COMMUNICATING WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Reviewed 2015
1 Parent Information – Talking To Our School

The relationship between home and school plays a very important part in a child's education.

Communication between school and parents is seen as essential to promote a mutual understanding between both parties to enhance the quality of education at this school. With effective communication it is believed that a more supportive environment will develop.

We cannot overestimate the critical role parents play in successful learning. Parents are in a position to contribute most to their child's development and are among the most important influences on the way in which the child approaches learning.

Teachers are responsible for the formal aspects of children's learning and successful teaching builds on the home experiences of the child. This is most effective where there is an active partnership with parents.

Two-way communication is a critical factor in the partnership between parents and the school. Where a partnership exists, it is easier for parents to feel confident about the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom and to solve problems.

We will seek to keep parents well informed about what is happening at school.

2 How Our School Communicates With Parents:

Communication will take place in many different forms

- Regular information about the school through online newsletters (fortnightly)
- Work samples sent home displaying student work standards and progress
- Formal written reports
- P & C meetings (twice per term))
- School board meetings (twice per term)
- Parent information evenings (early term I)
- Parent-teacher interviews (as required)
- Notes & letters
- Surveys
- Annual report
- Business plan
- Displays of children's work
- Assemblies (at least one per class each year)
- Special events and celebrations (e.g. Presentation Night December).
- Parent information booklets
- Parent information sessions
- School Website – which will include regular e-mail messages to registered members.

Parents are welcome to talk to their child's teacher when they need to and should make an appointment to avoid disrupting the learning program.

2.1 Newsletter
The newsletter is published on the school website every second Wednesday. Family members can request a newsletter reminder by visiting the website at http://www.ardrossps.wa.edu.au/ and subscribing to the newsletter. Alternatively families may request a hard copy of the newsletter be sent home where computer access is limited.

2.2 Parent Assemblies
Parents are invited to class Assemblies held each alternate Tuesday afternoon. Each class from Pre-Primary to Year 6 will conduct an assembly each year and parents/caregivers will be notified in advance to enable them to attend where possible.
2.3 Reporting
Reporting processes are regularly reviewed and often dictated by the policy of the Department of Education. Formal reports will be sent home at the end of Semester 1 and Semester 2, with opportunities for Teacher/Parent interviews.

2.4 Parent Information Evenings
Each teacher holds a meeting with their student’s parents during early Term I each year.

2.5 Interviews
Interviews can be of two types:
- Parent Teacher Interviews held as required at the request of either party for any relevant issue regarding a child.
- Interviews for those parents who wish to discuss the student’s report or work.

2.6 Presentation Night
In December, normally in the last week of school, an evening will be organized to enable the Ardross Community to farewell the Year six students and to view the presentation of the Annual awards which are:
- Tess Hackett Citizenship Award (to a Year 6)
- P & C Citizenship Award (to a Year 6)
- Class Awards for Excellence and Endeavour for children from Years 1 - 6.

Each class will present one award for each category while in mixed classes the teacher may choose a third award from either category.

2.7 Parents & Citizens Association (“P&C Assoc”)
The P & C Assoc is formally constituted under the School Education Act and regulations. Any parent or community member over the age of 18 may join by paying an annual subscription of no more than one dollar. The school's Principal and teachers may also participate.

The P & C is the forum for parents to discuss relevant educational issues and a mechanism to provide support for the school. Members are encouraged to discuss general education, safety, health issues, uniforms, matters that have bearing on the welfare of students, as well as a whole range of local, state or national issues that arise. The P & C plays an important role in fostering community involvement by organizing activities such as fundraising and social events.

A P & C meeting is not the appropriate forum to discuss individual parent/student, teacher/student issues. These should be a matter for discussions between the parents and the teacher/principal. In addition it should be remembered that under the provision of the School Education Act the P & C is precluded from exercising authority over the teaching staff.

The Ardross P & C Association meets regularly during term. All parents, teachers and interested community members are invited to attend and will be notified via the school newsletter of meeting dates and times.

2.8 School Board
The School Board is a body formally constituted under the School Education Act and regulations. The Ardross Primary School Board consists of 11 elected members - 6 parents/community members - 4 teachers and the Principal.
The role of the School Board is to:

a) To take part in —

   i) establishing, and reviewing from time to time, the school’s objectives, priorities and general policy directions;
   ii) the planning of financial arrangements necessary to fund those objectives, priorities and directions;
   iii) evaluating the school’s performance in achieving them; and
   iv) formulating codes of conduct for students at the school.

b) To promote the school in the community.

c) To determine, in consultation with students, their parents and staff of the school, a dress code for students when they are attending or representing the school.

d) To consult with the Principal on:

   i) any general policy concerning the use in school activities of prayers, songs and materials based on religious, spiritual or moral values;
   ii) the implementation of special religious education.

e) To approve:

   i) any charge or contribution;
   ii) the costs to be paid for participation in an extra cost optional component of the school’s educational programme;
   iii) the items that are to be supplied to a student for the student’s personal use in the school’s educational programme;
   iv) any agreement or arrangement for advertising or sponsorship entered into by the principal.

