



Policy Name	Communication Policy
Related Policies and Legislation	
Policy Category	Communication
Relevant Audience	All Treetops Community
Date of Issue / Last Revision	17 May 2010 29 May 2014 10 April 2015 – Re-Formatted
Date Set for Review	May 2016
Person/s Responsible for Review	Treetops Administration

Communication Policy

Aim

To support Treetops School as a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with all members of our Association: our staff, our students, the parents and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Definition of Communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to respectfully involve different stakeholders at different times. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of our community has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

For the purposes of this policy, communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

Objectives

All communications at Treetops School should:

- Keep parents, staff, students and other stakeholders as well informed as possible
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- Be actioned within a reasonable time
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- Take account of relevant school policies
- Be compatible with our Vision Statement and Strategic Plan and our core values of Respect and Care; Rights and Responsibilities and Integrity.

Internal Methods of Communication

Meetings

There is an integrated programme of staff meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formally and informally. All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. The approved minutes of staff meetings are emailed to staff shortly after each meeting. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to reflection on priorities, activities and future plans. At all other meetings, notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to the necessary staff members.

Email

During the past few years we have endeavoured to reduce our carbon footprint at Treetops. To facilitate this, the school has improved its IT structure and upgraded our assets. We use email effectively to communicate between staff members and from the school to the parent community. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. To continue to improve our email communication the following actions should be taken:

- All bulk emails from the school to the parent body come through the main front office
- All parents are Blind Copied (BCC) when more than one parent is emailed at all times
- Only the Principal, Administrator or a representative of the Chair of the School's Board can request a bulk email to be sent to all parents
- Teachers may use the main office email to communicate with their class parents
- If possible, any notices, information and similar to be communicated with the parents through Twigs once a week or Clippings once a fortnight. This ensures that our parent body are not inundated with communications from our school meaning that our parents are more likely to properly read our communications
- In an emergency and as directed by the Principal a bulk email may be sent to parents outside of these regular newsletter times. Missing a newsletter deadline is not considered an emergency
- Do not copy in more individuals than required
- Appropriate language is important in the use of email; emails should be proof read in order to check tone and appropriateness.
- Subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily.
- Email time should be blocked into your day if possible rather than allowing the received mail trigger to organise your day
- Do not use email to actively avoid face to face contact
- Emails relating to Administration, procedures, enrolment and day to day events will come from the Administrator, sometimes via the reception

- Emails from the Principal may also come via the Administrator
- The School has a separate policy for dealing with internet usage; you are advised to make yourself conversant with this

Newsletters (Twigs and Clippings)

Currently the school publishes two separate but similar methods of school to parent communication. Twigs is sent via email as a PDF every Monday afternoon. Clippings is the schools newsletter and is currently the major form of communication from the school to the Association and is sent via email as a PDF and also on the schools website every second Friday afternoon.

Clippings contains information from classes, specific requests, interesting articles and dates for your diary. Contributors have a deadline of the Wednesday morning before publication; unfortunately there is no provision for late submissions. Students, teachers, staff and members of the community who are involved in a particular event are welcome to submit pieces and articles (including photographs) to Clippings. Pieces are sometimes edited for content or formatting. Clippings throughout the term is restricted to between 8 – 10 pages to ensure parents are motivated to read through it and is generally formatted to begin with Early Years, work up through the school and finish with 1 or 2 pages of community notices. Presently we do not welcome advertising, however may publish an event or workshop that is of benefit to our parents or staff. On rare occasions it is necessary to 'bump' a piece due to late notice of urgent communication. We apologise if this causes any inconvenience and will attempt to run the piece, if relevant, in the following Clippings. Clippings is collated by the Administrator and signed off by the Principal. In the case that the Principal does not confirm the suitability of information, that information will be removed from Clippings. Due to time restrictions, it may not be possible to let the contributor know of this removal before the publication of Clippings.

If you do not have an e-mail address you can collect a copy from the office.

Please read all of Clippings, not just the sections which relate directly to your child as many times important information is included in its pages.

Written Communications for Staff

Staff are welcome to communicate with each other through written communications placed in staff files in the staff room. Phone messages taken by office staff will also be placed in pigeon holes except in cases of emergency. Staff should check their file regularly.

Telephone Calls

All staff have access to a telephone.

Classroom Binders

A Classroom Binder is placed in each classroom. It is updated at least once per year. The folder contains a staff handbook, timetables, classroom policies and procedures and employment policies and procedures, which are reviewed annually with revisions distributed to staff. Amendments or additions to this file are added to staff files for updating in their class binder.

Medical Listings and Individual Health Plans

Each classroom has a copy of the “*Medical Listings and Individual Health Plans*” for all students in the school with a known health issue. Staff are required to keep this folder in a safe place and become conversant with its contents. Parents are required to let the school know in writing any changes or additions to these documents.

Leadership Team

Leadership of the school is held by the Principal. The Senior School Coordinator, Administrator along with representatives from each teaching realm contribute to provide both practical and moral support for the Principal as the school grows. Discussions are scheduled to offer a sounding board and an avenue for delegation of certain responsibilities and tasks. It is also a training ground for the Coordinator and Administrator in particular areas of school management. It is intended to create a wider knowledge base and a stronger Leadership for the school. The Senior School Coordinator acts as Deputy Principal in the absence of the Principal from the school grounds.

