policy Number: COMMUNICATION 1.1

Status:

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Evaluation and Review: August 2015

Policy Contact Officer: Yvonne Rincheval

Related Documentation:

Complaints Handling Policy
RATIONALE
At St Mary’s Primary School we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which promotes open communication, respect, fairness and positive relationships. We believe that the relationship between home and school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. As a school community we are committed to working together to meet the various needs of our school community. Central to achieving this is trust and open, effective communication between all members of the school community. As a Catholic school the Gospel values form the basis for a proactive approach to communication and problem solving.

SCOPE
It is essential that we create and maintain a respectful and supportive learning environment that promotes student learning and enables clear communication between home/school and therefore leading to successful practice.

This Communication policy supports the school’s Mission and Vision Statements and Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Beliefs and Practices- The Essential Framework.

This policy directs teachers to practise communication which ensures:

- That effective communication between all school community members takes place
- That processes are in place which allow for open and honesty communication amongst all school community members
- That confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- That clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines are provided which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner
- That a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained.

PRINCIPLES
St Mary’s Primary School acknowledges the professionalism and integrity of our teaching staff and respect their right to work in an environment that is safe and supportive. The school is committed to promoting open and respectful communication between parents / caregivers and teachers. The following principles and procedures should be used to guide all communication.

1. Appropriate, constructive, and timely feedback is valued and encouraged.

2. Parents and caregivers should allow between 1 – 2 school days for a reply (School Hours 8.30am – 3.30pm) to any communication. Parents and caregivers should appreciate sometimes a delay in reply may be experienced, due to staff absences or illness.

3. It is acknowledged that teachers have time constraints during the school day and that issues or concerns are best dealt with when uninterrupted time and attention can be given to them.

4. Issues or concerns should not be discussed in front of students or other families. All parties should maintain a respectful demeanour during meetings.

5. All communication is open and respectful.
6. Issues of concern are best shared when they first arise.

7. Sensitive matters will not be dealt with via email.

8. First contact should always be made with the teacher or staff member concerned. Parents / caregivers should contact their child’s class teacher or the relevant specialist teacher if the matter involves your child or an issue of class operation.

9. Where a Teacher & Parent / Caregiver meeting is cancelled, it is the responsibility of the person cancelling to communicate with other parties and reschedule a mutually convenient time.

10. Where matters involve a third party, discussion will occur within privacy guidelines.

11. During meetings a record of the meeting will occur on a Parent Communication Form. Parents / caregivers may be asked to sign an IP form along with the relevant staff member.

12. Non-teaching staff should limit communication with parents. All enquiries regarding the school or a child should be directed to the teacher or Principal. If in doubt please check with the School Executive.

13. Please refer to the school’s Complaints Handling Policy when dealing with angry or emotional parents.

14. The school will communicate with parents / caregivers using the following methods:

   Prospectus, Parent Handbook and other enrolment information
   Parent Information Sessions
   Open Night
   Weekly newsletter, produced each Wednesday
   Assemblies
   Information and Permission Notes
   Reporting
   Parent / Caregiver and Teacher Interview
   Telephone, written or email* contact as needed
   Skoolbag App
   Moodle
   Learning Journeys

*Emails are to printed, saved electronically and filed in the orange card.
IMPLEMENTATION:

Procedure for contacting a classroom or specialist teacher:
When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child, the procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the issue. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

1. Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and ask office staff to arrange for the teacher to contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not usually available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time or whilst on duty.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time. Staff may use the school email.
3. Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Procedure for contacting other school personnel:
When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they considers affects the whole school, their child’s wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to:

- Contact the Principal or Assistant Principal using one of the three approaches outlined above.

When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with the Principal by contacting the school office, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and asking for a suitable meeting time.

In all cases if the matter is urgent and / or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine who is the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and the process to work towards a resolution, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

St Mary’s Primary School will deal with all complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. Matters will be investigated and dealt with in a timely manner. In working through any issues a resolution which treats all parties with dignity and respect will be sought. Issues and matters which have been raised will be kept in the strictest of confidence and not discussed with any other persons, excepting those directly involved.

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted or acted upon.

Resolving matters of concern are best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person. Emails and letters should be brief, alerting the person to the issue; they should not be used as a forum for in-depth discussion.

