

<p>Castlemaine Steiner School & Kindergarten</p>	<h2>COMMUNICATIONS POLICY</h2>
<p>PURPOSE</p>	<p>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 as a whole is reflected in our commitment to clear, open communication and transparency of educational and organizational structures. High levels of professional confidentiality are maintained to ensure confidence in school communications.</p>
<p>SCOPE</p>	<p>This Policy applies to all those who have interest in or dealings with Castlemaine Steiner School & Kindergarten, including but not limited to students, parents, teachers, community members, support services.</p>
<p>AIMS</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS & PARENTS, & STUDENTS</p>	<p><i>Respectful communication, with the child's needs always at the centre, is required between teachers and parent/caregivers at all levels of the process.</i></p> <p>Communication between the Teachers and Students</p> <p>In the classroom and throughout all school activities, there is an expectation that the 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.</p> <p>Students are expected to behave respectfully and to communicate clearly to 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.</p> <p>Teachers exercise authority in the classroom in different ways as the children journey through the school. <i>(also refer to Duty of Care Policy)</i></p> <p>Code of conduct for Victorian teachers</p> <p>All teaching staff must observe the code of conduct for the Victorian teaching profession. The codes can be found on the following sites:</p> <p>Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct</p> <p>www.vit.vic.edu.au</p>

Communication between the Teachers and Parents

Class Meetings

Teachers will generally hold a class meeting one evening each term. These class meetings will have a clear agenda. Topics may include a report on curriculum, 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 class news bulletins throughout the term, to provide information on class activities.

Parent Teacher Interviews

Twice per year parent teacher interviews are conducted to exchange information about the progress and qualities of each child. These are always undertaken with the interests of the child as the focus.

Communicating a concern with a class teacher

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.

Individual meetings are to be convened at mutually convenient times. 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.

Parents may request a meeting with their teacher either in person, via a note, or by ringing the office and requesting a message be passed on to the teacher.

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.

Parents should not contact other parents or students about their concerns or complaints as the school will deal with them following due process.

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. This enables the teacher to prioritise meetings and be fully prepared with all the necessary information for the meeting.

If this initial meeting does not result in a satisfactory outcome

Raise your concerns with the Principal in writing (refer to Complaints & Grievance Policy Appendix B), 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 to have a support person present at this meeting. However, the other party must agree with the choice of support person. 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.
- That the College is made aware that a meeting is taking place and of the process that is being undertaken.
- 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 CSSK *'Complaints & Grievance Policy'*

School Newsletters

The school newsletter (The Penny) is the primary means of communication between the School and Families. All teaching staff are required to provide an update on class activities for each fortnightly Newsletter.

Written Correspondence

All written correspondence must be acknowledged in writing within a two week period. Mail/correspondence addressed to a particular staff member is to be directed unopened to them. In order to ensure confidentiality for the children, parents and the teacher involved, please mark the envelope *'confidential'*.

Confidentiality is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately.

**COMMUNICATIONS
WITH SCHOOL
MANAGEMENT
REGARDING FINANCES
AND
ADMINISTRATION**

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

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

Feedback on matters of management or administration should be provided **in writing** to the Principal who will then ensure that it is addressed in the appropriate forum.

The Principal will always acknowledge communications in writing and confirm the course of action that has been followed within a two week period.

Communicating with the Board of Directors

If the matter is related to overall school governance the communication, 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
- Acknowledges receipt of correspondence and
- Ensures that correspondence is tabled at the next available meeting of the Board of Directors

Communicating with Management on Administration matters

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

General concerns about any aspect of the school management, fees or fee statements or school finances can be raised with the Business Manager who will consult with the Management Group which meet weekly.

Feedback and suggestions on the safety or aesthetic of the school grounds and facilities can be raised with the Business Manager.

Feedback or concerns on school management, enrolment, or school daily administration can be raised with the Business Manager.

Parents may request a meeting with the relevant manager, which would then be conducted in a professional manner. In planning this meeting parents should give advance notice about *what* it is you wish to discuss so that adequate preparation can be made.

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

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.

If the parent/s or staff member are unsatisfied with the outcomes of this initial meeting/communication, parents should write their concerns to the Principal, stating the issue and requesting that a facilitated meeting be established at which at least one other management team member will be present. The Principal will always acknowledge communications in writing and confirm the course of action that has been followed within a two week period.

	<p>The purpose of this facilitated meeting will be to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the concerns or feedback raised by the parent are accurately conveyed to the school. • That the Principal fully understands them and that they have been witnessed by another Administrative team Manager. • That the Principal has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the parent. • That the School Management Group takes responsibility to support a clearly articulated action plan for taking any next steps. <p>All meetings will be documented with notes kept in the Principal’s office.</p> <p>Should this process be unsuccessful the school will offer a mediated meeting according to the Complaints & Grievance Procedures set out below.</p> <p>Communications with School Reception</p> <p>The 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.</p> <p>Parents have a responsibility to read communications from the school eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class notes • School Newsletter • School Website Messages • School Policies <p>Parents have a responsibility to advise reception staff of current contact details.</p> <p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Confidentiality is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately. Where incoming E-mail correspondence is forwarded via the office to relevant staff members, the confidentiality of the content of the email cannot be assured as emails are opened to be forwarded.</p>
<p>COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS</p>	<p><u>Respectful communication between all staff members is required at all times.</u></p> <p>All staff will commit to behaving according to the agreed Code of Conduct. All staff commit to respect, value and look after their colleagues.</p> <p>School Management Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal will ensure that communications between staff are healthy. • The Principal is responsible for organising staff meetings as required, and will provide a schedule of meetings in week 1 of each term, with the understanding that some meetings may require short notice. • The Principal will advise which meetings are mandatory. • The Principal is required to make available planning and policy documents to staff.