Class Lists

Previously, the school has published a whole school Telephone Directory each year, which is updated as required, with parents and children’s names, phone numbers and emails. In 2014 we have created Class Lists for parents. If parents do not wish to have telephone numbers or email listed, or have a specific request regarding your details, they are to advise the office in writing by the end of the first week of school or within two weeks of accepting a place at Treetops. Class lists other than those parents have been provided for their child’s class can be obtained by contacting the front office.

Notice Boards

These are located outside all classrooms and outside the office. They display school information, community notices and news of specific events or requests. They do not advertise private business ventures, local or otherwise. Parents are welcome to place notices on the board outside the office once they have been approved by the Administrator or Principal. Notices will be cleared monthly or when relevant unless otherwise specified.

Social Gatherings

The School looks favourably on opportunities to develop professional working relationships and encourages informal gatherings within and outside the school in order to build on relationships, develop strong teams and encourage communication. The School will organise at least one social event each term to which all members of staff are invited.

Word of Mouth

Often information is passed on by word of mouth. It is advisable to check the accuracy of information accessed in this way.

External Methods of Communication

Treetops School has many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the school and the home is essential and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values through keeping

parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional at all times.

We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Email

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- Do not copy in more individuals than required
- Appropriate language is important in the use of email; emails should be proof read in order to check tone and appropriateness
- Subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily
- Do not use email to actively avoid face to face contact
- Emails relating to Administration, procedures, enrolment and day to day events will come from the Administrator, sometimes via the Reception
- Emails from the Principal may also come via the Administrator
- All emails from a teacher to their class or an individual parent or student in their class must be carbon copied (CC:ed) to the Administrator
- Staff may forward emails from parents to a member of the Management Team to deal with if preferred and should always do so if the content is a concern
- Hard copies of emails sent to or from parents regarding a student are kept in hard copy on the students file, the same applies to all internal email transmissions concerning student matters
- The School has a separate policy for dealing with internet usage; you are advised to make yourself conversant with this

Telephone calls

Administration staff check their phone messages every day and endeavour to respond to parents' phone messages within 24 hours. During teaching hours and immediately before or after school it is not possible to transfer a phone call through to a member of the teaching staff.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

The school runs a Facebook page to actively engage in the community and publicise the great work that happens in classrooms as part of a layering of story in the wider community. No other Facebook page is supported by the school. Parents are welcome to comment, like and share content on the schools Facebook page and to comment positively where appropriate.

Written Reports

Twice a year we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. In addition, parents meet their child's teacher/s once during the year for a private consultation about their child's progress. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Staff are required to document all parent interviews and place a copy of such documentation in the students file in the office. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. We also encourage parents to observe in the classroom. When children have special educational needs, we find it helpful to meet with parents more regularly. We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

School Information Package

The Information Package contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated throughout the year as relevant. The Information Package is given to all prospective parents as a first point of contact.

Parent Handbook

The Parent Handbook is available on the school website and all parents are strongly encouraged to read it thoroughly. It will be updated throughout the year as relevant.

Public access documents

School policies are available to parents on the school's website.

School Website

The school website provides information about the school, Montessori and International Baccalaureate education. It provides an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience and also has areas for information for current parents. The website is updated weekly by the Administrator.

Calendar

A Calendar of school events is produced at the start of each year and issued to parents and staff as a PDF over email. There is also a website calendar where information is uploaded weekly. Parents are encouraged to check the website calendar frequently.

Word of Mouth

Often information is passed on by word of mouth. It is advisable to check the accuracy of information accessed in this way. Please remember that teachers, office staff, coordinators and the Principal are approachable to deal with queries. All queries regarding your child should be addressed, in the first place, to the main class teacher. All queries regarding enrolment, calendars, website, promotions and publications should be addressed to the Administrator. All fee queries can be answered by the School Bursar.

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Letters

The school may send other letters of a general nature when necessary (e.g. prior to the beginning of each term) and store copies electronically.

Direct Communication with a Teacher

Many parents have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher when they collect them after school, or when they drop them off in the morning. However this is not the best time to speak for an extended period of time with your teacher or regarding matters of importance as the teacher will be directing their focus at the class at this time. Please make an appointment through the office if you would like to set up a meeting with your child's class teacher giving a brief outline of the issue.

Parent Code of Conduct

Please read the Parent Code of Conduct available on the School's website and in our Parent Handbook.

Grievance Procedure

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they considers affects the whole school, their child's wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to:

Contact the Principal (or Deputy Principal in the case of the Principal's non availability) or Administrator in the office by telephone, email or face to face contact. When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with the Principal by contacting the school office, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and asking the Receptionist or the Administrator to arrange a suitable meeting time.

In all cases if the matter is urgent and / or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine who is the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and the process to work towards a resolution, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

The school will endeavour deal with all complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. Matters will be investigated and dealt with in a timely manner. In working through any issues a resolution which treats all parties with dignity and respect will be sought. Issues and matters which have been raised will be kept in the strictest of confidence and not discussed with any other persons, excepting those directly involved. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted or acted upon.

Resolving matters of concern are best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person. Emails and letters should be brief, alerting the person to the issue; they should not be used as a forum for in-depth discussion.

Formal meetings will be minuted and all persons involved will receive a copy of the minutes. Any correspondence received by the school will be kept in a secure file.

(See Grievance Procedure and Policy for more information.)

Issues arising between students and families:

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

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

We recognise that children have diverse needs and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from health professionals and specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Social Services and Child Protection Units.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. After parents, we are the people most in contact with our children and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the Principal who, together with the staff member, may decide to report to the Department of Child Protection. (*See also Mandatory Reporting Legislation and Policy*)

We hold information on students in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details are available to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.