



## SCHOOL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION POLICY

### RATIONALE

At St James Catholic Primary School, we believe that the relationship between the home and the school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. We recognize that parents, students and teachers need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for the children. As a school community we are committed to working together to meet the differing needs of the various members of our community. This occurs most effectively when staff, students and parents are working towards the same goals. Central to achieving this is trust and open, effective communication between the people within the school community.

### AIMS

To ensure:

- That effective and respectful communication between school community members takes place.
- That processes are in place which allow for open and honest communication amongst school community members.
- That confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations.
- That clear, positive and fair processes are provided that allow issues or grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely and effective manner.
- That a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained.

### COMMUNICATION

#### PARENTS

Communication in the school community occurs in a variety of forms...

- **Formal and Informal Interactions**  
Information sessions may be held when necessary. An important example is when new families are welcomed to the school via the Foundation orientation sessions. An *informal* example is when these families begin to network via the Foundation Parents' Lunch at the beginning of the year, facilitated by the Parents and Friends group. Each class has a parent representative that is instrumental in passing on information. Information can be communicated when there is a special evening such as 'Maths Night'.
- **Masses & Sacramental Workshops**  
Parent/child workshops occur for families who have children receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- **Publications/Website/App**

The school website, information packages and brochures contain information about the school which is pertinent to families and appropriate for viewing of the wider community. A mobile device applications are also available for download, that includes relevant, important and timely information for families.

- **Parent Teacher Meetings/Reports**

At the beginning of each school year, a *Parent/Teacher Exchange Meeting* will take place. The purpose of this meeting is for parents to provide the child's classroom teacher with information about their child.

At mid-year, parents are invited to attend a *Family Conference*, where students are given the opportunity to articulate their strengths, challenges and learning goals.

In June and December, parents receive a *Report*. Throughout the year, parents and students receive ongoing progress updates via an online portfolio.

For those students who are eligible for SWD (students with a disability) funding, meet the criteria for *New Arrivals*, have English as a Second Language, and/or have specific learning needs, a *Program Support Group Meeting* is held once each term. The purpose of these meetings is for student progress and achievement to be communicated to families and for goals to be set for the following term.

- **Assemblies**

Whole school assemblies are held weekly and parents are invited to attend. Briefing and news is shared, as well as presentation of awards. The national anthem is sung and the school prays the St James prayer together.

- **School Newsletter**

A fortnightly Newsletter is provided to families. The Newsletter is also sent to senior students to ensure they are also aware of its content. The Newsletter aims to keep parents informed of current school happenings, school routines, future events and current educational issue.

## SCHOOL

It is essential that staff members of the school communicate information in agreeance 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 CEOSale, CEVN and legal requirements.

- Our school has a policy of open and cooperative communication. This practice, however, recognises that staff members have legal, departmental, local, professional and social obligations with regards to the communication of information.
- We will provide annually two written reports and two parent-teacher interviews for students, additional interviews upon agreement, a multimedia digital portfolio and a community report.
- The Information Privacy Act and the Health Records Act 2001 require that schools protect the interests of individuals with regard to their personal information and respect the individual's right to control how their personal information is used, and for what purpose.
- The school will only collect consensual information that it requires about individuals, and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.

- 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 letter of request be made.
- Information sought by police, including interviews of students must be directed to the Principal. Requests from Department of Human Services personnel regarding students or families will be complied with at all times.
- All staff will comply with court subpoenas to provide information at all times.
- St James supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including a commitment to: elected Government; the rule of law; equal rights for all before the law; freedom of religion; freedom of speech and association; the values of openness and tolerance.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a fundamental attribute of any professional organisation. The protection of confidential information relating to others is a serious moral, professional, ethical and legal responsibility that our school recognises and upholds.

