



Communication Policy

including Grievance Procedure

Rationale

A positive school culture of trust and care is built upon the effective partnership between home and school. Critical to this partnership is a commitment to open, honest and timely communication with shared expectations and responsibilities. In promoting respectful and constructive communication as a key element of conflict management, we strengthen this partnership further to value each other's contributions and work effectively together for the betterment of our students' wellbeing and learning outcomes.

Objectives

This Communication Policy has been developed to:

- Clearly articulate the School's commitment to communication as the basis for a positive partnership between home and school
- Acknowledge the benefits and shortcomings of contemporary electronic communication methods and establish clear expectations for both home and school in relation to their use
- Provide clear expectations and instructions for communication between caregivers, the school and staff at Auburn Primary School.
- Promote efficient means of communication between stakeholders which maintains safe workplace expectations and supports staff to effectively balance work and home life.
- Provide a clear process for the expression of grievances.

Implementation

Auburn Primary School, in our commitment to maintain effective communication with stakeholders, currently use a variety of strategies to support clear and timely communication. While email and other electronic means of communication are both efficient and environmentally friendly, and can be a most convenient method for parents/caregivers unable to attend the site during regular school hours, we value face-to-face and telephone conversations to maintain the personal element of the home-school relationship.

Current methods of effective communication include:

- ✓ **Staff to staff:**
 - Day book, calendar, staffroom whiteboard
 - Weekly staff meetings
 - Office 365 Team - *Auburn Primary School Staff*
 - Internal email
 - Minutes of meetings
 - Newsletter
 - Text/SMS/Messenger
- ✓ **School to students:**
 - Classroom notices/whiteboards
 - SeeSaw
 - Lunchshed noticeboard
 - Front Office trays
 - Newsletter
 - Flyers
 - Email (year level dependent)
 - Face-to-face messages
- ✓ **School to parents:**
 - Interviews and Semester written reports
 - SeeSaw
 - Classroom and lunchshed notices/whiteboards
 - Front office displays and posters
 - Newsletter and associated flyers
 - FaceBook – *Auburn Primary School, Auburn Primary School (SA) Parents & Friends Group, Auburn Playcentre*
 - Website
 - Text/SMS
 - Email distribution
 - Phone calls
 - Student diaries
 - Face-to-face meetings, informal and formal
- ✓ **School to community:**
 - Front office displays and posters
 - Newsletter
 - FaceBook – *Auburn Primary School*
 - Website
 - Flyers – local business advertising spaces
 - Governing Council community member
 - Local representation – ACDC, U2Kids

1. Responsibilities of all staff, parents and caregivers

When communicating in relation to school and/or student matters, it is an expectation that all members of staff and parents/caregivers will:

- Maintain respectful and constructive communication that describes the concern, communicates the facts and is focused on understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- Keep electronic communication brief and informative.
- Address issues that require a level of detailed discussion in person or over the phone.
- Respect the confidentiality of messages containing personal or sensitive information; and do not forward or pass on this information to a third party without permission.
- Remember that electronic messages are subject to Freedom of Information regulations.
- Refrain from connecting via social media in relation to the matter, so as to maintain the appropriate professional relationship.

2. Expectations of staff and contractors - general

When communicating with parents/caregivers, we will:

- Send or respond to work related messages at a time of convenience throughout the school day, and use personal discretion to respond outside of school hours (8.30am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday).
- Aim to reply to parent communication within 24 hours.
- Acknowledge receipt of parent communication as soon as practicable within school hours and if time is required to gather information and provide a suitable reply, indicate when an informed response will be provided.
- Address sensitive issues or matters in person at a mutually agreed time; and never raise or discuss matters of this nature in electronic communication.
- Notify parents/caregivers of any dates of extended leave, where direct communication will not be available.
- Not respond to offensive or abusive messages; and forward any such messages immediately to the Principal.

3. Expectations of staff and contractors – specific forums

- **NEWSLETTER:**
Use the newsletter as the primary method of communication for whole of school relevance, published in Weeks 1, 3, 6 and 9 of each term, posted on the School's Facebook site and distributed via the email distribution list.

- *Teachers will submit class page by Wednesday prior to newsletter's publication, as per Term roster.*
- **SEESAW:**
Use the class SeeSaw app for any short notices between newsletter publications, reminders or class or individual parent correspondence, as required.
 - *Teachers will outline individual classroom intentions at the Parent Information Night in Term 1 each year; and assist parents to join.*
 - *Teachers will check SeeSaw daily, at a time most convenient to their routine.*
 - *Teachers will post at minimum, once a week for whole-class happenings.*
 - *Teachers will post or support students to make at least one individual learning post each week.*
- **FACEBOOK:**
Use the Facebook page as a forum for celebration, sharing and promotion of school events.
 - *Teachers will indicate on the Term post schedule, learning or events that they may like to promote on the page*
 - *Teachers will have access and responsibility to make a post, as indicated on the schedule.*
- **EMAIL:**
The school will hold an email distribution list, telephone directory and postal address log of all parents/caregivers which will be used primarily for whole-school communication, particularly of large documents or Department system-wide correspondence. This forum will largely be used by the Principal and administrative/finance staff to communicate with parents, as required.

