

1. Policy

St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Primary School recognises that educational outcomes for students are enhanced when there are positive relationships between the home and School. The 'Communications Policy' affirms the School's commitment to and responsibility for ensuring that communication with families is effective, open, and timely.

2. Rationale

At St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Primary School, we hold relationships among our school, our parish, and our community in the highest regard, as together we live the Gospel values inspired by St Oliver Plunkett and in the tradition of the Presentation Sisters.

We believe that positive partnerships between parents/carers, teachers, students, and our school community support a positive learning environment. Parents/carers, school staff and students share responsibility for providing safe, supportive, and productive learning environments. Efficient and effective communication is integral to these successful partnerships.

Our School Leadership Team, teachers and support staff, work in partnership with families to build a strong sense of community where staff, parents/carers and students feel they belong. We support each other in the exchange of ideas and strive to maintain an environment where ideas are valued and respected. This provides a strong foundation upon which to deliver the best possible learning outcomes for all students.

3. Aims

Communication underpins our School community. This policy provides a framework for effective communication, with the following key goals:

- To promote a strong and positive sense of school community;
- To reinforce the common goal shared by staff, parents/carers and students and the need for cooperation;
- To promote an environment that encourages active participation and the sharing of ideas and knowledge.
- Respect and acknowledge the professionalism of school staff and St Oliver Plunkett as a whole.
- Preserve the reputation of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School and its staff.
- Protect the rights of individuals.
- Uphold our duty of care to students.
- Comply with system and legal requirements.

- To ensure that communication is effective and always respectful, polite and honest; and
- To ensure that important information can be accessed quickly and easily.

Ultimately all communication is intended to ensure that students achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

4. Implementation

4.1 Communication with Parents/Carers

St Oliver Plunkett implements a range of formal strategies for communication with parents/carers. These strategies include a combination of printed and emailed information, access to online resources, academic progress interview/s and information session opportunities.

All formal written communication will be reviewed by a member of the School's Leadership Team prior to being issued or made available to students and/or parents/carers.

In addition to formal strategies the school community is welcomed to events and performances that celebrate student achievements and milestones. Community members are also invited to be actively involved in and informed of School activities through participation in the Parents & Friends Association.

There is an expectation that communication and all interaction between school staff and parents/carers is mutually respectful. Verbal and/or physical aggression or threats, offensive language, and derogatory comments, whether face to face, over the phone, via email or on social media is unacceptable. School staff are not expected to respond to communication that is unacceptable. In the event of this type of communication, parties involved will receive a phone call inviting them to attend a face-to-face meeting to work through issues in person, with the support of the Leadership Team.

How we communicate with parents:

Teachers and school staff use a range of communication methods to communicate with parents. St Oliver Plunkett's commitment to parents is that teachers will provide a clear outline of how, and how often, they will communicate with their class. This is established at the beginning of each school year.

Communication channels used by teachers and school staff to communicate with parents include:

Parent Information sessions: at the beginning of each school year, teachers host information sessions to provide important information such as the year level specific curriculum, expectations of students and parents, and an outline of the annual events calendar.

Parent/teacher interviews: formal discussions about student progress and performance held in Terms 1 and 3.

Individual meetings: teachers may contact parents if required to arrange meetings to discuss their child's progress or behaviour; parents may also request this.

Emails: teachers will issue regular emails outlining key student activities; this may be a regular email (such as weekly) or distributed as required. **Note: recipients of all class, year level and school-wide emails must be blind carbon copied (BCC) so that personal emails are not shared.**

Class communications: are sent home in paper form or via email, as required;

St Ollie's Facebook page: is used for reminders and extra-curricular activities as required. **Note: the school Facebook Page is the only source of social media supported by the school Administration and should be the only Facebook Page used by parents/carers and staff.**

Information sessions (as required): may be held to inform about and discuss specific topics such as NAPLAN, positive behaviour support or ICLT requirements.

