

Communication Policy

Rationale

Surrey Downs Primary School is committed to open, honest and timely communication. We are also committed to communication being respectful and constructive. In adhering to these principles, we aim to strengthen the goodwill and the positive partnership between families and the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our children.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to:

- Clearly articulate the school's commitment to the positive use of email, Class Dojo, Facebook and Sway for electronic communication
- To acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and families communicating via electronic methods, but also understand their shortcoming
- Establish clear expectations for both staff and families in the use of electronic methods as a communication tool
- Implement a policy which maintains a safe workplace for staff and supports them to effectively balance their work and home life

Procedures for implementation

Emails, Class Dojo, Facebook and Sway are an environmentally friendly way of communicating that can save time when used effectively. We acknowledge that they are very convenient for families who are working and find it difficult to catch up with school staff during regular work hours. Having said that, our school community values face-to-face and telephone conversations and understands that these forms of communication are preferred in many situations.

Expectations of both staff and families

When communicating electronically, staff and families are expected to adhere to the following etiquette, including:

- Electronic communication is at its best when it is brief and informative. Issues that require a level of detailed discussion should be dealt with in person or over the phone.
- Electronic communication should always be respectful and constructive. If it relates to a concern or problem, it ought to be focused on understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- Electronic communication works best when it is positive. Be conscious the tone or intent of electronic messages can easily be misunderstood. Avoid sending negative or confrontational messages.
- Never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, children or families). Likewise, messages containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without permission of the sender.
- Staff and families are not expected to respond to electronic communication that is contentious or requires ongoing dialogue. A face-to-face meeting, or phone conversation, should be arranged in this circumstance.
- Make sure the purpose of your message is clear...do you require specific action or is the email for information only?
- Group messages have the potential to waste the time of many, so avoid sending them to anyone for whom it is not relevant. It is also courteous to avoid time wasting communication, including jokes, chain letters and commercial solicitations.
- When messaging a group, staff and families must ensure they not disclose the email addresses of others without permission to do so. (Blind CC should be utilised).

Expectations of staff

- Electronic communication should not be used to discuss a sensitive issue which was not initiated by the family or had not been previously discussed with the family.
- When a message is received from a family that requires some time to gather information and reply properly, the staff member should respond acknowledging that the message has been received and indicate when an informed response will be sent.
- Staff will aim to reply to family communication within 2 working days.
- When on leave, staff will inform families of relevant leave dates.
- Staff may choose to send or respond to work related messages at a time of their own choosing, but there is no expectation to respond to these messages outside of school hours or on non-work days for part-time staff.
- Staff are not to respond to offensive or abusive messages and should forward them to the Principal.
- Staff will share with families aspects of the learning program at least once a week.
- Reminders for events and due dates will be provided with at least 2 working days.

Expectations of families

- Please always call the school with messages regarding 'need to know information' the day of the event (eg pick up details). Remember that given work demands teachers may not get to read messages until late in the day often after school has finished for the day.
- Please don't seek to discuss in detail your child's academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioural issues via an electronic message. These are best addressed over the phone or in person.
- Please keep all communication professional. Valuable teaching time is taken up when reading messages.
- Messages that are intended for the Principal should be sent directly to the email address of dl.1100.principal@schools.sa.edu.au
- Remember to respect staff personal time, including weekends, holidays, sick days and non-working days. Families shouldn't send messages outside of work hours and expect an immediate response. Some staff may choose to respond to messages but it is not an expectation, nor should it be seen as a deficit if a message is not responded to during these times.
- It is the responsibility of every family to keep Administration and the class teacher up-to-date with current email addresses.
- Please remember that electronic messages are not necessarily confidential and can be subject to FOI (Freedom of Information) regulations. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or personal contact.
- Depending on the nature of the message, you may not receive an electronic reply at all since the staff members will determine how best to contact parents: by electronic message, phone, or to schedule a personal conference.

Implementation

- This policy will be shared with families at the beginning of the school year.
- It will be reviewed and updated bi-annually, to ensure that it remains current.

Updated & Endorsed by Governing Council	March 2023
Review date	March 2025