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COMMUNICATION POLICY

REVISION
DATE

2.0
9 August 2018

DOCUMENT HISTORY

DATE	REV	APPROVED
9 Dec 2015	1.0	Principal Endorsed by Council: 09 December 2015
17 August 2018	2.0	Principal Endorsed by Board: 17 August 2018

Revision Details

REV	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
1.0	First issue for use
2.0	Compulsory review – as per policy Update to meet current school context and procedures Change of reference from <i>School Council</i> to <i>School Board</i>

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1 Introduction

Mount Lawley Primary School (MLPS) administration, teachers and other staff will partner with parents to strive to provide the best education possible for each student. We understand the importance of clear and concise communication and we aim to create a culture that encourages effective two-way communication between staff and parents. We will communicate objectively and concisely with the parents on a regular timeframe as well as an on-needed basis.

MLPS intends to make the communication process as transparent as possible and we hope to encourage more objective and complete communication between parents and staff. A clearly defined communication policy and resolution process will help to ensure issues get raised and resolved in a timely manner, to the satisfaction of the involved parties. This allows both staff and parents to focus on the academic, physical, social and emotional development of our students.

Parents can support this effort by keeping staff updated on new or changed information concerning their child's needs, contact details and individual situation.

This Policy was developed in consultation with the school community. It has been endorsed by the School Board and approved by the Principal. The Principal and staff shall be responsible for its implementation.

The Principal, with the assistance of the School Board, shall ensure that this Policy is reviewed as required, but no less frequently than every 3 years. Review of this Policy shall be conducted in consultation with the school community.

2 Definitions

In this Policy -

- "MLPS" is the Mount Lawley Primary School.
- "Principal" means the principal of MLPS.
- "Parents" includes parents, caregivers and guardians of students at MLPS.
- "School Board" is the MLPS Board.

3 Communication Policy

3.1 Communication Agreements

MLPS staff and parents all agree to the following basic principles in regards to effective communication. Each party shall:

- Demonstrate mutual trust and respect when meeting the needs of the student;
- Interact courteously and professionally with the other party;
- Be open to new learning, viewpoints and experience;
- Approach issues calmly; and
- Maintain required confidentiality.

To facilitate this, a list of teacher and staff contact details can be found on the MLPS website (www.mountlawleyyps.wa.edu.au).

3.2 Regular Communication Tools

MLPS regular communication tools are as follows:

- Letter to Kindy parents advising session times and information booklet given no later than two weeks before the start of the new school year;
- Information to be given to other new parents including school session timing for the child at the time of enrolment;
- Welcome meeting by classroom teachers for parents of students in the class, to be held after school in the first month of the new school year;
- Fortnightly assemblies which parents and the community are welcome to attend;
- Fortnightly Newsletter produced electronically available on the website, the School app and via email if requested;
- School website containing updated information on the school, school policies and the school calendar;
- Class Newsletters at the start of each term by class teachers
- School smartphone application which contains newsletters, announcements and contact information;
- Class teachers may use some of the following tools to communicate to their class parents; Email, Dojo, Connect, Seesaw, Class Craft and/or Blogs;
- In the absence of any court order or agreement to the contrary, copies of regular school communications and student reports will be forwarded to both parents on request;
- Text messages containing announcements and contact information;
- School Board which meets at least twice each term with agendas and minutes published on the website;
- Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) and P&C committees and subcommittees which can be joined or meetings attended. Agendas and meeting notes are published on the website;
- A minimum of one parent volunteer per class will be the P&C's Class Representative – liaising between class parents and the P&C;
- Annual Report detailing the state and performance of the school;
- Parent survey conducted annually by the School Board;
- Transition program from Kindy to Pre-Primary which includes a tour of the Junior areas and familiarisation for the children. Includes a transition meeting for parents;
- Parent/teacher interviews conducted on an as-needed basis. These can be scheduled by telephoning the administrative staff who will be responsible for coordinating a mutually agreeable meeting time;
- School Reports are provided to parents on the Wednesday of the last week of Term 2 and Term 4; and
- Class placements are advised on the last two business days before students return for the new year.

3.3 As-needed Communication

Absences

Parents are required to contact the school early in the day in regards to student absences. This can be done via:

- the contact button on the School App
- an email to MountLawley.PS.Absences@education.wa.edu.au
- a phone call to (08) 9370 2170.

The school will send a text to the mobile phone number on file prior to lunch on the day of the absence if no notice was given. If no mobile number has been provided, an email will be sent.

Under the Education Department's Attendance Policy, a student's time away from school to go on a holiday must be recorded as an 'unauthorised vacation' on our attendance register. The school must be notified at least two weeks prior.