What parents can expect in communication with school staff:

- Regular communication via; BCE Connect/Parent Portal, text messaging service (where appropriate), School Newsletter, Class/cohort Newsletters and Facebook
- Update notes and permission slips
- Parent Information sessions in Term 1 (and where required)
- Student reports in Semester 1 and 2 via BCE Connect/Parent Portal
- Parent/teacher Interviews in Term 1 and Term 3
- Opportunities to meet with the classroom teacher by appointment
- Notifications of any serious issue or ongoing issues concerning their child
- Opportunities to provide feedback (where appropriate) including BCE Listens Survey
- Assemblies as scheduled

- Please do not assume teachers will have the opportunity to read and respond to emails during school hours as contact time with the students takes precedence – **if you have an urgent message, contact the school office**
- Scheduled academic discussion with teachers about your child after class learning time, i.e., after 8:35am and before 3:05pm.

When sending emails:

- Emails are sent to the teacher's school email address only
- Teachers will respond to parent emails within their next 48 working hours (2 working days). This includes teachers in job-sharing roles.
- If requesting a meeting, in their email, parents should briefly outline the issue or concern they wish to raise and, if the support of additional staff is required
- Teachers may request a meeting if there is an issue or concern too complex to resolve via phone call
- Emails will only be sent for school-related purposes
- Consideration will be made as to whether an email is the most appropriate form of communication, given the circumstance
- Language used in email communication will be respectful.

4.2 Our expectations of parents:

When communicating with teachers or other school staff, parents will:

- Approach the discussion in an open, courteous, and respectful manner
- Listen to the advice and feedback from staff, seeking clarification where necessary
- Appreciate that school staff must consider the requirements of all children under their responsibility, not just individuals
- Respond to teachers and other school staff in a timely manner and within specified timeframes, particularly with regards to:
 - permission slips
 - invitations to parent-teacher interviews or other school events
 - requests for reports from other allied professionals (e.g., Paediatrician, OT, Speech etc)
- Respect the **confidentiality** of discussions relating to school or classroom issues, particularly those of a sensitive nature (for example if involving another child or family), and not share conversations with other parents or school community members.

4.3 General enquiries

Our experience is that many of the answers to queries of a general nature from parents have previously been provided in formal communication material, such as the School Newsletter, What's Happening at St Ollie's, Parent Portal, St Oliver Plunkett's Facebook page or classroom emails.

Parent Representatives can be a helpful first step in confirming general information about classroom or school activities, particularly for parents and students new to the school. As part of their role, most Parent Reps keep handy formal school communications for reference in case they are asked by fellow parents to clarify information.

Student-specific enquiries

At times, parents may want to raise questions or concerns in relation to their child's academic progress or relationships within the classroom or with their peers. The classroom teacher should be the **first point of contact** for any matters involving a student's learning and progress, behaviour support and friendships.

Urgent communication

If teachers or other staff need to be contacted **urgently** (e.g., sudden family situation) or as a priority (e.g. a student unexpectedly needs to be picked up early or will be suddenly absent for some time), parents/carers must telephone the office in the first instance. Typically, the office will then advise the teacher or Leadership Team where required. When teachers do need to speak directly with a parent/carer, the teacher will call and arrange a mutually agreeable time.

In person, before or after school communication

Teachers generally use the time prior to school to prepare for the day and the time after class to finalise the day. It is important to schedule a meeting time if you wish to discuss your child with their teacher. This can be done via email or through the school office.

4.4 Communication between students and teachers/school staff

Two-way communication between students, teachers and other school staff is an integral aspect of school life. St Oliver Plunkett welcomes and encourages students to engage in appropriate conversations with all members of staff within the school. However, we must also ensure we uphold an environment of respect, professionalism, and care.

4.5 Our expectations of students:

When communicating with a teacher or staff member, students should:

- Address the staff member using their formal name (Mr, Mrs, or Ms)
- Be respectful in tone and language
- Make eye contact and speak directly to the teacher or staff member
- Only use email to communicate with teachers where appropriate and the classroom teacher has given permission (see ICLT Policy requirements)
- To speak informally or formally with their classroom teacher, the School Guidance Councillor, or a trusted member of the school staff if they have an issue or concern.

4.6 Our expectations of staff:

When communicating with students, teachers and school staff, a staff member should use the student's first name and full names of staff (Mr Surname and Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils.