- The Principal ensures communication processes are followed respectfully.
- Human Resource Management matters, including matters related to employment conditions, are directed to the Principal, apart from specified responsibilities undertaken by the Business Manager.
- Where a staff member acts contrary to this or any school policy, the Principal will communicate the concern to the staff member and keep records of all meetings related to the matter.
- The Principal will ensure that all matters relating to a particular child and/or class are communicated directly with the Class Teacher.

Communication between Teachers and all Staff Members

Regular and respectful communication between teachers occurs in several forums of the school, as well as meetings as required:

Class Teachers are to attend College meetings and Faculty meetings to ensure regular and up-to-date information/communication regarding school events, to provide and give feedback on educational matters, to exchange student news and to participate in pedagogical activities, such as Child Studies.

Specialist teachers are expected to attend Specialist Faculty meetings twice a term.

Class teachers are also to communicate to specialist teachers any relevant information regarding particular classes, children or school activities.

Specialist staff are requested to take any issues they have with a student, a class, or parent:

- Directly to the class teacher in the first instance; then
- To the Principal should the above two not resolve the issue.

Administration team members meet at least twice per term.

Administration Managers also meet weekly in the Management Group.

All Class Teachers are to participate in a process of peer review annually.

Weekly and term notice boards are kept up to date with school events in the staff room.

School events are published in the fortnightly "Penny".

Staff news and information is published weekly in the Staff Memo.

Communication Concerns between Staff Members

If a communication concern occurs between staff members:

- The first step should always be to 'go direct' to the person/s. That is to communicate the issue directly to the person/s concerned in a space and at a time which allows for respectful exploration of the concern.
- If a staff member is dissatisfied with a previous communication, the next step in the process is to clearly outline the concern in writing to the Principal stating the issue and requesting that a **facilitated meeting** be established within a two week period.
- Either party may request to have a support person present at this meeting, however

the other party must agree with the choice of support person. Any staff member who does not have a conflict of interest may be called as a party to this meeting.

- In some cases an outside facilitator may be brought in to manage the meeting.
- The purpose of this facilitated meeting will be to ensure:
 - That the concerns raised are accurately conveyed.
 - That each of the staff in conflict and the Principal fully understand the concerns.
 - That the teacher or staff member has an opportunity to respond directly to the concerns and that the nature of the response has been heard and understood by the other.
 - That the Principal manages a clearly articulated action plan for taking any future steps.
 - All such meetings will be fully documented with records kept in the Principal's office
- If this **facilitated meeting** does not result in a satisfactory outcome:
 - The staff members are asked to address their concerns in a letter to the School Principal to ensure that the matter has followed correct process to date.
- Should the procedures be in order, circumstances will now require handling as a Grievance (*refer Grievance Procedure below*).
- If the problem involves the Principal, then the concern should be directed to the Board of Directors in writing.

General Procedures in Staff Communications

- Meetings and general communication should be held in an appropriate space and at a time as mutually agreed.
- If a either requests a third person to be present at any meeting, this request must be met with the agreement of both parties.
- Notes may be taken at meetings, including agreed outcomes which are passed on to other parties.

Role of third party/support

To ensure information is passed clearly between Teachers and Administration, Business and /Site Management:

- Wherever possible information or requests for tasks should be by email to ensure that responses can be followed up.
- Teachers need always to be respectful of office staff workload and request potentially big jobs very early.
- Teachers need to be aware of the workload of the Site Manager and put written requests for tasks into the Site Manager's pigeon hole with an indication of the urgency of the task.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately. Where incoming E-mail correspondence is forwarded to relevant staff members, the confidentiality of the content of the email cannot be assured as emails are opened to be forwarded.

All staff are responsible to uphold the confidentiality statement on their Position Descriptions.

Written Correspondence

Mail/letters addressed to particular teachers/staff members is to be directed unopened to the appropriate teacher.

Confidentiality is essential for children, families and all staff members in all areas of school communications. Written letters are preferred to ensure sealed correspondence is delivered appropriately. Where incoming E-mail correspondence is forwarded to relevant staff members, the confidentiality of the content of the email cannot be assured as emails are opened to be forwarded.

All staff are expected to adhere to the confidentiality statement on their Position Descriptions.

Responding to Verbal Enquiries, Concerns and Complaints

1.Enquiry/concern/complaint



2.Listen actively



3.Respond to all issues



4.Agree on actions and timelines



5.Record



6.Follow up

sample process for responding to written enquiries, concerns and complaints:

- maintain confidentiality at all times;
- assess the seriousness of a complaint;
- acknowledge the enquiry, concern or complaint with a prompt written reply within five working days, even if a resolution is not available at this stage;

- clarify your understanding of the problem as soon as possible;
- identify action and timelines in writing and include a name and contact number;
- respond to all issues raised;
- take action within stated timelines;
- record the complaint, the action and the outcome;
- review the situation and confirm with the parent that the matter has been resolved; and
- if necessary, review relevant school/office policy or procedures.

Procedure for responding to Written Enquiries, Concerns and Complaints

1. Acknowledge receipt



2. Identify action timelines



3. Confirm actions



4. Take action



5. Record



6. Follow up

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