COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Purpose

Social harmony, health, and a positive, creative living environment are the guiding motives for our school policies and procedures. The health of our school community is reflected in our commitment to clear, open communication and transparency of educational and organisational structures. High levels of professional confidentiality are maintained to ensure confidence in school communications.

Whilst positive and clear communications are important to parent/school relationships, all communications must also respect the rights of staff to disconnect from their work outside of working hours.

Scope

This Policy applies to all those who have interest in or dealings with RedGum, including but not limited to students, parents, teachers, community members, support services.

Aims

This Policy aims to facilitate the smooth functioning of the school and to assist students, staff and parents to work successfully together. The guidelines complement the regular, informal communications that already take place between members of the school community.

Communication amongst Teachers/Staff, Parents and Students

Respectful communication, with the child's education always at the centre, is required between teachers and parent/caregivers at all levels of process.

Communication between Teachers/Staff and Students

In the classroom and throughout all school activities, there is an expectation that

communication from the teacher to the student is clear, caring, and with well understood boundaries. In addition, teachers are expected to be sensitive to and able to act upon individual and group needs, both inside and outside the classroom.

Students are expected to behave respectfully and to communicate as clearly as possible with all adults at the school. If and when an infringement occurs, students are guided to understand the full consequences of their actions and given the opportunity to redress any harm done.

Teachers exercise authority in the classroom in different ways as the children journey through the school *(also refer to Student Behaviour Policy)* and communications strategies may change according to the student's stage of development or specific communication needs. Students with additional communication needs may have specific communications strategies outlined in an Educational Support Plan.

Code of conduct for Victorian teachers

All teaching staff must observe the code of conduct for the Victorian teaching profession. The codes can be found on the following site:
Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct - www.vit.vic.edu.au

Communication between Teachers and Parents

Class Meetings

Teachers will generally hold a class meeting twice a year. These class meetings will have a clear agenda. Topics may include a report on curriculum, parent engagement in curriculum-related activities, discussion on developmental stages of children, class dynamics, and events in the life of the class. The class meeting should also provide an opportunity for parents to share experiences and support for their children through their class life together. Class teachers may also provide regular written updates throughout the term, to provide information on class activities.

Parent Teacher Interviews

Parent teacher interviews are conducted at least once per year to exchange information about the progress and qualities of each child. These are always undertaken with the education of the child as the focus.

Communicating a concern about a child

If parents have a concern regarding their child and/or their child's education in any way, the

first step is to speak directly with their Class Teacher. Support staff including Learning & Support Assistants and Administration staff should not be approached to discuss concerns about a child and/or their education without first consulting with the Leadership Team and/or the Class Teacher. Parents should not contact other parents or students about their concerns or complaints as the school will deal with them following due process.

Informal conversations are strongly discouraged when discussing concerns regarding a child and/or their education. Parents may request an individual meeting with a teacher by using the school's booking system or calling the office. Parents are to communicate clearly about the nature of the matter and its urgency. This may often be best clarified in writing prior to any meeting between the teacher and parent. If a specific issue is to be discussed, lead-time needs to be provided so that there is an opportunity for both the teacher and the parent/s to give prior thought to the matter and provide opportunity to fully prepared with all the necessary information for the meeting.

At no time will aggressive or disrespectful language be acceptable in any communication between a parent and teacher. An interview may be terminated and re-scheduled for another time if required.

If this initial meeting does not result in a satisfactory outcome
Parents should raise concerns with the Principal in writing (refer to Complaints & Grievance Policy), stating the issue and requesting that a first meeting be established with the Principal within two weeks.
If deemed necessary, the Principal may facilitate a meeting between the teacher and the parent/s:
Either party may request a support person present at this meeting. However, the other party must agree with the choice of support person; notice must be given in advance of the meeting with details about the identity of the support person shared. In some cases, an outside facilitator may be brought to manage the meeting.

The purpose of this meeting will be to ensure:

- That the concerns raised by the parent are accurately conveyed to the teacher.
- That the teacher fully understands them and that they have been witnessed and recorded by the Principal.
- That the teacher has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and to ensure that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the parent.
- All meetings will be documented with notes kept in the Principal's office.

If the above process does not reach a satisfactory outcome for either party

Refer to the *'RedGum Complaints & Grievance Policy'*

Parent App

The Parent App is the primary means of communication between the school and families. Regular updates and class and student specific information will be communicated via the App.