Staff must only use school email accounts when communicating with students. Personal email accounts must never be used to communicate; nor should any other personal communication channels, including but not limited to; text messages, social media etc.

Communication between school administration and parents

Key communication channels used by the school administration (including Leadership Team) include:

Emails (and formal letters): the school administration team will issue regular emails about school-wide issues; often these will include a formal letter from the Principal or other member of the Leadership Team

Fortnightly school newsletter: whole-of-school school information is included in a fortnightly school newsletter, published every second Friday (odd weeks) during school terms. A link to an electronic copy of this is emailed to all parents as well as being published on the school website and parent portal

St Oliver Plunkett Catholic Primary School Facebook page: is used for reminders and promotion of extra-curricular activities as required; content is managed by the school administration team

Parent portal: is the school's repository for all relevant information including school updates, newsletters and policies, and individual student academic information; it is managed by the school administration team

Text messages: SMS text messages are sent to parents when prompt communication to the school community is required, including in the event of an emergency or school closure.

Information sessions as required: may be held to inform about and discuss specific topics such as NAPLAN, positive social/emotional behaviour programs or ICLT requirements. Members of the school Leadership Team typically attend these sessions.

Individual meetings: St Oliver Plunkett Leadership Team are available to meet with parents to discuss administrative matters or any concerns that cannot be discussed or resolved with classroom teachers. The Principal and Assistant Principals are available to meet with parents where they have an issue, concern, or matter of interest about the general operation of the school.

Our expectations of the school administration, including the Leadership Team

The school administration team, and specifically the Leadership Team, will make every attempt to ensure school communication is consistently succinct, timely, appropriate, and easy to access.

The Leadership Team is expected to:

- Approach any discussion in an open, courteous, and respectful manner
- Listen to the concerns of parents, seeking clarification where necessary
- Present information in professional and objective terms if necessary
- Provide a safe, open environment when resolving any contentious issues either between parents, between parents and teachers, or among other stakeholders
- Consider cultural and personal sensitivities and protocols when dealing with the school community
- Maintain confidentiality unless agreed otherwise or required by duty of care obligations.

4.7 School-wide communication

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School is widely regarded and respected for its strong community spirit. We often see parents taking a leadership role in organising an event either on behalf of the school or the parent community. Examples of this are the School Fete, Mother's and Father's Day Stalls, and other P + F events. Accordingly, the school's formal communication channels are used by such parents, including the P + F, to promote inclusivity and participation.

4.8 Our expectations of parents communicating to the school community

When communicating with the school community, parents should:

- Use positive, respectful, and inclusive language
- Understand that some parents may choose not to participate in activities for a range of reasons
- Be considerate with the amount and timing of communication across multiple channels
- Remember that, by using formal school communication channels, communications can affect the reputation of the school
- Only use school communication resources for school-related purposes.

Class-wide communication

The personal contact details of parents with students in the same class are shared with other parents of students within the class, via the Parent Representatives. This is primarily to allow parents to contact each other, often to arrange social events for their children or for other practical purposes.

These contact details should only be used for school- or student-related activities, not for business, marketing, or fundraising purposes.

Parents are not obliged to share their contact details via their Parent Representatives and may choose not to do so.

4.9 Matters of Welfare

In the event that a parent or teacher is seriously concerned about the welfare of their, or another's, child, this matter should be raised immediately and confidentially with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Issues arising between students (and families)

Conflicts or issues between school children will arise from time to time and, in some cases, these may require formal intervention. If this is the case, a concerned parent typically should first speak with the classroom teacher. A member of the school's Leadership Team may also provide support if deemed necessary by the teacher.

If the issue is particularly sensitive (e.g., accusations of inappropriate behaviour), a member of the school's Leadership Team may be advised first. Under no circumstances should these issues be discussed with other parents or the wider school community.

No parent should directly approach a student on behalf of their aggrieved child or to try to resolve a perceived issue without school involvement. If this occurs, the school's Leadership Team will be immediately informed and will intervene.

