

Parent Communication Policy

Audience: School Community

Rationale

Our Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2016 states that:

The School wishes to maintain an environment where parents will feel fully informed and will be comfortable in contacting appropriate people at the School when the need arises.

In regard to our staff, one of the key elements of our School Mission Statement is to attract and retain high quality staff... “who will feel respected and valued”. Our staff are our most important resource. Attracting and retaining high quality staff can only happen when the School environment, which includes both their colleagues and the parent community, is supportive and approaches any matters of concern in a reasonable and respectful manner. As a school, we aim to “model the values of integrity, loyalty, respect, sustainability and compassion”. This is an aim that must apply to all members of our School community in order to succeed.

Our aim within this policy is to ensure that all means of parent communication with the School helps to create and maintain this environment.

Communication takes many forms including face-to-face contact, telephone contact, email and other electronic communication, letters and school diaries. Whatever the form, the manner of the communication should be respectful. Staff have a right to feel safe in carrying out their professional duties and should reasonably expect to be supported by School management should they find themselves threatened or intimidated, or treated with a lack of respect, in their dealings with the School community.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School’s Social Media Policy, which encompasses the expectations of all members of the School community in regard to responsible digital citizenship.

Procedure

Most appropriate means of Communication

In general, the most personal form of communication is preferable, but not always practical. All of the communication types listed above will sometimes need to be used, but when an issue is considered to be of a serious nature to a school family, phone and/or face-to-face contact is the preferable and most effective means of communication. Matters considered important, but of lesser urgency, such as homework completion, enquiries about the best person to speak to, concerns about required uniform, canteen availability and so forth are often more appropriately made either by email or diary notes. We understand that while personal contact is always preferable, it is not always possible.

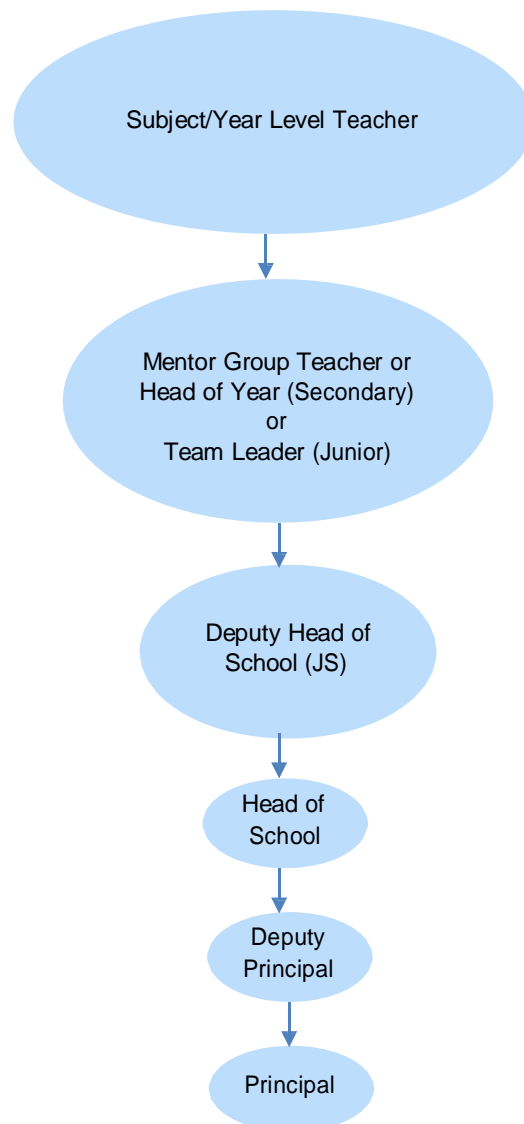
All communication with staff, no matter how emotional the issue, should always avoid personal attacks, emotional rather than factual assertions and unsubstantiated allegations

(based on rumour and hearsay). These are unhelpful in identifying and resolving issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

Who to tell and when to speak to someone else

If you have a concern with your child's performance in a particular subject or class or are unhappy with a teacher's response or approach to your child's learning, it is always preferable if you speak directly to the relevant teacher about your concerns (at a mutually agreeable time). Speaking directly to the person with whom the responsibility lies is the most efficient and effective means of resolving any concerns. It also extends the respect due to the staff member as a professional in our school community and ensures that simple misunderstandings or misinterpretations are not unnecessarily escalated to a crisis level, which is distressing for all involved.

The diagram below represents the preferred order of contact for most issues, except the very serious. If you have spoken to a classroom teacher about a concern and feel that the matter is unresolved, and you cannot speak to them again, you should feel free to contact the next person in the chain of responsibility.



Making appointments

It is preferable that parents of Junior or Secondary School students make appointments to meet with staff about any serious matter, or any matter that may be time consuming to discuss. Staff have obligations to supervise students between lessons and in breaks and have meetings they are expected to attend before and after school. Making appointments to see staff, rather than trying to catch them during the course of the day, allows them to give their full attention to the matter at hand and ensures the wellbeing of the students in their care.

Appointments with any member of staff can be made in person, by phone or email to Reception or Student Services at any campus of the School.

Social Context

Where you meet staff in a social context and you wish to talk about your children and/or the school (as often happens) this is fine as long as both parties to the conversation have positive things to say. If the conversation is about a specific concern with your child or some aspect of the Schools' policies or procedures, this is not the best time or place for such a conversation and an appropriate appointment should be made to speak to one of the people in the diagram above.

Privacy Issues

In all meetings and/or interviews with staff the privacy of other members of the School community must be maintained. Parents who make reference to other students, teachers or parents run the risk of abusing their privacy. Similarly, our staff are not to discuss other children, staff or parents.

Split Families

In the case of communicating with parents from split families, the School will endeavour to maintain the privacy of all parties. In regard to our actions and the information shared, the school will, and must, abide by any Court Orders (family, restraining, etc) or Parent Agreements of which we have been notified in writing. The School cannot and will not act on advice that is not in writing in the form of a court order or a parent agreement signed by both parents.

Difficult Interviews

Parents should expect staff to terminate interviews that become physically or verbally aggressive, or when a tone of mutual respect has been lost. An opportunity to reconvene the meeting will be offered when emotions are under control.

The school appreciates constructive feedback and welcomes the opportunity to discuss matters of concern with parents. When this is done respectfully, meaningful and satisfactory outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

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