

COMMUNICATION POLICY

RATIONALE

Flagstaff Hill R-7 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 parents and the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students.

PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to:

1. clearly articulate the School's commitment to the positive use of the email and blog system for electronic communication.
2. to acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via electronic methods, but also understand their shortcoming.
3. establish clear expectations for both staff and parents in the use of electronic methods as a communication tool.
4. 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 and blogs are an environmentally friendly way of communicating that can save time when used effectively. We acknowledge that they are very convenient for parents 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 Parents

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Electronic communication works best when it is positive. Avoid sending negative or confrontational messages. We never say in an email what we wouldn't say to the recipient's face.

4. Never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents). Likewise, messages containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without permission of the sender.
5. The tone or intent of electronic messages can easily be misunderstood, especially where humour or sarcasm is involved. Be conscious of this and pick up the phone in this instance.
6. Avoid writing in capitals.
7. Staff and parents are not expected to respond to electronic communication that is contentious or requires ongoing dialogue. A face-to-face meeting should be arranged in this circumstance.
8. 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.
9. Make sure the purpose of your message is clear...do you require specific action or is the email for information only?
10. When messaging a group, staff and parents must ensure they not disclose the email addresses of others without permission to do so. (Blind CC should be utilised).

Expectations of Staff

1. Electronic communication should not be used to discuss a sensitive issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not been previously discussed with the parent.
2. When a message is received from a parent 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.
3. Staff will aim to reply to parent communication within 2 working days.
4. When on leave, staff will inform parents of relevant leave dates.
5. 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 (8:30 am-4:30 pm Monday - Friday).
6. Staff are not to respond to offensive or abusive messages and should forward them to the school principal.

Expectations of Parents

1. Please only send non-vital messages by this medium. For example, do not use electronic methods to inform a teacher that your child is not to go to OSHC that afternoon, as the teacher may not see the message in time or it might be a relief teacher without access to email. Remember that given work demands teachers may not get to read messages until late in the day. If you need an answer more quickly, please telephone the school and leave a message.
2. 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.
3. Please keep all contacts professional. Valuable teaching time is taken up when reading messages.
4. Messages that are intended for the office staff should be sent directly to the school's email address, that being: : dl.1018_info@schools.sa.edu.au
5. Remember to respect staff personal time, including weekends, holidays, sick days and non-working days. Parents 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.

6. It is the responsibility of every parent to keep the school administration and class teacher up-to-date with current email addresses.
7. 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.
8. 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 published on the school website, school blog and school staff blog.

It will be reviewed and updated annually, to ensure that it remains current.