

Purpose and Overview

Social harmony, health and a positive, creative living environment are the guiding motives for our school policies and rules. A healthy social life is dependent on the cultivation of social responsibility based on individual insight and sound observation and listening skills. The health of our school community is reflected in our commitment to clear, open communication and transparency of educational and organisational structures. High levels of professional confidentiality are maintained to ensure confidence in school communications. We recognise that the manner of involvement, commitment and communication by parents and staff, have an exemplary and motivating influence on the students.

The purpose of the Communications Policy is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the School and to assist students, staff and parents to work successfully together. The guidelines complement the regular, informal communications that already take place between members of the school community.

Policy

Respectful communication between all students, staff members, parents and other members of the school community is required at all times.

1. THE ASHSS COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

The *ASHSS Communication Framework* provides an overview of the communication procedures in relation to the following areas:

- Critical incidents
- Student wellbeing
- Behaviour management and discipline
- Education
- Management
- Administration
- Business and Finance

2. COMMUNICATION ON ISSUES OF EDUCATION

a. Communication between the Teachers and Students

- In the classroom and throughout all school activities, there is an expectation that the communication from the teacher to the student is clear, loving and with definite and well understood boundaries. In addition, teachers are expected to be sensitive to and able to act upon individual and group needs, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Students, likewise, are expected to behave respectfully and to communicate clearly to all adults at the School. If and when an infringement occurs, students are guided to understand the full consequences of their actions and given the opportunity to redress any harm done.
- The *Codes of Conduct* and *Behavior Management and Discipline Policy* provide additional guidance.

b. Communication between the Teachers and Parents

i. Class Meetings

- Teachers will hold a class meeting one evening each term.
- Class meetings have a clear agenda circulated in advance. Topics may include a report on curriculum, discussion on developmental stages of children, class dynamics, excursions, camps, festivals and other events in the life of the class.
- The class meeting should also provide an opportunity for parents to share experiences and support for their children through their class life together.

ii. Class Bulletins

- Class Teachers may also provide regular class news bulletins throughout the term, to provide information on class activities.

iii. Parent-teacher Interviews

- Parent-teacher interviews are conducted twice per year to exchange information about the progress and development of each student and are always undertaken with the interests of the child as the focus.
- These interviews are an essential part of the school assessment and reporting procedures and are conducted professionally with documented feedback on each student's development in the class.

iv. Written notices

- Written notification of excursions, camps and other special events is provided well in advance so parent/s are properly informed and have time to make necessary arrangements and prepare their children.

c. Communicating a concern with a class teacher

If parents have a concern with their child and/or their **child's education** in any way, the first step is to speak directly with their Class Teacher.

- Individual meetings are to be at mutually convenient times. If a specific issue is to be discussed, lead time needs to be provided so that there is an opportunity for both the teacher and the parent/s to give prior thought to the matter.
- Parents may request a meeting with their teacher either in person, via a note, or by ringing the office and requesting a message be passed on to the teacher.
- At no times will aggressive or disrespectful language be acceptable in any communication between a parent and teacher. An interview may be terminated and re-scheduled for another time if required.
- Parents are to communicate clearly about the nature of the matter and its urgency. This may often be best clarified in writing prior to any meeting between the teacher and parent. This enables the teacher to prioritise meetings and be fully prepared with all the necessary information for the meeting.
- If a parent is **dissatisfied** with a previous communication, the process is to write their concerns to the Principal or their nominee, stating the issue and requesting that a **facilitated meeting** be established.

d. A facilitated meeting

- The Principal will arrange and facilitate a meeting with the parent/s, teacher concerned and usually a member of the College of Teachers (who has no conflict of interest with the matter) within two weeks of the letter being received.
- The parent may request to have a support person present at this meeting.
- The purpose of this facilitated meeting will be to ensure:
 - That the concerns raised by the parent are accurately conveyed to the teacher and the teacher fully understands the concerns.
 - That the teacher has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and to ensure that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the parent.
 - That a College member is assigned to support a clearly articulated action plan for taking any next steps.
- All meetings will be fully documented with records kept in the school office.
- If this initial **facilitated meeting** does not result in a satisfactory outcome the parent/s or teacher are asked to address their concerns in a letter to the Principal to ensure that the matter has followed correct process to date, and the Principal will then determine the most effective process to resolve the perceived concerns. This may require **mediation** where both parties agree to work towards a solution to the perceived problem. Alternatively the circumstance may require handling as a grievance; see the *Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure*.