Parents are also cautioned against contacting another student's parents in the first instance; it is always best to initially speak with the classroom teacher or member of the Leadership Team to ascertain the best approach for resolution.

The Leadership Team and parents are responsible for maintaining respectful communications when dealing with such issues. Should such an issue remain unresolved at the local school level, it may be referred to Brisbane Catholic Education for resolution.

The School acknowledges the Brisbane Catholic Education Student Protection Policy and processes for the communication of matters relating to Student Protection and adheres to all requirements.

5. Social Media

Social Media may be used by the School and the School community as a method of communication. Social Media will be used at all times so that due respect is given to the reputation and good name of the School.

When using Social Media, our community is expected to ensure that they **do not**:

- Impersonate or falsely represent another person
- Bully, intimidate, abuse, harass or threaten others
- Make defamatory comments
- Use obscene or offensive language towards others
- Post content that is hateful, threatening or divisive.

6. Review

This policy and the supporting Annexures will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier at the discretion of the Principal.

7. Related documents

- i. The Brisbane Catholic Education Student Protection Policy and processes, available at: <http://www.bne.catholic.edu.au/students-parents/student-protection>
- ii. The School Volunteer Code of Conduct publication, available from the School office, or the online Parent Portal.
- iii. The School Media Consent Form, available from the School office, or the online Parent Portal.

Mechanism	Purpose	Action	Frequency
Communication between School and Parents/Carers			
Newsletter	To communicate key events, ideas and achievements to the School community.	Administrative staff compile the newsletter content including items from the School Leadership Team, teachers, students, the Parents & Friends Association, and community groups as appropriate.	Distributed fortnightly in digital form. A copy is uploaded to the School website. A printed copy is available in the office for collection.
Curriculum Outlines and Subject Overviews	To communicate learning goals, strategies, activities and/or programs that are specific to the student's year level.	Year level teaching teams prepare the documents collaboratively.	Distributed each year in digital form. A printed copy is available on request. Discussed during the Information Evening at the commencement of the school year.
Information Nights	To communicate detailed information relating to a specific School initiative or program and to provide opportunities for consultation.	Hosted by Executive, Principal or Assistant Principal, or teachers as appropriate. Advertised in the School Newsletter and via social media as appropriate.	Scheduled as required
Parent/Teacher interviews	Parents and teachers meet to discuss student achievement, progress and concerns.	An invitation to attend interviews is issued to parents/carers by the School administration.	Late Term 1 and late Term 3
Semester Reporting	Provides a comprehensive report about a student's academic progress, achievements, social development and work habits.	Teachers complete assessment, moderation and prepare reports. Reports are submitted to the School Leadership Team for review and comment. Reports are uploaded to the Parent Portal.	End of Semesters 1 and 2
Parent Portal (A secure online space for parents)	Presents collated information about a student including contact and medical information, academic progress and results etc.	Administrative staff compile content as information is updated and results become available.	Ongoing updates
School website	Provides information about the School, School Programs, student achievements, School Policies and provides access to supporting documents.	Administrative staff update the website weekly.	Ongoing updates

Mechanism	Purpose	Action	Frequency
Social Media (e.g. School Facebook and Instagram)	Optional method of communication allowing important or urgent updates to be relayed to participating families quickly. Alternatively, the School may post photographs* or updates of current events relating to students and the wider community.	Administrative staff manage content.	Ongoing updates as appropriate
Communication within the broader School community			
School Assemblies	To recognise and share achievements and information with students and parents.	Prepared and lead by students, teachers and the School Leadership Team. Parents advised of special presentations or celebrations.	Weekly
School Concerts Skills & Talents	To foster a sense of community and to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills through performance.	Prepared and led by students, teachers and invited guests as appropriate. Parents advised of timing.	End of school year End of each term
School notice boards	To provide additional information relating to School activities	Updated by School staff members and/or Parents and Friends members.	Ongoing updates as appropriate
Meetings of the Parents & Friends Association	To provide ongoing opportunities for parents/carers to be involved in and informed of School activities.	Chaired by elected parent/carer volunteers. Meeting times and articles are published in the school newsletter. Minutes are published on the School website.	Monthly

* Subject to necessary parent/carer consent

School Staff Communication Roles and Responsibilities:

While there are several school staff that may communicate with families about school-based information, the classroom teacher is the first port of call regarding information about learning.