- Confidential information at our school may only be transferred from one person to another when it is professionally appropriate and legally acceptable to do so.
- All staff will be reminded regularly about workplace confidentiality and professional expectations, as well as privacy obligations as detailed in the *Information Privacy Act – 2000*.
- All highly confidential information relating to any current or past parents, families, students or staff members will be maintained in individual files in the school office and can only be accessed with the Principal's approval.
- Staff members provided with confidential documentation relating to students or families should present the documentation to the Principal so that it can be retained on the confidential individual files.
- Staff members are to direct any requests for confidential information to the Principal.
- Staff members will not disclose confidential information about students, families or staff, or be drawn into discussions about students, families or staff, with any third person or agency, which has no legal or compelling need to discuss such issues.
- While staff members may have confidential discussions with others, particularly students, all staff members are compelled to report all disclosures of intentions to self-harm or to harm others.
- Breaches of confidentiality relating to complaints, staff selection or staff performance etc are all serious offences. The Principal will thoroughly investigate any alleged breaches of confidentiality or privacy.

The Student Code of Conduct will make reference to each student's responsibilities relating to their own confidential information, and the confidentiality rights of others.

## COMMUNITY GRIEVANCES

The social, emotional, moral, spiritual and physical wellbeing of our **students**, in light of the values of St James Catholic Primary School, is pivotal to their success at school and in their future lives. Students' ability to positively resolve conflict and grievances is an important part of their positive social and emotional health.

As with the students, we acknowledge that the **adults** of the school community can sometimes feel aggrieved also. Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

We have an overarching philosophy of Restorative Justice when it comes to resolving conflict for children and adults alike.

Key elements of our grievance handling procedure: -

Impartiality: If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality: You can feel secure that if you do make a complaint under this policy, it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the person investigating.

No victimisation: If you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The school authorities will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

All have a voice: Each person in a grievance situation should have a voice. All sides of the story should be heard.

Timelines: Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period as possible.

- It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented. Serious allegations should be put in writing and given to the Principal.
- The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes have not been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- Community members may be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at appointments to resolve grievances. When someone is called in for a meeting, they should be told the nature of the meeting and be provided an appropriate amount of time in preparation.
- The Principal and Deputy will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not they will act upon anonymous complaints.
- The Principal will seek the support of the CEO if grievances are not resolved.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the CEO's Conflict Resolution Policy.

## PROCESS FOR PARENTS WITH A CONCERN

Where a parent has a concern involving a student, parent or staff member, the following procedures are in place:

1. The parent should request an interview with the classroom teacher at a time convenient to both parties.
2. If no resolution is found or not appropriate, the parent should contact the Principal who will arrange a meeting between the parent, classroom teacher and Principal and any other relevant staff.
3. If there is still no resolution, the parties should consult with the Parish Priest.
4. The Parish Priest may wish to involve the Principal's Education Consultant of the CEOSale.

Where a parent has a family matter that they believe the school needs to know about the following procedures are in place:

1. The parent contacts the Principal to discuss the matter.
2. If necessary, the parent and Principal will meet with the classroom teacher to discuss the matter and the possible implications for the student in the school setting.
3. At the request of the parent, counselling may be sought for the student.
4. In the event that the parent contacts a staff member other than the Principal in the first instance:
  - a. The staff member should direct the parent to meet with the Principal, and/or
  - b. The staff member should record the purpose and content of the meeting and forward it to the Principal.

## PROCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH A CONCERN

Please also refer to the St James Catholic Primary School:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Agreed Practice for Managing Behaviour
- Complaints or grievances may be resolved informally by the classroom teacher or Principal, however, appropriate procedures in dealing with complaints must be clearly communicated to the school community, these include:
  - Students being aware of the ability to approach their teacher or the Principal if they have a complaint or grievance.
  - A knowledge that all complaints will be heard, discussed and resolutions sought.
  - Records of interviews and meetings and all documentation of the process, procedures followed and resolution are documented and retained.
- St James Catholic Primary School may also seek the advice or services of the CEOSale – Student Services to assist in the resolution of the complaint or grievance.

## **EVALUATION & REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed by the School as part of the School Improvement cycle.