



St Mary's Primary School

Parent/Guardian Relationships Policy

Policy Statement

At St. Mary's, we are committed to nurturing respectful relationships and active partnerships with our parents/guardians. We believe that our students' learning journeys are enriched through positive and reciprocal home and school relationships. Parents/guardians act as one of the most influential role models in a child's life. We therefore seek parent/guardian support in promoting and upholding the core values of the school community and its culture of respectful relationships.

Rationale

This policy is intended to guide parents/guardians in collaborating with staff, other parents/guardians, students and the wider school community. It articulates the school's key expectations of both staff and parents/guardians with regard to respectful relationships and behaviours. It also specifies the school's position with regard to unacceptable behaviours that breach our culture of respect.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Policy
- Positive Relationships (Grievance) Policy
- Social Media Policy for Employees
- Student Wellbeing Policy

Responsibilities

Among students, staff and parents/guardians, we are committed to nurturing a culture of respectful relationships, and as such, strive to develop the following:

- a respect for the innate dignity and worth of every person
- an ability to understand the situation of others
- a cooperative attitude in working with others
- open, positive and honest communication
- the ability to work and collaborate respectfully with others
- trusting relationships
- responsibility for one's own actions.

In promoting and upholding this culture, we expect that parents/guardians will:

- support the school's Catholic ethos, traditions and practices
- support the school in its efforts to maintain a positive teaching and learning environment
- understand the importance of healthy parent/teacher/child relationships and strive to foster those relationships
- adhere to the school's policies, as outlined on the school website
- adhere to the '*Protocols for the Use of Email as a Communication Tool*' (see Appendix 1)
- treat staff, other parents/guardians and members of the wider school community with respect and courtesy.

In promoting and upholding this culture, we expect that staff will:

- communicate with parents/guardians regularly regarding each child's learning, development and wellbeing
- provide opportunities for parent/guardian involvement in each child's learning
- maintain confidentiality over sensitive issues
- relate and respond to parents/guardians in a respectful and professional manner
- ensure a timely response to any concerns raised by parents/guardians
- adhere to the '*Protocols for the Use of Email as a Communication Tool*' (see Appendix 1)

Implementation

In raising concerns on behalf of a child, or making a complaint about the school's practices or treatment of a child, we expect that parents/guardians will:

- listen to their child, but be mindful that their child's views or opinions may reflect only one side of the story
- observe the school's stated procedures for raising and resolving a grievance / complaint (see Positive Relationships (Grievance) Policy)
- follow specified protocols for communication with staff members, including making appointments at a mutually convenient time and communicating any concerns in a constructive and respectful manner
- refrain from approaching another child while in the care of the school to discuss or chastise them because of any alleged actions towards their child. Rather, parents/guardians should refer the matter directly to their child's teacher for follow-up by the school.

In responding to a parent's/guardian's concerns or a complaint, we expect that staff will:

- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- ensure that the parent's / guardian's views and opinions are heard and understood
- communicate with and respond to parents/guardians in a constructive and respectful manner
- as far as is practicable, ensure a timely response to any parent/guardian concerns/complaints
- strive for resolutions and outcomes that are satisfactory to all parties.

Staff Safety and Wellbeing

The school places high value and priority on maintaining a safe and respectful working environment for staff. The school regards certain behaviours as harmful and unacceptable insofar as they compromise, or threaten to compromise the safety and wellbeing of staff. These behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- shouting or swearing (regardless of whom the behaviour is directed towards), including in person or on the telephone
- physical or verbal intimidation
- aggressive hand gestures
- writing rude, defamatory, aggressive or abusive comments to/about a staff member (including via email or on social media)
- racist, sexist or otherwise insensitive and inappropriate comments
- damage to or violation of possessions/property (or threats to engage in behaviour of that kind).

