



*Kindergarten and Playgroup
Educating the Whole Child*

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Guidelines for Communication

Communication between each of the following should be:

Teacher to Pupil

- Clear, loving
- So children know different boundaries`
- Open respect

Pupil to Teacher`

- Use the teacher's first name as a form of address
- Open respect

Teacher to Parent

- Open respect
- Individual meetings are encouraged, but not before school
- A time needs to be made so that each understands why the meeting is being called and can give some thought to it
- Opportunities for casual interaction happen e.g. at festivals where teachers attend

Teacher to Teacher

- Each has a duty of responsibility
- Open and honest meetings
- Regular meetings, including day to day routine and curriculum and cultural development
- Form of meetings needs to be clear
- Teachers to communicate any problems or issues with children to other members of the College
- College to meet once a term with specialist teachers
- Teachers to communicate with specialist teachers any relevant information regarding particular children or the class
- Seek appropriate assistance when needed from within the College or from other colleges or appropriate colleagues.

Teacher to Class Parents

- Parent information evenings to be held throughout the year e.g. each term
- Class meetings to have a clear form, for example, curriculum, class dynamics, a time for parents to be heard and some kind of learning topic for the parents
- Parent-teacher interviews to be held regularly, e.g. end of terms 1 and 3 and a written report at the end of terms 2 and 4.

Teacher to Class

- Clear, loving, warm, humorous, enthusiastic
- Given an understanding of what is required of school work and behaviour
- Provide appropriate and positive learning experiences for the stage of development of the children in the class
- Follow a strong, clear, enriching curriculum incorporating all the elements Steiner considered important for the development of the children in the class
- Be sensitive to and be able to act upon the individual and group needs both inside and outside the classroom.

College with Administration

- Office staff to be responsible for day to day administration
- Leadership Team /College representative and Business Manager to meet regularly
- Process for decision making to be clear and used formally

College/Committee of Management to Parents

- Letter to College, Committee of Management or Administration to be acknowledged and then responded to in a reasonable time frame.

Parents to College/Committee of Management

- Clear, dated, written communication outlining the issue and action requested to be passed to the College, Committee of Management via the office administration
- Parents to have a clear understanding of the policy and the process undertaken and respect for the College and Committee of Management decision.

School to Wider Community

- Parents and Friends group together with the administration team to undertake responsibility for organising appropriate brochures, flyers , media , activities to promote the school
- College to be in regular communication with this group regarding the form of publicity used
- Leadership Team or Business Manager to communicate appropriately with government and non – government bodies to whom the school has accountability
- Leadership Team to communicate where appropriate with other local schools and other Steiner schools.

Process for Communication

These guidelines are to facilitate the smooth functioning of the school, and to assist parents, students and staff. The Guidelines complement the regular, informal communication that already takes place between members of the school community.

General Communication

The school uses a number of means to communicate with the parent body including the weekly newsletter, parent group meetings, e.g. Parents and Friends, Parent information evenings/class meetings, parent teacher meetings and school reports.

Individual Communication

A guide to whom to approach and steps to take are as follows:

- For all matters concerning your child's education, your first point of contact should be your child's teacher. We ask that except for brief communications you do not seek to speak with teachers before school. At this time they are focussed on greeting the children, dealing with their needs and establishing the mood for the day.

Should you wish to request an interview with the teacher, please give advance notice about what it is you wish to discuss so he/se can be best prepared to assist.

- For any reason you either feel you cannot approach your child's teacher or you are unsatisfied with a previous communication, you may make an appointment to speak with the Leadership Team or write your concerns to the College of Teachers. The College has a commitment to respond either verbally or in writing to EVERY communication. The Leadership Team is available by appointment to speak with you regarding any educational issue, including curriculum and policies.

For an issue that remains unresolved at this stage, please refer to our Grievance Procedure.

- For concerns, questions, or suggestions about school administration or finance, see or leave written communication for the Business Manager.

Communication problems arising between staff members:

1. 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.
2. 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 Leadership Team requesting that a facilitated meeting be established. If the problem or concern is with a member of the Leadership Team or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or process, then a letter should be written to the Committee of Management via the Chairperson. The staff members in conflict and the Leadership Team or a Committee of Management member will be present at this meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to ensure:
 - That the concerns raised are accurately conveyed
 - That each of the staff in conflict and the Leadership Team or Committee Member 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 Leadership Team / Committee Member manages a clearly articulated action plan for taking any future steps.
 - All such meetings will be fully documented with records kept in the School office.

If an issue is not resolved at this stage please refer to the Grievance Procedure.

Grievance Procedure

This Grievance Procedure is to be followed only in situations when the above prescribed steps have been followed and one or both of the participants are still unhappy with the outcomes, on the grounds that they were:

- Unfair or unreasonable or
- That they believe that due process as described above was not followed.
- To begin a formal Grievance Procedure a *written request* must be filed with the Leadership Team stating the belief of unfair or unreasonable treatment and the grounds for the belief that due process has not been followed. If the grievance is with a member of the Leadership Team the written report of the grievance must be lodged with the Chairperson of the Committee of Management.
- The Leadership Team / Chairperson will acknowledge the receipt of the letter within 2 working days.
- The Leadership Team / Chairperson will assess the nature of the complaint and assign a relevant school representative to follow up the matter. The Leadership Team will, in most instances, act as the school representative. If this is deemed inappropriate a Committee of Management representative will be appointed.
- The school representative will contact the writer to discuss their written statement and to inform them of the next steps.
- The school representative, will then promptly initiate appropriate actions to resolve the grievance. Appropriate action includes but is not limited to:
 - (i) Making enquiries about the circumstances of the grievance;
 - (ii) If relevant, ensure that all the previous steps of the Communication Policy have been followed;
 - (iii) Reviewing *reasons* for the contentious decision or the cause of grievance.
 - (iv) Reviewing the *process* of arriving at the contentious decision or the cause of grievance.
 - (v) Forming a panel and/or appointing an independent consultant to carry out an investigation
 - (vi) Engaging in negotiations between the people involved.
 - (vii) Engaging external mediators to work towards conciliation
- The school representative will then be responsible for:
 - (i) Tabling a report to the Chair of the Committee of Management, or if it is the Chairperson acting as the School Representative, the report shall be presented to the full Committee of Management. This report will include clear recommendations for the resolution of the matter,
 - (ii) Providing a complete and written reply to the complainant informing them of the outcome.
- All parties to the grievance are to sign and date a written agreement to the resolutions to the grievance.

Confidentiality

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.

All staff are responsible to uphold the confidentiality statement on their Contracts.

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.

Respectful communication, with the child's needs always at the centre, is required between teachers and parents at all levels of these processes.

The above procedure also applies to all situations of conflict involving administrative staff or other members of the community when working for the school.

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