Wales Street Primary School



COMMUNICATION POLICY

Policy No.1.10

Rationale

At Wales Street 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 an International Baccalaureate school, the Primary Years Program Learner Profile attributes and the IB attitudes form the basis for a proactive approach to communication and problem solving.

Aims

To ensure:

- That effective communication between all school community members takes place
- That processes are in place which allow for open and honest 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

1. Guidelines for Implementation:

Wales Street Primary School will use a range of strategies to communicate effectively with the school community. These are listed in the Appendix- *Mechanisms for Communication.*

- The main source of school community information is the fortnightly electronic newsletter and it is an important tool for communicating the happenings at the school.
- It is the responsibility of parents and carers to read the newsletter to stay abreast of the current happenings at the school.
- It is also the parents/carers responsibility to ensure that their current email is up to date so that communication is ongoing and available to use as required.

- The Mechanisms for Communication (see appendix) will be reviewed annually to reflect and update the current operational communication processes at work in the school.
- It is acknowledged that teachers have time constraints during the school day and issues or concerns are best dealt with when uninterrupted time and attention can be given to them.
- 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.

1.1 Curriculum and class information

- Teachers and year level teams will communicate curriculum information and homework expectations at the beginning of the year via a team newsletter, the Parent Information Exchange evening and the Unit of Inquiry leaflets.
- Further curriculum information will be sent out at the beginning of each of the remaining five units of inquiry throughout the year.
- An essential agreement will be set at the beginning of each year for each PLT to standardize the communication method across the team.
- Extra and incidental curriculum information may be sent via email throughout the year and is done so at the discretion of each learning team.

1.2 Guidelines for communication- appropriate use of Email

Wales Street Primary School considers email a vital communication tool and recognizes the importance of proper email content and speedy replies. Nevertheless the high volume of email traffic and the resultant impact on workload issues necessitates some guidelines for all users of the school's email system. Staff members are provided with DET email accounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication both within the organization and with the broader community.

- To facilitate a speedy response, try to limit emails to less than 200 words.
- Clearly and concisely explain your issue or question.
- Try to direct the enquiry to the most relevant person.
- Because teachers are not always online due to teaching and meeting responsibilities, their response times may take from 2 to 4 days within the working week.

1.3 Guidelines for communication- Phone

Wales Street Primary School encourages parents and staff to use the telephone as an important tool to communicate personal concerns and issues that cannot be discussed via email. It is also important that all conversations by all parties are respectful and courteous.

Telephone communication is also useful for queries, urgent messages that need to be relayed to students and teachers, and student absences..

Staff may not always be able to return telephone calls during the normal school day and may take up to 48 hours to return the call. Email may then be used to respond to the call and arrange a meeting time.

Staff private phone numbers are not to be given out to parents. Parents are advised that if they wish to contact staff by phone they are to call the school during working hours.

1.4 Guidelines for communication -Social media

Wales Street Primary School has a Facebook page and a Twitter account as a form of communicating social events and happenings at the school to the wider community., Information will be sent via the school app- Flexibuzz as a means of providing our community with instant notifications, reminders of daily events and links to the newsletter. This is an information service app which allows parents/carers to also notify the school of absences, change family details and make contact with the school.

To support the positive intent of these platforms, it is important to remember that:

- Social media is one form of communication from the school but not the main form and is not a forum for open discussion
- Social media such as Facebook and Twitter is used by the school to promote school happenings and positive stories about the school community.
- Social media is used to build a sense of community
- The moderator has the right to withdraw inappropriate comments and discussions.
- Social media could be used to supplement and highlight information from the newsletter

2. Contact Procedures

2.1 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:

- Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and ask a school administration officer 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 yard duty.
- Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organize a suitable meeting time.
- Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

2.2 Contacting other school personnel:

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider affects the whole school, their child's wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to:

- Contact the Principal, one of the Assistant Principals, either via email or telephone to make an appointment at a suitable time.
- Alternatively, contact the Welfare Officer if it is a matter concerning a child's wellbeing or welfare, or the School Nurse for Health related matters.

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 the Office Manager or an administration officer to arrange 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 the most appropriate person to resolve the issue, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

3. Procedure for Complaints or Issues

Wales Street Primary School will deal with all complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below

The procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*. Those matters include:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- criminal matters.