4. Expectations of parents and caregivers

When communicating about school matters, we will:

- Communicate in person, via email, approved school channels and platforms, and phone (including the approved Principal's mobile phone, as required).
- Contact the Front Office for urgent matters or matters that require an immediate response; and direct administrative correspondence to the school's email address: dl.0425.info@schools.sa.edu.au
- Keep the school administration and class teacher up-to-date with current contact details, including phone and email addresses.
- Convey messages with clear language, honesty and respect; upholding the school values and expected conduct at all times.
- Arrange a time to meet with staff face-to-face to discuss sensitive or complex issues (a request via email briefly outlining your concerns and to arrange a meeting is appropriate prior to a deeper discussion).

- Understand staff must prioritise teaching and building a positive learning environment during school hours, and will attend to emails and phone messages at a convenient time during the school day (8.30am – 4.30pm).
- Consider school hours when expecting a response and understand that depending on the nature of the message, the staff member will determine the best method for reply and respond accordingly (ideally, within 24 hours, as required by this policy).
- Read the newsletter and check SeeSaw and SMS daily, or as notifications arise.

5. Responsibilities of students

In line with the school values, students will communicate with peers, staff and their family in relation to school and learning, in a manner that is timely, clear, respectful and honest. They will:

- Convey information accurately, through the telling of facts.
- Pass school correspondence to their parents/caregivers on the day of issue (including flyers, notes, newsletters).
- Check daily notices on classroom boards, the lunchshed notice board, and office displays.
- Use communication channels and devices for the intended purpose, and as permitted by school policies (for example, mobile phone and personal device policy; technology user agreement, SeeSaw class agreements, etc.).
- Report any worries, incidents or concerns to an adult at school as soon as possible throughout the school day; particularly, in order to seek support to manage grievances.

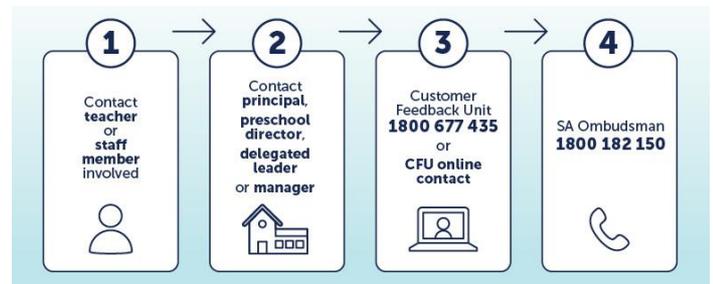
6. Grievance Procedure for management of issues and policy breakdown

In line with Department for Education Complaints Management Procedure, Auburn Primary School acknowledge that *teachers and support staff are often the first point of contact for a parent with a concern or complaint, and as such, staff will make every effort to resolve these matters where possible:*

- Level 1: parents raise any concerns or complaints about their child's education with their child's teacher or staff member involved. Teachers acknowledge and aim to resolve the issue in line with the procedure. When the complaint is easily resolved over the phone or by front line staff (including the Principal for minor concerns), recording of the issue may be maintained at site level (ie brief notes).
- Level 2a: parents raise any concerns or complaints about their child's education that they feel unable to raise with their child's teacher or staff member involved, with the

Principal. The Principal acknowledges and aims to resolve the issue in partnership with the parents/student, in line with the procedure. This may require involvement of the class or relevant teacher, as appropriate. The complaint received by the school and the decision or actions taken to address it are documented in minutes and reported annually.

- Level 2b: when Level 2a does not provide a satisfactory resolution, parents contact the local Education Director (Gawler 2 Portfolio).
- Level 3: when Level 2 does not provide a satisfactory resolution, parents elevate the complaint to the Customer Feedback Unit. *Concern can also be lodged via the 'Feedback/Complaints' link on the School's website.*
- Level 4: when neither Level 1, Level 2 nor Level 3 avenues provide a satisfactory outcome, parents may contact and seek independent review from the Ombudsman SA.



Policy review

The school council and staff regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the Communication Policy. Staff informally review/update annually and track recommendation and/or suggestions; with a formal review in collaboration with Governing Council and the community every 3 years. The Parent Survey feedback, when conducted, is also used to inform this policy, as relevant.

Date policy last ratified: February, 2022

Date of next policy review: February, 2025

Relevant resources

- Auburn Primary School's *Use of mobile phones and personal devices* policy
- Department for Education complaint management procedure and associated resources:
<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/department/feedback-and-complaints/raising-complaint-department>