Email Communication

The school uses email as an accepted form of communication for day-to-day matters. Note that emails should be kept to dot points or three short paragraphs or less. For anything requiring more detailed communication, parents should book a time for a phone call, zoom meeting, or face-to-face meeting.

Email communications should be respectful and clear. As with all other forms of communication, abusive emails are not acceptable.

School staff are not expected to respond to emails at night or on weekends. In an emergency, parents can email the principal at principal@redgum.vic.edu.au
School Staff will check their emails at times between 8 am and 6 pm on their working days. School staff will endeavour to make an initial response to email communications within two working days of receipt.

Mobile Phone Communications

Teachers will not share their personal mobile phone numbers with parents, other than the class carer. Parents should not communicate with teachers via teachers' mobile phones (via call or text).

Teachers may communicate with parents via mobile phone in special circumstances (in relation to urgent camp or excursion matters or for urgent medical or behaviour matters for example).

Communicating with the Board of Directors

If a matter is related to overall school governance, parents or staff members may communicate in writing directly to the Board of Directors through correspondence to the Secretary of the Board.
The Secretary of the Board will:

- Ensure that the Chair of the Board receives the correspondence
- Acknowledge receipt of correspondence and
- Ensure that correspondence is tabled at the next available meeting of the Board of Directors

Communications with School Leadership Regarding Finances and Administration

Respectful communication between parents and those working in the School's leadership and support roles is required at all times.

RedGum welcomes feedback and information on any aspect of school operations as part of a philosophy of overall accountability and responsiveness and transparency.

Parents wishing to give feedback about aspects of school leadership should initially contact the relevant person by speaking directly or leaving a note.

General concerns about any aspect of fees or fee statements should be directed to Edusmart initially. Concerns relating to school finances can be raised in writing with the Business and Finance Manager who will consult with the Principal regularly. Confidentiality is always an absolute priority in communications related to school fees or school finances. These meetings and conversations must be carried out in a suitable meeting space.

Concerns in relation to additional learning needs (including education support plans) can be raised with the Deputy Principal.

All other matters should be directed to the Principal.

The Principal, Deputy Principal and Business and Finance Manager will acknowledge receipt of concerns in writing within a two-week period and will confirm the course of action that has been followed.

Parents may request a meeting with a member of the Leadership Team. In planning this meeting, parents should give advance notice about *the subject of the meeting* so that adequate preparation can be made. Parents are asked to advise who will be attending the meeting at the time of booking the meeting.

A record must be kept of any such meeting with a parent: *e.g. a diary note indicating the purpose of and outcome of the meeting.*

If parent/s or staff member are unsatisfied with the outcomes of an initial meeting/communication, they should follow the steps in the school's Complaints Policy.

Communications with School Reception

The Reception and Office staff have a huge job supporting the staff and children of the school every day and it is important that they are not regularly repeating information which is already made available to the school community in the usual communication channels.

Parents have a responsibility to read communications from the school, for example,

- Parent App updates
- School Website content
- School Policies
- Emails and SMS messages from the school

Parents have a responsibility to advise reception staff of current contact details, including email address and mobile phone number.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is respected for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Where a communication is confidential or of a sensitive nature, written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately. Where incoming E-mail correspondence is forwarded via the school office to relevant staff members, the confidentiality of the content of the email cannot be assured as emails are opened to be forwarded.

Communications between Parents

Communications should be respectful and clear.
Class contact lists should only be circulated by the Class Carer, with the permission of the parents on the list.

Class Social Media Accounts

The School has concerns about the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp for school-based communication. These include concerns about privacy and support for the school Code of Conduct.

If Class Carers do choose to set up class parent social media groups (using programs such as WhatsApp etc.), it must be used only to communicate information about school events and teacher requests. The following guidelines apply in relation to class parent social media groups:

- Membership of the group is completely optional
- Class parents choosing not to join the group must instead receive relevant communications via email, phone or text
- Comments for posts must be turned off

- The social media group must not be used to discuss specific educational matters nor issues of concern – parents should instead discuss their educational queries and/or issues individually according to the Communications Policy and Complaints & Grievances Policy
- The class carer will act as moderator of the group to support the group to follow the guidelines

Document Control

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