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.
- Formal meetings will be minuted and all persons involved will receive a copy of the minutes. Any correspondence received by the school will be kept in a secure file.

3.1 Issues arising between students and families:

No parent should approach the children of other families with a school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or Deputy Principal and not discussed with other persons. This will then become a school matter and will be dealt with by the Principal at his/her discretion.

Resources

Appendix A – Email Protocols for Teacher and Parent Communication (attached)

Appendix B- Mechanisms for Communication (attached)

DET documents – School communication Toolkit

APPENDIX A

Email Protocols for Teacher and Parent Communication

Protocols for Parent email use:

Email may be a fast and convenient way for you to send messages but this may not be the case for many of our teachers. Teachers read emails at different times of the day and so an immediate reply is not possible. In fact you may not receive an email reply at all, since the staff member will determine how best to contact you: by email, phone call or to schedule a personal conference.

To use email effectively in a school setting, we have developed the following guidelines for parents/carers:

Email is appropriate for:

- To report an absence or forthcoming appointment for a child/children
- Brief enquiries about general school matters
- School related issues only
- To pass on relevant information to the appropriate personnel e.g. minor issue or alert to the school nurse
- As a communication tool between teachers and parents.
- When agreed between the teacher and the parent (following a face to face contact) email may be used as a form of regular communication about a student's day at school in place of a communication book.

Email is not ideal for:

- Your child's academic progress. This is best addressed through a telephone conversation or a personal conference with your child's teacher.
- Use as a tool for in depth discussion but can be used to raise a topic to be discussed at a face to face meeting
- Sending non-vital messages by this medium. For example, do not use email to inform the school that your child is to meet you somewhere when the day ends. Instead use the telephone to contact the office to be sure that the message is received and clearly understood.
- Threatening or offensive language

When sending email:

- Identify yourself in the subject line of your email and if appropriate, the name of your child.
- It should only be addressed to the intended recipient (To: as the primary recipient)
- The use of 'Cc' (Carbon copy) is to be used if you would like another recipient to be aware of your email as a secondary recipient but not as an invitation to respond
- The use of 'Bcc' (Blind carbon copy) is to be used for tertiary recipients as a privacy measure or if sending to recipients who do not know each other, such as in a mailing list so that email addresses are hidden.
- Ensure emails are respectfully written as meaning can be misinterpreted.
- Acknowledgement of emails received by staff should be given within 2 working days. Further discussion of the topic raised could take up to 5 working days.

Privacy:

- Please remember that email is not necessarily confidential and can be subject to FOI (Freedom of Information) regulations. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or personal contact.
- Due to privacy, DL (Distribution Lists) will not be available to parents and the general community
- Events committee may use the email DL lists to contact parents for support and promotion for scheduled events only.

Protocols for Staff email use:

The school maintains email accounts for teachers to facilitate parent/teacher communication and internal as well as system wide staff communication. The school reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to the school's educational mission.

- 1.3 Staff using email to correspond with parents must adhere to the following:
 - Staff must use a school provided email account for all staff/parent communications
 - Email must never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues should be dealt with face to face or by telephone.
 - Email parents only when they have agreed that email is an appropriate form of communication
 - The use of Cc and Bcc may be used by all parties to notify others of the conversation only if relevant.

1.4 When sending an email:

- Emails should be short and directional in nature and only include facts.
- Care should be given when using student names. Refer to students by first name, initials or 'your son/daughter' depending on the content. Do not discuss non-related students or issues to parents
- Email messages to parents should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- If you wish to make a complaint, it is recommended that you do not write a lengthy email, in the first instance. You may use email to contact a person from the leadership team to discuss the matter with you in person.
- The use of Cc and Bcc may be used by all parties to include others in the conversation only if relevant

1.5 Privacy

- All emails that reside on the DET servers may not be confidential. Email messages may be requested by the public under FOI (Freedom of Information) laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- When sending an email to all parents that have given permission at one time, the Bcc Blind Carbon Copy) facility must be used to list addresses to ensure that privacy is maintained.

