

COMMUNICATION

BETHAL PS POLICY

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Rationale.

At Bethal Primary we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which promotes open communication, respect, fairness and positive relationships.

We believe that the relationship between home and school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. As a school community we are committed to working together to meet the various needs of our school community. Central to achieving this is trust and open, effective communication between all members of the school community.

Aims

To ensure:

- That effective communication between all school community members takes place
- That processes are in place which allow for open and honest communication amongst all 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 and guidelines are provided which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner
- That a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained

1. Guidelines for Implementation:

Bethal Primary will use a range of strategies to communicate effectively with the school community.

- The main source of school community information is the weekly newsletter, which is printed and given to the eldest child at the school each week and is an important tool for communicating the happenings at the school. This newsletter is also updated on a weekly basis on the website.
- It is the responsibility of parents and carers to read the newsletter to stay abreast of the current happenings at the school.
- It is acknowledged that teachers have time constraints during the school day and issues or concerns are best dealt with when uninterrupted time and attention can be given to them.
- In all cases if the matter is urgent and / or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed.

1.1 Curriculum and class information

- Teachers and year level teams will communicate curriculum information and homework expectations at the beginning of the year via a team newsletter.
- Extra and incidental curriculum information may be sent via email throughout the year and is done so at the discretion of each individual teacher/ learning team.
- An essential agreement will be set at the beginning of each year for each area team to standardise the communication method across the team.

1.2 Guidelines for communication- Phone

Bethal encourages parents and staff to use the telephone as an important tool to communicate personal concerns and issues that cannot be discussed via email. It is also important that all conversations by all parties are respectful and courteous.

Telephone communication is also useful for queries, urgent messages that need to be relayed to students and teachers, and student absences.

Staff may not always be able to return telephone calls during the normal school day and may take up to 48 hours to return the call.

2. Contact Procedures

2.1 Contacting a classroom or specialist teacher:

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child, the procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the issue. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

- Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and ask an Office Manager to arrange for the teacher to contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not usually available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time or whilst on yard duty.
- Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organize a suitable meeting time.
- Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

2.2 Contacting other school personnel:

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider affects the whole school, their child's wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to:

- Contact the Principal or Assistant Principal, using one of the three approaches outlined above.

When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with the Principal by contacting the school office, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and asking an Office Manager to arrange a suitable meeting time.

In all cases if the matter is urgent and / or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed.

The Principal will determine the most appropriate person to resolve the issue, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

3. Procedure for Complaints or Issues

Bethal will deal with all complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below

The procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*. Those matters include:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

Issues and matters which have been raised will be kept in the strictest of confidence and not discussed with any other persons, excepting those directly involved.

- Anonymous complaints will not be accepted or acted upon.
- Resolving matters of concern are best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person.
- Emails and letters should be brief, alerting the person to the issue; they should not be used as a forum for in-depth discussion.
- Formal meetings will be minuted and all persons involved will receive a copy of the minutes. Any correspondence received by the school will be kept in a secure file.

3.1 Issues arising between students and families:

No parent should approach the children of other families with a school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or Assistant Principal and not discussed with other persons. This will then become a school matter and will be dealt with by the Principal at his/her discretion.

This policy was last ratified by school council in June 2017.