COMMUNICATION POLICY

Implementation Date: Wednesday, November 12th 2003
Review Date: Term 4 2015

Rationale:
It is essential that staff members of the school communicate information in accordance with established protocols so as to preserve the professionalism of the school, to protect the rights of individuals, to uphold our duty of care to students, and comply with departmental and legal requirements.

Parents need to be informed that of how certain issues are dealt with by the principal, staff members and the School Council.

Aim:
To ensure that the communication of information is carried out correctly and in a manner that complies with school, departmental and legal requirements.

Implementation:
• Our school has a policy of open and cooperative communication.

• Information:
  o Information is to be dealt with in accordance with the school privacy policy.
o Any person seeking information from the school that falls outside the school’s previous practices must be directed to the Principal who may require that a formal written Freedom of Information request be made.
  - The Principal will inform School Council of any such requests.
  - All such Freedom of Information requests will be referred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s (DEECD) Freedom of Information Unit.

o Information sought by police, including interviews of students must be directed to the Principal.

o Requests from Department of Human Services personnel regarding students or families will be complied with at all times.

o All staff will comply with court subpoenas to provide information at all times.

• Principal:
  o In addition to the responsibilities outlined above, the Principal will provide an annual report to the school community. Normally at the annual general meeting.

• Staff:
  o Staff will provide two written reports for each student each year, offer two parent-teacher interviews per year and organise additional interviews upon agreement with families.
  o Staff members have legal, departmental, local, professional and social obligations with regards the communication of information. Action may be taken against staff members who choose to communicate information improperly.
  o DEECD employees are free to make public comment on issues relating to education, but in doing so, must be wary not to make comments that can be construed as negative criticism of our school, School Council, our community, staff or community members.
  o As a matter of professional courtesy, and as a requirement of Section 3.6 of the Teaching Services (Conduct of Duties) Order 1998, staff will communicate with the principal before making public comment or formal statement on educational issues or that bears on the organisation or program of the school or place of work. The
Principal will ensure the School Council President is informed about such statements or comments.

- **School Council President**
  - Like the Principal the School Council President may act as spokesperson on behalf of the school on public occasions. The President must ensure there is a clear understanding of those times when the comments made, are those of an individual, and not intended to represent the school’s position.

- **School Council**
  - The School Council has a unique position in the school community and is often privy to information not generally available to parents. All councillors are to be guided by:
    - This policy,
    - The council code of conduct, and
    - The school privacy policy.

- **Parents:**
  - The attached template provides guidance for parents who wish to communicate with the school. It indicates how the Principal, Staff and School Councillors may deal with different types of issues.
  - Families are requested to present all concerns in a calm manner. There are nearly always two sides to a story.
  - The School Council acknowledges that there will be times when parents or staff will broach sensitive issues with each other. Such concerns are to be treated in accordance with the school privacy policy.
  - The template is to be promulgated in the school newsletter at least twice yearly.

Darren Schreck                                      Peter Farrell
School Council President                            Principal

References: Circular 278/2002 - Communication Protocols
            Circular 396/2001 - Information Privacy
            Exec Memo 2002/010 - Child Protection
School Communication Template

Parent/Community Member

School Councillor

School Council President

Major

Minor

Staff Member

Issue

Relates to policy, buildings & grounds, finance or resources?

Principal

Reflects/consults then decides what to do next

No action

The issue relates to an individual child?

Handle

Follow up with parent/s & classroom teacher

Executive meeting.

Add to School Council meeting agenda.

Follow up with staff

Individually development
Staff meeting
Professional
Discuss with SAARP
Other

Issue

Relates to an individual staff member, a program or a procedure?