e. Written Correspondence including letters, notices, class bulletins and emails

- All school correspondence written by staff members must be highly professional in nature.
- Mail or letters addressed to particular teachers/staff members are to be directed unopened to the appropriate teacher.
- In order to ensure confidentiality for the children, parents and the teacher involved, please mark the envelope 'confidential'.
- The confidentiality of emails from parents that are forwarded to individual staff members from the general school email address cannot be assured as in order to be forwarded emails are opened.
- Email communication about school matters should be addressed to individual staff members or to the general school email using school email addresses, and sent by school staff using school email addresses.

f. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Confidentiality is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications.
- Parent/s should not have their children present when they are discussing concerns with the Class Teacher, unless it is deemed necessary by the teacher to have the student present.
- Parent/s should not forward communications addressed to them from the school to other parents, staff members or members of the school community.

3. COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, FINANCES AND ADMINISTRATION

- The School welcomes feedback and information on any aspect of school operations as a part of a philosophy of overall accountability and responsiveness and transparency.
- Feedback on matters of governance, management or administration should be provided **in writing** to the Principal and/or Business Manager (or their respective nominee), who will then ensure that it is addressed in the appropriate forum.
- The Principal and/or Business Manager will always acknowledge communications in writing and confirm the course of action that has been followed.

a. Communicating with the Board of Directors

- Parents or staff members may communicate in writing directly to the Board of Directors through correspondence to the Chairperson.
- The Secretary of the Board will:
 - i. ensure that the Chair of the Board receives the correspondence,
 - ii. acknowledge receipt of correspondence and
 - iii. ensure that correspondence is tabled at the next available meeting of the Board of Directors.

b. Communicating with Management on Management/Administration matters

- Parents wishing to give feedback about aspects of school management should contact the Principal or Business Manager as follows.
- The first step is to speak directly or to write a note to the:
 - *Principal* with general concerns or clarification about any aspect of the school management, enrolment or school daily administration.
 - *Business Manager* with concerns or clarification with fees or fee statements or school finances, the safety or aesthetic of the school grounds and facilities
- Parents may request a meeting with the relevant manager, which would then be conducted in a professional manner. In planning this meeting parents should give advance notice about *what* it is you wish to discuss so that adequate preparation can be made.
- A record must be kept of any such meeting with a parent e.g. a diary note indicating the purpose of and outcome of the meeting.
- Confidentiality is always an absolute priority in communications related to school fees or school finances. These meetings and conversations must be carried out in a suitable meeting space.

- If the parent/s or staff member are unsatisfied with the outcomes of this initial meeting/communication, parents should write their concerns to the Principal, stating the issue and requesting that a **facilitated meeting** be established at which at least one other management team member (or if necessary the Chairperson of the Board) will be present.
- The purpose of this **facilitated meeting** will be to ensure:
 - That the concerns or feedback raised by the parent are accurately conveyed to the School.
 - That the management team member fully understands them and that they have been witnessed by another Manager or the Chair of the Board.
 - That the management team member has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the parent.
 - That the Principal or Chair of the Board takes responsibility to support a clearly articulated action plan for taking any next steps.
 - All meetings will be fully documented with records kept in the Principal's office.
 - Should this process be unsuccessful the school will offer a mediated meeting according to the *Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedures*.

4. COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING DAILY OPERATIONS - SCHOOL OFFICE /RECEPTION

The office staff have a huge job supporting the staff and children of the school every day and it is important that they are not regularly repeating information which is already made available to the school community in the usual communication channels.

- Office staff maintain up-to-date class lists, contact details and school data bases.
- Parents **MUST** keep the school informed of any change to their contact details.
- Parents have a responsibility to read communications from the school including: class notes, school newsletter, website messages, school policies.
- It is **essential** for parents to read the **school newsletter** regularly as this is the main channel for the school to communicate information and dates for up and coming school or class events.
- All information regarding the daily operations of the school can be obtained from the school office, which is open from 8.30am to 3.30pm.
- Parents can communicate with office staff via the phone, email, SMS or with a note, which their children can drop in to the office. Office staff must record all verbal messages in writing.
- Messages for office staff to convey to students should only be of an URGENT nature.
- Messages for students and teachers must be left before 2:00pm at which time they will be conveyed.
- Emails and SMS messages will be sent by the school office to parents to notify them of important or urgent matters.
- General information about the School also be found on the **school website**.

5. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS

Respectful communication between all staff members is required at all times.

a. Principal

- The Principal or their nominee ensures communication processes are followed respectfully, according to this policy and engages appropriate mediation if required, where a dispute is not resolved by usual communication processes.
- The Principal ensures that mandated groups and staff are managing their specific area of responsibility effectively through direct communication and regular formal meetings (with agendas and minutes) and/or written reports.
- Communications with the Principal ensure school operations and activities are well coordinated, effective, efficient, safe and aligned with whole school plans and compliance obligations.
- All Human Resource Management matters, including matters related to employment conditions, are directed to the Principal.
- Where a staff member acts contrary to this or any school policy, procedure or Code of Conduct, the Principal will communicate the concern in writing to the staff member and keep records of all meetings

APPROVED BY

EFFECTIVE DATE

REVIEW DATE

School Board

March 2021

March 2022

related to the matter.

- School Community members should make an appointment if they wish to discuss a concern with the Principal.
- The Principal will ensure that all matters relating to a particular child and/or class are communicated directly with the Class Teacher as appropriate.

b. Information flow between Class Teachers and all Staff members

i. *Staff Noticeboard, School Calendars, Staff Emails and School Newsletter*

- All staff are responsible for ensuring the staff noticeboard and school calendars (written and online e.g. Google Calendars) are kept up to date with school events
- Each staff member is responsible for keeping her or himself informed of and up-to-date with school matters by regularly checking (at least twice a day) the staff noticeboard, school calendars (written and digital) and emails
- All staff are required to contribute to and read the School Newsletter that the school community stay informed of school matters.

ii. *Meetings*

- The Principal and Class Teachers are to attend *College Meetings* and *Faculty Meetings* to ensure regular and up-to-date information/communication regarding school events, to have input into decision-making about educational programs and other school matters, to exchange student news and to participate in pedagogical and professional learning activities.
- Specialist Teachers are invited to attend *Faculty Meetings* each week to ensure class and specialist curriculum are complementary and integrated.
- Class Teachers and Specialist Teachers are required to communicate any relevant information regarding particular classes, children or school activities.
- Specialist staff are requested to take any issues they have with a student, a class, or parent:
 - i. Directly to the Class Teacher in the first instance; then
 - ii. To the Principal should this not resolve the issue.

c. General Procedures in Staff Communications

- To ensure information is passed clearly between all staff members. Wherever possible information or requests for tasks should be in writing and dated to ensure that responses can be followed up.
- Teachers need always to be respectful of office staff workload. Requests for tasks should be made via an appointment to discuss the task and or in writing with an indication of the urgency of the task. Potentially big jobs must be requested very early.
- Mail/letters addressed to particular teachers / staff members is directed unopened to the appropriate teacher.
- **Confidentiality** is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately. Where incoming Email correspondence is forwarded to relevant staff members, the confidentiality of the content of the email cannot be assured as emails are opened to be forwarded.
- All staff are responsible to uphold Privacy and Confidentiality.

d. Should a communication problem arise between staff members

- The first step should always be to “go direct” to the person. That is to communicate the issue directly to the person/s concerned in a space and at a time, which allows for respectful exploration of the concern.
- If a staff member is dissatisfied with a previous communication, the next step in the process is to clearly outline the concern in writing to the Principal requesting that a facilitated meeting be established. The staff members in conflict and the Principal will be present at this meeting, the purpose of which will be to ensure:
 - That the concerns raised are accurately conveyed.
 - That each of the staff in conflict and the Principal fully understand the concerns.
 - That the teacher or staff member has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the other.

- That the Principal manages a clearly articulated action plan for taking any future steps.
- All such meetings will be fully documented with records kept in the Principal's office.
- If an issue is not resolved at this stage please refer to the *Complaints and Grievance Resolution Procedure*.

Related Policies, Procedure, Forms, Guidelines etc.

- ASHSS Code of Conduct for Staff
- ASHSS Code of Conduct for Students
- ASHSS Policy and Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians and School Community
- ASHSS Privacy Policy
- ASHSS Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure

Related Acts and Regulations

- Education Act 2013
- Ombudsman Act 1974

Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the SHASE Board on _____.

Signed: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Chairperson