Please Note:

Research undertaken by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, in 2013 found a clear link between student absence and achievement in school. Each day a child is absent from school has a direct impact on their educational outcomes. In the best educational interest of all students therefore, it would be preferable for time away from school to be limited.

The Director General of the Education Department has also highlighted student engagement and attendance as priorities in *Focus 2018 Directions for Schools*. Establishing and maintaining a positive attendance career for all students ensures success in their future study and career pathways.

Incidents

In the event of any incident occurring at the school which requires notification to the parent (e.g. injury, accident, etc.) the school will contact the parent in a timely manner that fits the incident. Incidents are recorded and tracked by the school.

Issues and Complaints

MLPS strives to create a culture where communication between school and home is comprehensive as well as regular and helpful, but sometimes issues arise. We recognise that parents and staff both want the best for each student and we welcome contact from parents when there is an issue at hand.

We believe that there is a difference between an issue, or even a concern, and a complaint. We consider an issue or a concern to be a serious matter, but something that can be resolved with assistance from the class or specialist teacher through an informal approach. A complaint is a much more serious matter that will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction and will follow a more detailed resolution process.

School Resolution Hierarchy

1 st Port of call	Teacher
2 nd (if required)	Line Manager –Ms Monck/K-2, Mrs Adam/3–6 & Specialists & Mrs Martin/ 5&6
3 rd (if required)	Principal

We encourage parents to raise their concerns or complaints in a timely manner. As the class teacher is the person most knowledgeable in regards to the student, we encourage you to start with them. Parents are asked to contact the teacher directly, via email or in person, or contact the administrative office to coordinate a more lengthy discussion. As morning drop off and afternoon pickup times can be very hectic for the teacher, email can be a very effective tool to request a meeting or to request further clarification of a small issue.

For most issues, we request parents make an appointment to see the teacher, outlining the reason for the meeting, to allow them to prepare adequately. The teacher will initially respond within 2 school days with, at a minimum, a plan to address the issue, or timing for a scheduled meeting. Please note, School Education Act employees, that is, teachers and school administrators are not required to initiate or respond to electronic and other communications from school staff, parents or community members when not on duty, unless in an emergency. This includes time when staff members are on sick leave or approved leave, public holidays and student vacation time.

The teacher and parent know the student best and can partner to resolve most concerns in a timely manner, but sometimes specialist teachers, the school psychologist or administration will be called in for their expertise. Our primary goal as staff and parents is to resolve these concerns to ensure the academic, social and emotional wellbeing of our students.

At the meeting, notes will be taken by the teacher with discussion points, recommendations and outcomes. This is to ensure teachers and parents have a clear understanding of the purpose of the meeting and the outcomes to be achieved. Upon close of the meeting, parents are asked to read and sign the notes. They are given a copy of the notes for their own record and the teacher also keeps a copy for the students' file.

If the issue is not able to be resolved to the satisfaction of the parent and/or the teacher, the issue can be referred to administration by either party. This can be done via email, letter, phone or in person. The following information will be required:

- Name and contact details
- Information relating to the matter
- Any relevant documents, if applicable.

Once administration has received the referral, they will formally acknowledge receipt within 2 school days. They will then identify and advise the appropriate person to progress the matter and be the point of contact between the two. The school will then respond within 14 calendar days with a proposed resolution or the recommended next steps to take.

This response will be returned in the manner with which the referral was originally filed, or in writing. If it is considered by MLPS to be without substance, this decision will be communicated in writing to the parents.

We expect that with the respect, support and guidance of both parties, we will be able to resolve any incident within a timely manner. Sometimes, however, outside assistance may be required. If a matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of either party, an email, fax or letter can be sent to the Regional Executive Director at the North Metropolitan Education Region at the WA Department of Education.

Address:

Level 2, 1 Puccini Court
Stirling WA 6021
(PO Box 1126 Innaloo City WA 6918)

Phone: (08) 9285 3600 (main reception)

Fax: (08) 9285 3730

Email: NorthMetropolitanERO.PublicInbox@education.wa.edu.au

This written document should contain the details, the steps taken to date and a suggestion as to a satisfactory resolution, if appropriate. A copy of the email or letter should be sent to the other party as a courtesy.

4 References_

Department of Education:

Disputes and Complaints

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/disputes-and-complaints.en?cat-id=3457094>

Complaints Management

<http://det.wa.edu.au/standardsandintegrity/detcms/navigation/complaints-management/>

Complaints Management Toolkit

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/complaints-management-toolkit.en?cat-id=3457094>

Talking with my school

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/talking-to-your-school.en?cat-id=3457094>

School:

N/A

Other:

TICHR Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts

<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/research-topics/student-attendance-and-educational-outcomes-2015.pdf>