The School Board meets regularly during term. The second last meeting of the Board held during the school year is to be a meeting:

   a) that is open to the public; and
   b) in which a report is presented on the performance of the Board’s functions since the previous annual public meeting.

Note: The School Board does not have any influence in curriculum matters or the operation of the staff.

3 Other Information that is Available From Our School:

- School Plan
- Annual Report
- Information on Department of Education and school policies and policy changes
- Student behaviour management and development policy
- Curriculum details
- Access to the School Board
- Information about participation in the Parents and Citizens’ Association and other support groups
- School contributions, charges and booklist
- Excursions details
- School dress code
- School events
- Community events
- Key policies, namely: Homework Policy; Community Use of School Facilities and Resources Policy; Sponsorship and Promotions Policy; Drug Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Behaviour Development and Management Policy, Dress Code Policy.
4 Other Forms Of Parental Involvement In The School

Other means of parent involvement are
- Attendance at excursions and other school functions
- Assisting within classrooms on teacher invitation and on school special projects
- Assistance on roster duty in Kindergarten & Pre-Primary
- Assisting in the canteen, at sports days or at busy bees
- Conducting uniform shop
- Attendance at P & C Meetings
- Attendance at Annual School Board Open Meeting
- Attendance at social events
- Attendance at Curriculum discussion forums.
- Health Promoting School Committee
- Community Group
- Class Parent Contacts
- Library assistance

5 Addressing Enquiries, Concerns, Requests or Complaints

At Ardross Primary School our staff will acknowledge any inquiries, concerns, requests or complaints from parents and other school community members and will welcome any questions or feedback. Our policy in dealing with enquiries, concerns or complaints is simple and straightforward:

Our school will maintain processes to ensure enquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are addressed promptly and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. Every effort will be made to resolve any issues at the local level.

This policy is based on good practice and system wide policy from across the Department of Education. This policy ensures that enquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly and contribute to continuous improvement.

The partnership between parents and our school is strong. Parents and school community members can be confident that staff will listen and respond to their needs and concerns.

6 Principles Underlying The Policy

- In all matters the educational well-being of students is the first priority.
- All persons in the school community including students, parents, administrators, teachers and support staff, have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents and community members are able to raise concerns and make enquiries, requests or complaints about any aspect of school life and have them dealt with fairly and promptly.
- Processes for managing inquiries, concerns, requests or complaints are straightforward, reflect principles of natural justice and operate within the regulatory framework of the Department of Education Western Australia.

7 Advice For Parents And Guardians

7.1 What Can Parents Do If They Have A Problem?

- Many problems can be solved by seeking information as early as possible. If parents have any questions or concerns about their child's progress, or any other issues, they should contact the class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually-convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.

- Interpreters and English as a Second Language Teachers, and Teacher Assistants can be available to assist parents in communicating with our school. Please contact the school or the local regional education office if you would like the assistance of an interpreter.

- Parents have the opportunity for greater involvement in the school through the School Board and Parents and Citizens' Association. These provide the opportunity for parents to express opinions on policy issues in the school.
8 Advice For Parents And Guardians

8.1 Process To Follow When There Is a Problem

1. Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.

2. Decide whether the problem is a concern, a query, request or a complaint. This will help in finding a solution.

3. Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. This can be arranged through the school office.

4. Try to stay calm. Even if you don’t feel it, being calm will help to get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry.

5. If the issue involves an incident involving another parent’s child, do not approach the child or parent. Raise the issue with the school first.

6. Raise the issue with the Principal, if you feel the issue has not been resolved or addressed through initial contact with the relevant teacher.

9 Recommended Procedures For Parents And Guardians In Raising Concerns Or Complaints

9.1 School-level resolution

Stage 1: Discussion with relevant staff member

Contact the class teacher or other relevant staff member to discuss the concern/complaint. This is best done by making an appointment through the school office. The staff will work with you to resolve the problem.

Stage 2: Review or investigation at the school level

Contact the principal who will work with you and the staff member to resolve the problem if your initial meeting with the relevant staff member did not resolve the issue. You may wish to formalise your concern/complaint. To do this, you may write to the principal who will acknowledge the letter with a written reply as soon as possible, even if a resolution is not available at this stage.

The principal will consider the issue and identify what action is to be taken and by when, and will clarify the process if a formal complaint is to proceed.

This action and timeline will be confirmed with you in writing.

