St Joseph's Primary School Kangaroo Point

Communication Policy

Approved: November 2018

Quality Relationships are at the core of our Mercy Values and the importance of good communication cannot be underestimated. We have over 320 students, 50 staff and around 250 families - all up we have a community approaching 620 people. Good communication between these people is essential to provide the best possible education for our students. This communication is not just about the school communicating but requires parents, students and staff to feel able to communicate their aspirations, concerns and ideas. To minimise the risk of miscommunication there are some basic principles that we ask parents, staff and students to follow.

One of the best ways that parents can help their children succeed in school is to be involved with their education inclusive of reading the school newsletter and any information sent home. This starts with good communication between you and your child's teacher. We acknowledge the need for stakeholders to communicate in a courteous and respectful manner at appropriate times with timely feedback.

Miscommunication is usually the number one cause of conflict. Check before you react. Remember that the vast majority of people are good people and want the best for your child and other people. Often children see things from their world and often don't understand what leads up to a situation and so can at times only communicate part of the story. Our Mercy Values remind us all to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Go to the staff member closest to the situation. Speak first to the most appropriate person, don't go "over someone's head" until you have spoken to them. Please do not discuss issues or people "in the public arena". We are about building community not destroying people and their reputations.

When to communicate is always a hard balance. At the beginning of the year when everything is new, sometimes it may be best to wait, but generally speaking, if it is worrying you, don't wait; talk to the staff member closest to the situation. We do not want to solve all of our children's problems, but a quiet word to the teacher can alert them to an issue before it gets too big.

Don't wait for a parent-teacher interview. If you want to know how your child is going, then make an appointment to see the teacher.

The bigger the issue the more time it takes to resolve. No matter who you see, make an appointment so the person is there and they can put aside enough time to deal with it thoroughly.

Don't try to sort out a problem between your child and another at school by approaching a child or his/her parent – speak to your class teacher. No parent has the right to approach a child from another family about a school incident.

Don't speak on behalf of others – Delegations and speaking for others often ends up with the "others" not backing you up when the crunch comes. If you have a concern, please raise it with the most appropriate person. Supporting the school does not always mean agreeing with it but using the communication channels and processes that respect all members of the community, will support us in community building and in what we are hoping to achieve. Gossip is usually wrong and never resolves issues.

Electronic Communication
Please find the school's position with regards to electronic communication between parents and staff.

Increasingly parents and teachers are using e-mails to communicate with each other. Email is often a convenient and helpful way to communicate with your child's teacher, but parents and teachers should follow the same guidelines as for any professional communication.

Electronic Communication Initiated by Parents
All emails for staff should be sent to the relevant staff member's school email address. Emails should only be sent for professional purposes.
School staff receive many emails in the course of a day; generally staff will not have time to answer these during school hours due to their work responsibilities. School staff are required to check their emails once daily on each day that they work. Any emails of an urgent manner should be sent to the school email pkangaroopt@bne.catholic.edu.au so that relevant information can be passed on or addressed as required.

School staff will endeavour to contact you in a 48-hour turnaround period.

School staff will not respond to email communication between the hours of 4pm and 8am on school days. Emails received over the weekend or school holidays will be responded to within 48 hours of the next work day.

A teacher may request a meeting if the issue is too complex to resolve by e-mail.

Some tips for communication with school staff
- A poorly worded or aggressive email can lead to a breakdown in communication and neither parent nor the teacher wants this. Following email etiquette can enhance communication.
- A poorly worded or aggressive email to a staff member impacts on their well-being and their ability to work effectively to support your child. Emails that are aggressive in nature will be forwarded to the Leadership team for discernment and action taken.
- Be positive, courteous and diplomatic. You can't take back an email message and email can be easily forwarded. Be calm and choose your words carefully. Don't write and send an email when you are angry.
- Open up your communication with the teacher with phrases such as "Can we talk about...?" or "I need to check ...". Avoid comments such as "You should have..." or "You must be mistaken." You may not have all the details you need to support those statements.

- Make respectful requests, such as "Please could you send home the information about..." Avoid giving orders to the teacher by saying, "You have to..." or "You need to...". Be brief and stick to the point. Use kind words rather than fighting phrases. For example, "Please, could you..." and "Thank you for all you did," go a long way in building a good relationship.
- Do not forward someone else's email, including a teacher's, unless you have their permission.
- Watch out for viruses and spam - don't spread these around.