Class teacher	Learning programs and progress; behaviour support including classroom, friendship and playground interactions, circumstances outside of school that may impact learning including family dynamics; homework; safety issues or changes in behaviours at home; changes to scheduled appointments; good news stories; positive feedback to the teacher.
School Office	Communication of school events; invitations to assemblies and gatherings; absences and early/late departures; payment of fees; scheduling meetings with teachers and administration staff; urgent messages; changes to pick up/drop off arrangements; changes in family circumstances; medical issues that change or arise; if your child has a communicable disease (head lice, chicken pox, etc.); planned absences (holidays inside school term times); any information relating to custody or access; change of address or contact details.
Principal	Communication regarding the overall procedures, policies and functioning of the school; positive behaviour for learning support; parent support; teacher well-being; circumstances that affect the payment of school fees; concerns or complaints
Assistant Principal, Administration	Communication regarding the overall procedures, policies and functioning of the school; positive behaviour for learning support; parent support; teacher well-being; concerns or complaints; deputising for the principal when required
Assistant Principal, Religion	St Ollie's Religious Education Program; Catholic Identity; spiritual development of children and parents; school masses and celebrations; positive behaviour for learning support; parent support; teacher well-being; concerns or complaints
Primary Learning Leader	All areas relating to curriculum; support to the principal and staff in ensuring high expectations for the engagement, learning progress and achievement of each student; positive behaviour for learning support

<p>Guidance Counsellor</p>	<p>Referrals regarding social and emotional concerns; behavioural concerns or changes; educational assessment; change in family circumstances; tragedy or trauma</p>
<p>School Parish Priest</p>	<p>Advice on help agencies and pastoral support for students and their families; enquiries about the faith development and pastoral care of students and families including the St Oliver Plunkett Sacramental Program</p>
<p>Library/ ICLT Coordinator</p>	<p>Communications about library/reading events; borrowing and overdue books; Book Club; ICLT concerns/issues; broken iPads; connection to Network First; 1-1 Program</p>

1 Purpose

This guide applies when a parent/carer moves to discuss a concern, issue or enquiry relating to the School, or to their child, with a member of the School Leadership Team or with their child's teacher. The process is also illustrated in the included flowchart.

The School maintains that the resolution of concerns is best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person and encourages parents/carers to seek an early resolution to any issue that arises.

2 Matters Relating to the School

Examples of concerns or enquiries that relate to the School include:

- Child Protection concerns
- Workplace Health & Safety concerns or observations
- Student Enrolment enquiries
- Payment of School Fees enquiries
- Staffing enquiries

The Parent/Carer should make an appointment to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team. The outcome of the meeting is to include:

- A mutual agreement of actions to be taken;
- A mutual agreement of the timeframe for actions; and
- A record of the meeting is to be retained by the School.

If a resolution cannot be reached or the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting they can direct further enquiries to the Area Supervisor for Brisbane Catholic Education School Service Centre South.

3 Matters Relating to the Classroom

Examples of concerns that relate to the classroom include:

- Curriculum enquiries
- Clarification of classroom routines
- Homework concerns or enquiries
- Social issues
- Behaviour management concerns or enquiries

The Parent/Carer should make an appointment to meet with the teacher using one of the following methods:

- Contact the school administration and arrange for the teacher to make contact to confirm a suitable meeting time;
- Contact the teacher in writing or via a brief email, requesting a suitable meeting time; or
- Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty), requesting a suitable meeting time.

Emails and written communication should be brief and all emails to teachers must be sent to the relevant teacher's School email address.

Teachers will endeavour to respond to emails within 2 working days. The School office should be contacted for matters requiring a more urgent response.

8. Complaints

The School acknowledges that parents/carers may have cause to make a complaint about an issue of concern. Complaints should be directed to the School Leadership Team or may be directed to the Area Supervisor for Brisbane Catholic Education School Service Centre South.

9. Communications Flowchart