Documentation
All conversations with parents and teachers is to be documented on the Parent Communication Form (Appendix 1 and located at G:\common\teacher\admin\forms\Parent Teacher interview.doc). The completed form is to be given to the Principal and Assistant Principal. All persons involved will receive a copy of the minutes. Recommendations are actions, checked and signed off by Teacher, Principal and Assistant Principal. Completed documents are filed in the Incident and Communication Folder which is held in the Assistant Principal’s Office. Any correspondence received by the school will be kept in a secure file.
A master copy of this document will be held in G/Common/teacher/forms and the handbook.

**Ongoing Communication between school and home**

To ensure relationship building at St Mary’s Primary School, teachers will maintain a *Parent Contact Grid* (Appendix 2) which will be used throughout the year. This document will be held in the back of the Class Roll book.

A master copy of this document will be held in G/Common/teacher/forms and the handbook.

**Issues arising between students and families:**

No parent should approach the children of other families or their parents with a school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or Assistant Principal and not discussed with other persons.

The procedures of this policy will be shared at staff meetings each semester. At the end of each term the Parent Grid will be checked when the Rolls are handed over to the Assistant Principal.

**School Communication**

**Staff**

- *Moodle* homepage/calendar and also policies, procedures, resources
- Staff memo link to *Moodle*
- Staffroom notice board as required
- Staff meeting minutes (professional development and business briefings)
- School/term events calendar
- Job share - staff share information in communication books
- Casual Teachers’ Information Booklet
- Medical Alerts in Class Roll, handbook and contact book

**School Community**

- School newsletter (sent home weekly, on the Skoolbag App and on website)
- Parent/caregiver notes as necessary
- School website www.grafplism.catholic.edu.au
- Family Hand Book (on enrolment and on school website)
- School policies (office, website)
- Parent information meetings (Kindergarten Information, Class Curriculum, Parent Forums, Meetings and Workshops)
- Stage curriculum bulletins (per term)
- Student reports (half yearly and end of year)
- Parent Teacher interviews offered twice per year.

**Evaluation**

- The Communication Policy will be regularly reviewed.

**Reference:**
Information sharing

Communication Home

Written Form

- All teachers will send home a form letter to each student’s parents introducing yourself, highlighting your class, contact information, goals you have for the year, etc. The letter will be sent home in the first week of school.

- All letters or notes to parents should be proofread by at least two other staff members before the note is sent home.

- After the letters have been proofread by two staff members, they need to be turned into the principal for final approval.

- A copy needs to be made and put in that student’s file of each letter or note sent home to that student’s parents.

- All written communication should be professional, courteous, and have contact information to get back in touch with the teacher.

- Avoid the use of jargon.

- If the letter/note is hand written, make sure that it is legible.

Electronic Form

- A ‘hard’ copy of correspondence that is sent electronically should be also printed and held in the office. The document should be filed electronically on G: drive and saved and linked via SAS. Teachers should be given access if appropriate.

- Make sure that all text/graphics are large enough to be seen or read.

- Avoid the use of jargon.

- Be sure to run spell/grammar check on any electronic communications.

- Only use electronic communications with parents who have expressed that it is the way they prefer to be contacted.

Letters should include the date; reference if applicable; parents address and salutation; language should be clear and concise; use standard 12-point font.
ABSENTEE NOTICE
COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Date ___ / ___ / ____

Dear_____________________

Regular attendance at school is important for students to reach their potential. The school is required to record the reason for any absences as a way of ensuring that students are absent from school only when they are sick or have another good reason for missing school.

Your child, __________________________ was absent from school on __________________ and no explanation has been received. Please assist us by completing the attached form and return it to school with your child as soon as possible.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact the school on telephone 66422262 to discuss your child’s attendance; notify details via the Skoolbag App or email (smpgraf@lism.catholic.edu.au).

Yours sincerely

…………………………...………
Teacher

___________________________________________________________________________________________

Name of Child  _______________________________  Date of Absence  ________________________

REASON FOR ABSENCE: ………………………………….……………………………................................................................................

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Name of Parent/Carer  ___________________________Signed ________________________________.

Date _________________________

Office Use

Assistant Principal Notified     Yes / No
Reporter Pro updated     Yes / No