Version	Edited by/Comments	Next review
1	Ratified by School Council	2015
2	Reviewed and ratified by School Council 2018	2021



APPENDIX B.

MECHANISMS FOR COMMUNICATION

STAFF TO STAFF COMMUNICATION

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MECHANISM	PURPOSE	ACTION	FREQUENCY
School Strategic Plan	 To review current school practice and performance. Set goals for strategic planning 	School improvement Process- review current goals on an annual basis to set direction of AIP and develop future goals every 4 years	 4 year review cycle Parent, staff and student survey annually
Annual Implementation Plan	To articulate the actions to be taken to achieve one year targets that will work towards 4 year priorities	 Leadership and staff formulate plan at the beginning of each year to implement the goals of the strategic plan AIP reviewed at the end of each year 	Annually developed
USB drive for all new staff	To introduce new staff to all the policies and procedures in a digital form as part of the induction process	New staff to access in their own time	• Once
Performance and Development reviews	 To implement whole school goals, Annual review to identify professional learning Career path planning 	 Leadership team supports staff through formal and informal meetings to plan/support and evaluate the pathways process. Staff prepare documentation prior to formal meeting times Principal advises the Department when the processes are completed 	 Ongoing throughout the year Formal meetings at the Planning Stage, Mid Cycle Review End of cycle
Leadership meetings	To ensure whole school cohesion, strategic planning and management	Principal, Assistant Principals and Leading teachers raise issues, share information and plan at whole school level	• Weekly

Staff meetings	To provide information, raise issues and discuss school management activities and	Whole staff meetings held twice a term	Twice a term
Professional development meetings	To provide professional development in key learning areas as identified in the AIP	Staff to build capacity in teacher professional knowledge and skills in Key areas of AIP	8 weekly meetings per term
Professional Learning Team meetings PLT – How	 To share information, raise issues, plan and discuss team and class management, To plan collaboratively in teams to improve student outcomes 	 Prep, ,Year 1/2, Year 3/4 and Year 5/6 PLTs meet All staff are members of a collaborative teaching team 	 One Weekly in class time One Weekly after school meeting
Communication whiteboards	To provide daily information, timetable changes and staff absences	Open to all staff for input and notices.	Ongoing
Staff Weekly email	To provide an overview of weekly absences, school events, excursions and professional development	Assistant Principal to send email at the start of the working week to all staff	WeeklyOngoing
Staff Emails	To effectively communicate between staff, information and day to day changes	 Staff to use Distribution List for information only pertaining to whole staff issues. Teams to send minutes and information pertaining to relevant staff when required. 	• Ongoing
School calendar- digital	To provide an overview of school events, excursions and professional development	Upcoming events are entered on the calendar by all staff	Ongoing and updated throughout the year

Status: Ratified by School Council 2018

SCHOOL TO COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

MECHANISM	PURPOSE	ACTION	FREQUENCY
Newsletter	To communicate key events, policies, ideas and achievements to the school community	Admin staff to coordinate items	 Newsletter distributed every second Thursday in digital form and linked to the website.
School Council and sub committees	To represent the school community in governance of the school. including the development of the strategic plan and policies, raising funds, ensuring the school meet the DEECD compliance regulations.	 Elections held annually. Position on school council held for two years Meeting times and articles are published in the school newsletter School council and sub committees reformed each year 	Meetings held at least twice a term
Compass	Online communication portal for student reports, emailing parents and staff Notifications. Absences	 Staff to manage the portal Student reports accessed from this site Login by parents/carers only Absences can be logged through Compass by parents 	Daily use
PLT Information and PYP newsletters	 To inform parents of the Program of Inquiry and curriculum development To inform parents about the curriculum overview for each term 	PLT teams to send home information pamphlet to inform parents about the PYP and to share with parents their teaching planner	Once a term
Student contact details	To ensure all student information, health issues and contact details are up to date	Printout of student information sent home with each student for review by parents/carers to ensure contact details are accurate	Early term 1