NOTE: You should be aware that when a formal concern/complaint is made in writing about the performance of an individual staff member, that staff member will receive a copy of the document.

9.2 Region-level Resolution

Stage 3: Regional resolution

If resolution is not reached at the school level, contact the Coordinator of Regional Operations at your Regional education office for assistance in resolving the issue. This will involve an independent review of the situation and may include mediation.

Stage 4: Central Resolution (Formal Complaints)

In those exceptional circumstances where a formal process is required, the parent or principal can forward a complaint to the Director-General of Education, Department of Education.
10 Parent Channels Of Communications

The following is offered as the first point of contact regarding particular issues:-

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Process for School Staff

10.1 Handling Enquiries, Requests, Concerns or Complaints

Responding to verbal enquiries, requests, concerns or complaints:

1. Listen attentively and courteously. Determine whether the matter is an enquiry, a concern, a request or a complaint. If required by the parent, ensure access to an interpreter.

2. Repeat your understanding of the problem, acknowledging the complainant’s feelings and clarifying the problem. It is important to focus on the problem and not on finding fault or blame.

3. Maintain confidentiality at all times.

4. Respond to all issues raised by the complainant.

5. Agree on action and timelines

6. Record the complaint, the action and the outcome.

7. Review the situation and confirm with the parent that the matter is resolved.

8. If necessary, review relevant school policy or procedures.

Responding to written enquiries, requests, concerns or complaints:

1. Acknowledge the enquiry, concern or complaint with a prompt written reply (within two days), even if a resolution is not available at this stage. The letter should clarify your understanding of the problem, identify action and timelines and include a name and contact number. Respond to all issues raised.
2. The seriousness of a complaint should be assessed by the appropriate person, depending on the level the complaint has reached. If it is capable of settlement at the school level, action should be taken to resolve the issue at the school level, and appropriate records written and retained at the school. If the complaint is sufficiently serious or incapable of resolution at the regional level, it should be forwarded to the Director General.

3. Identify action and timelines.

4. Confirm action and timelines in writing to parent.

5. Maintain confidentiality at all times.

6. Record the complaint, the action and the outcome.

7. Review the situation and confirm with the parent that the matter has been resolved.

11 Principles For Handling Complaints

- Act promptly
  Find out as quickly as possible both the nature of the complaint and the outcome the complainant seeks.

- Listen carefully, discuss the issues calmly and maintain confidentiality.
  Treat complainants with respect and courtesy. Approach the complaint with an open mind, taking the person seriously and letting them have their say. We should welcome complaints and assure complainants that they will be dealt with properly. Record all relevant details. Maintain confidentiality to protect complainants, their children, and the staff involved.

- Focus on relevant issues.
  Keep the discussion to relevant issues and check the facts. It is important to hear all sides of the story and keep everyone involved informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint. Be clear about current policy and processes.

- Give personal and specific responses.
  Give the complainant your name. Let them decide whether the matter is really an enquiry, a concern or a complaint. Be clear about what solutions we can actually offer. Explain what will happen next and what steps and support are available. Make sure written responses address all of the issues, contain information and use plain English.

- Keep a record of complaints, timeline for action, action taken and outcomes.
  Recording details help to ensure that we deal with each complaint satisfactorily. In many cases some brief diary points and/or a note on the student’s file is all that is required.

  A clear record is helpful where there are subsequent enquiries, concerns, complaints or investigation. Tracking complaints will help us improve our policies and operations both in managing complaints and in the areas of operations about which we receive complaints. The emphasis should be on learning rather than attributing blame. We need information to plan for improvement.

- Fix the problem

- Reflect
  How did the issues arise? How can similar problems be avoided?
12 Dealing with Complaints or Suggestions

**This procedure requires that the teacher / parent level has been undertaken**

Complaints arrive in person or via writing, fax, telephone, email or from Regional Office.

Respond to all complaints within 2 working days.

Find out what the problem is:
- What does the complainant want you to do?
- If you are not clear, contact the complainant to find out more.

If they are complaining to the wrong person, refer them to the correct person.
If you are unsure who they should be complaining to, find out and get back to them.

If they are not satisfied, suggest they contact the Regional Office. Give them a name and contact number.

If you are the right person try to resolve the problem informally first e.g. meeting or phone call.

If resolved check if the complainant is expecting a letter confirming the conversation or meeting. Always make it clear they can take it further if they are not happy.

Review complaint, take a fresh look.

Central Office

Review complaint, take a fresh look.

Regional Office

Does the policy or administrative system need reviewing?

Standards & Integrity Unit

Overriding Guiding Principles

- Remain Professional
- Be Honest
- Be Helpful
- Be Polite
- Be Constructive
- Be Open
- Do not promise more than you can deliver
- Address the problem not the person
- Be clear on what the complaint is about and what a satisfactory solution would be.