In circumstances where a parent/guardian behaves in an unacceptable way, the principal or a senior staff member may, as a first step, seek to resolve the situation and repair the relevant relationship. This may include engaging in discussions and/or mediation. However, where a parent's/guardian's behaviour is considered by the principal as being likely to cause harm, distress or danger to the staff member or others, the school may exercise its legal right to:

- impose a temporary or permanent ban on the parent/guardian entering the school premises
- suspend or terminate the parent's/guardian's child's enrolment at the school
- in serious circumstances, refer the matter to the police
- respond in any way that the school considers is necessary and appropriate.

Review

Every policy will have an approved review date nominated. Policies may be reviewed before the review date in response to relevant changes, or as requested by the Principal or School Board.

Approved by the Board: Tuesday 13 August, 2019

Review Date: As per the Review Policy



Appendix 1

Protocols for the Use of Email as a Communication Tool

Rationale

At St Mary's Primary School we are committed to open, honest and timely communication. We are also committed to communication being respectful, measured, sensitive and constructive. In adhering to these principles we aim to strengthen the goodwill and the positive partnership between parents and the school and to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students. We acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via email, but also understand its shortcomings. These protocols are designed to establish clear expectations for both staff and parents in the use of email as a communication tool.

General Principles

Email is an environmentally friendly way of communicating that can save time when used effectively. We acknowledge that email is 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 phone conversations and understands that these forms of communication are preferred in many situations.

Expectations of Both Staff and Parents

When communicating via email, staff and parents are expected to adhere to email etiquette, including:

- Emails are at their best when they are brief and informative. Issues that require a level of detailed discussion should be dealt with in person or over the phone.
- Emails should always be respectful and constructive. If the email relates to a concern or problem, it ought to be focussed on understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- Avoid sending negative or confrontational emails. Email is not to be used to vent. We never say in an email what we wouldn't say to the recipient's face.
- Never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents). Likewise, emails containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without permission of the sender.
- The tone or intent of emails can easily be misunderstood, especially where humour or sarcasm is involved. Be conscious of this and pick up the phone rather than send an email in this instance.
- Staff and parents are not expected to respond to emails that are contentious. A face to face meeting should be arranged in this circumstance.
- Group emails have the potential to waste the time of many, so avoid sending emails to anyone for whom it is not relevant. It is also courteous to avoid time wasting emails, including jokes, chain letters and commercial solicitations.
- Make sure the purpose of your email is clear. Do you require specific action or is the email for information only?
- Staff and parents must be careful not to disclose the email addresses of others without permission to do so.

Expectations of Staff

- Email 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. Issues that require a level of detailed discussion should be dealt with in person or over the phone.
- When an email is received from a parent that requires some time to gather information and reply properly, the staff member should respond acknowledging that the email has been received and indicate when an informed response will be sent.
- Staff will aim to reply to parent emails within two working days.
- When on extended leave, staff will activate an auto-reply message detailing relevant leave dates.
- Staff to utilise the 'delay email' function so emails are sent between 7am and 7pm.
- Staff are not to respond to abusive emails and should forward them to the school Principal.

Expectations of Parents

- Remember to respect staff personal time. Parents should not send emails outside of work hours and expect an immediate response. We request you utilise the 'delay email' function on emailing systems so that emails are only sent between **7am - 7pm Monday - Friday**.
- Please only send non-vital messages by this medium. For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is not to go home on the bus that afternoon, as the teacher may not see the message in time. Remember that given work demands teachers may not get to read emails until late in the day.
- Please don't seek to discuss in detail your child's academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioural issues via email. These are best addressed over the phone or in person.
- Emails that are intended for the office staff should be sent directly to the school's email address, that being: office@smmalverneast.catholic.edu.au
- Classroom teacher is the first port of call for communication. (If you have concerns regarding the teacher, communication is to be directed to the Principal.)

Implementation

Informing parents of Teacher Email Addresses - The first class newsletter of each term, will include the email addresses of the classroom teacher/s.

Informing Teachers of Parent Email Addresses - Office staff will compile lists of parent email addresses to be provided to teachers at the beginning of the year.

Responsibilities

All staff and parents are responsible for using email in accordance with these protocols.

It is the responsibility of school leadership to ensure the protocols are brought to the attention of:

- Parents on enrolment of their child
- The whole school community annually
- Staff, to review annually.