



Communication Policy

March 2019

Rationale

At St Michael's Parish School, our aim is to be proactive in strengthening positive partnerships between the School, its families, the St Michael's Catholic community and the wider community of Ashburton and beyond. Effective two-way communication is integral to this partnership.

St Michael's Parish School partners with the parents of each child in nurturing their faith and providing a balanced education that targets their academic, physical, social and emotional development. The best outcomes for students will be achieved when each contributes their different perspectives and insights to the partnership in open and inclusive communication that is built on, and builds, trust and respect.

Policy Statement

St Michael's Parish School strives to:

- Create a culture of open and respectful communication that promotes closer collaboration.
- Foster close communication between parents and the teachers of their children.
- Keep parents regularly informed about its expectations, and their children's activities and development at school.
- Ensure there is well structured formal program of communication with parents, with both school and family responsible for ensuring there is effective communication outside these formal opportunities.

From parents, the school seeks timely, honest and complete information about their child. Parents will ensure that the contact information they have provided to the school remains accurate and current.

All communication between the school and parents will be respectful, professional and underpinned by considerations of appropriate privacy and confidentiality principles.

Implementation

Formal Communication

As circumstances require, this may include:

- electronic and paper documents
- parent information sessions
- meetings, and
- telephone and face to face contact

School Improvement Plan: compiled in collaboration with the school leaders and Catholic Education Melbourne. It proposes actions for the coming year against key improvement strategies and intended outcomes for the School. The staff report on the progress achieved against the plan in the previous year.

School policies: developed by the Leadership Team and Catholic Education Melbourne with advice on their development and review from the School Advisory Council. They are available on the school's website or upon request from the school office.

Parent Handbook: provided to new families at the time of enrolment. Parents will be notified of any changes to school policy and procedures. A current version of the Parent handbook is available on the school website. www.smashburton.catholic.edu.au

School Newsletter: published fortnightly and distributed to families via email. It is posted on the school's website and on the Skoolbag App.

Principal's monthly Presentation to the School Advisory Council: highlights resourcing and operational issues under the five spheres; Education in Faith, Learning and Teaching, Student Wellbeing, School Community and Leadership and Management, relevant to the general school community. The Principal additionally provides a bi-monthly report to the Parish Pastoral Council.

Parent Information Night: held in Term One to provide information to the school community. It includes the opportunity for all parents to commence the home/school partnership.

Level Newsletter: sent home by the Year level at the commencement of each term. It outlines the curriculum relevant to their year level. (Big concepts for the term, homework requirements and proposed excursions as well as opportunities for parents to participate in classroom activities).

Parent-Teacher-Child Conversations: formal meetings held at least twice yearly (usually in Term 1 and 3), and at other times on request.

Academic reports (written): issued twice yearly at the end of Term 2 and Term 4.

Skoolbag App: provides push notifications and alerts, documents, events, reminders and announcements. It works with smart phones, iPads and Android tablets

Caremonkey App: a secure online platform for medical records and school forms. Each child has their own profile and parents/caregivers can automatically update emergency information, personal information and sign permission forms.

Seesaw App: a secure platform that provides parents and carers with a digital learning journal of student learning. Each child has their own learning journal and teaching staff post samples of student learning throughout each term.

Communication outside the formal program

The use of email is the preferred method of distributing information within the school community. Parents should clearly indicate to the school if they have a preference for receiving information in paper form.

Teachers will contact a child's parent as soon as possible (by phone, email or to make an appointment to meet in person) to discuss concerns that arise about a student.

Parents are also contacted by the child's classroom teacher if the child's inappropriate behavior disrupts the teaching and learning process, and/or is sufficiently serious to warrant them being temporarily excluded from the class.

The school administration staff will contact parents if a child is seriously injured at school, complains of illness, or needs to go home for any reason.

Parents need to keep their child's teacher informed about any significant incidents and changes that are likely to affect the student at school or their attendance at school. This may be via a short note to the teacher. Alternatively, parents can contact the teacher or the school administration by email, telephone or in person.

Parents may approach teachers directly but to avoid disruption to the teaching schedule, they should do so only at mutually convenient times before school or after school.

Raising concerns

At times parents may have concerns regarding their child's academic progress, social relationships or a general classroom matter. These concerns should be raised directly with the child's class teacher in the first instance.

Procedure for contacting a classroom or specialist teacher

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff the procedure is to contact the teacher involved giving a brief outline of the issue or concern. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

1. Contact the school, either by phone or front the office personally, and 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 playground duty.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time.
3. Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours and request that they arrange a suitable meeting time.

Where the teacher has been approached but the issue remains unresolved, an appointment should be made with the Principal to discuss the issue further. Except in exceptional circumstances, the Principal will ensure that all pertinent information is relayed to the Staff member involved so that all relevant information may be considered in seeking a mutually beneficial resolution.

The Principal is available to meet with parents where they have an issue, concern or matter of interest about the general operation of the school. Where a mutually suitable time is not available for a period of days the school will offer an opportunity to discuss the concerns with the school's Deputy Principal.

Issues arising between students and families:

No parent should approach the children of other families or their parents with school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal, Deputy Principal or other member of the Leadership Team and not be discussed with other persons.

From time to time differences in expectation and disappointments about delivery will give rise to tensions and disagreements in the partnership between the school and parents. Both school and parents are responsible for respectful communication about these concerns. All matters of concern must, in the first instance, be addressed to the school. Only after this courtesy is afforded to the school may a matter that cannot be resolved locally be referred to Catholic Education Melbourne for resolution.

Through a whole school approach to Respectful Relationships, St Michael's is committed to creating a school community where all staff, students and families are equally respected and valued and enjoy equity of opportunity, outcomes and experiences.

Communication Strategy with the Wider Community

St Michael's Parish School utilises Twitter, Instagram and the World Wide Web to promote the works of the school and to encourage new enrolments. The school endeavours to use social media to communicate with the wider community. Articles are submitted to the local newspapers to promote the school's activities and to highlight the benefits of attending St Michael's. As a school we also encourage the wider community to access our school website www.smashburton.catholic.edu.au to gain the most current and relevant information about our school community.

Communication on behalf of the school with any external bodies, including the media, must be approved by the Principal.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School Improvement Plan 4 year review cycle.

This policy has been ratified by Michael Fletcher Chairperson of the SAC on 23/08/2019