School App- Flexibuzz and Compass	To communicate key events and reminders to the school community	 Admin staff and class teachers to coordinate items for the app push notifications published regularly 	ongoing updates
School website	To provide information about the school and its programs	The website is updated weekly and includes the newsletter	Ongoing updates
Social media	To share and celebrate the events and achievements that occur in school daily life. E.g Facebook and Twitter	 To post images and news from school events to share with the local community. As a means of giving information about upcoming events. 	Ongoing
Assemblies	To recognise and share achievements and information with parents and students	, ,	Weekly
Parent information forums	To inform and consult with parents about school initiatives and programs, e.g. School Improvement, PYP information sessions	Hosted by teachers, leadership personnel or principal as required to provide opportunities for consultation with parents	Schedule as required
Community events	To foster a sense of school community through shared experiences and activities	Notes to advise as required	

STUDENT VOICE

MECHANISM	PURPOSE	ACTION	FREQUENCY
Informal meetings with student and teacher	 To share relevant information to support students Feedback mechanism for students 	Students or teacher initiates meetings on informal needs basis and discusses learning goals	As required
Class meetings	To promote positive social development and raise issues for class discussion	Teachers schedule class meetings into the weekly program, utilising the opportunity for social skill development	• Weekly
Junior School Council	To allow students to make positive contributions to the school environment and wider community	Staff member coordinates representatives elected from the grade 56 classes.	 Annual elections and regular meetings
Assemblies	To recognise and share achievements and information with parents and students	 Assembly conducted weekly by JSC and school captains. Opportunity for sharing of skills and achievements with students, teachers and parents 	• Weekly
Prep happy Hour	To recognise and share achievements of prep students share the learning with parents and students	Parents advised of special assemblies	Once a term

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

MECHANISM	PURPOSE	ACTION	FREQUENCY
School App- Flexibuzz	To communicate key events, happenings and reminders to the parents and school community	 Admin staff and class teachers to coordinate items for the app push notifications published regularly 	ongoing updates
Informal meetings with parents/carers and teacher	To share relevant information to support individual students	Parent/carer or teacher initiates meeting	As required

Parent information night- (PIE) night	 To enable parents to share information about their child's strengths and areas of concern. To provide any information that may assist the class teacher to articulate goals that they may have for their child 	 Teachers to keep information with student records. 2 way meeting between parent and teacher. Pro forma for recording discussion and concerns 	Mid term 1- parent teacher evening
Student led conferences	Students present their learning to the parent and the teacher	Parents use booking system to organise a time to be involved in 3 way student led conference	End of term 2
NAPLAN National Assessment Program Literacy & Numeracy	To assess student performance in Language Conventions, Writing, Reading and Numeracy against national benchmarks	 One week of testing in term 2 May Reports are issued to parents at the end of term 3 	Week4 Term 2
Semester written reports	To provide a comprehensive report about students' progress, achievements, social development and work habits	 Teachers complete assessment and moderation and prepare written reports Reports are submitted to the leadership team for review Data is collected electronically and stored for data analysis Reports issued to parents before SLC 	Last week of term 2
Prep Information Night	To provide parents with an overview of the Literacy and Numeracy skills and content that are introduced in the prep year and how they support their child	An information night is conducted for parents by teacher in the prep team.	Term 2
Students portfolios	 To provide students, teachers and parents with an opportunity to reflect upon student learning To support written reports and as a body of evidence to 	 Students and teachers compile portfolios Used during the Student Led Conference as the vehicle for demonstrating their learning 	Sent home twice a year

Status: Ratified by School Council 2018

Special needs team	demonstrate student achievement To foster optimal educational outcomes for students with special needs and learning difficulties-consultation with parents, departmental representatives and outside agencies	 Notes to advise as required. Records kept in individual student files (confidential) to follow the student as they pass through the school Teachers use At Risk process to identify and track student intervention strategies 	 Meetings with relevant stakeholders held as required Ongoing monitoring throughout the year
COMPASS	 To provide parents with access to attendance records and report absences to the school As a portal for parents to book into school events such as interviews, SLC and school based events To provide a comprehensive report about students' progress, achievements, social development and work habits (to be implemented in 2015) 	 Teachers complete assessment and moderation and prepare written reports Teachers enter data on learning tasks for parents to access via the parent portal (coming soon) Teachers use Compass for electronic roll marking 2 sessions per day. 	 Every day- roll marking As required for events Reporting as semester reports (coming soon) twice a year