



Education
Public Schools

Gravesend Public School Communication Procedures



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Parents naturally want the very best for their children. What exactly is “the best” of course differs greatly from one parent to the next, essentially, we all want our children to be successful and happy – and to feel secure in all aspects of their lives.

During their school years, the home and school occupy the greatest part of their time – and carry the greatest influence on their development into adulthood. The more harmony there is between home and school, the greater will be the chances of achievement and fulfilment.

The contribution which parents have traditionally made in schools is highly valued. However, children (first and foremost), parents, teachers and the school community stands to reap major benefits from even stronger ties.

The “best” possible outcomes from all children’s education are very much enhanced by a strong partnership between parents, teachers and students.

Introduction

This policy is about parents and our school. It uses the term “parent” to refer to people who have the responsibility for the care of children attending school.

Children learn best when school programs offer some understanding of their background. Therefore, a strong partnership between parents and school becomes all the more important when the complex and rapidly changing nature of our society is considered.

The Department of Education, and this school, encourages participation because:

- Parents have a unique knowledge and understanding of their own children, being their first and most influential educators
- Parents have the right, through their responsibility to and for their children, to be informed about their children’s learning and to participate in reaching decisions which affect them
- Parents have talents, interests, energies and skills which enrich the life and program of the school.

Involvement and Participation

Involvement . . .

Refers to the contribution which parents make to the life and business of a school without necessarily being part of the decision-making process. Many parents are already involved in their child’s school in a variety of ways. Their involvement may range from assisting with special classes to working in the canteen or listening to children reading. Parents can also be involved by being consulted on particular issues by decision-makers.

Participation . . .

refers to parents sharing in the making of decisions about school aims, policies and programs with staff and students. Participation may be through the P&C, sub-committees, or in preparing submissions on issues of special interest.

The Department of Education is committed both to increasing parents’ involvement and to ensuring that parents can participate in school decision-making if they wish to do so. The nature and level of each parent’s involvement and participation remains a matter of individual choice.

Involvement and participation are equally valuable and parents should have the opportunity to choose how they are involved, or how they participate, from a wide range of options agreed upon by the school community.

In encouraging the involvement and participation of parents in our school the following guidelines will be observed:

- Any involvement and participation recognise the framework of relevant legislation and NSW Department of Education guidelines.

- Any involvement and participation must not conflict with the specific professional responsibilities for which principals, teachers and non-teaching staff are accountable.

For example, while parents should participate in the development of a school Behaviour Code for Students, it is the responsibility of the principal and teachers to manage student behaviour on a day-to-day basis.

Responsibilities

All of us: each and every parent, the school principal, teachers, non - teaching staff and school counsellor, have a role to play in encouraging and supporting parent and community engagement in our school.

The Responsibilities of the Principal

The Principal will:

- consult with parents and plan to promote parent involvement and participation.
- endeavour to foster the interest, knowledge and skills of parents who have not previously been involved.
- ensure that information is made available to parents, establishing new channels of communication where necessary.
- monitor and evaluate parent participation practices.
- include, wherever possible and relevant, parents in staff development and school development activities.
- address, investigate and provide feedback on, the concerns of parents when expressed directly to the Principal.

The Responsibilities of Teachers

Teachers will continue to work with parents to:

- help parents feel welcome in the classroom, for example, through activities including class parents' meetings.
- build good relationships with parents and children.
- ensure that parents and non – teaching staff have all relevant information about their children's education
- seek the views of all parents on matters relating to their children's education
- promote the idea of their parents' participation among children.
- create a welcoming environment for all members of the school community.

The Responsibilities of SAS Staff

- Create a welcoming environment for all members of the school community.
- Provide professional and friendly customer service.
- Work with teaching staff to communicate relevant information about children's education when needed.
- Promote a positive attitude towards our school community.
- Communicate any concerns to a supervisor in a manner which allows for positive action to be taken.

The Responsibilities of Parents

Parents have a responsibility to:

- cooperate with school staff, other parents and students in the interest of their child's education.
- show an active interest in their child's schooling.
- express their opinion in relation to school matters.
- communicate concerns in a manner which allows for positive action to be taken.
- support the implementation of school policies.
- assist the school in establishing a set of shared values and expectations.

The Responsibilities of Children

Children have a responsibility to:

- develop an understanding of the school's Behaviour Code for Students
- cooperate with each other and with school staff to create a happy and safe learning environment.
- take every opportunity to learn as much and as well as possible through always trying to do their personal best.
- Communicating concerns

There will be times where parents wish to query something or make a complaint concerning something which has occurred at school.

So that we have the best possible chance of arriving at a solution which is best for all parties concerned, it helps if parents can give us a clear view of

- What is seen to be the problem?
- What action or outcome is desired?

In many cases, the class teacher may be the appropriate person to approach. All teachers are willing to set times where they can meet with parents to discuss concerns. Parents should either contact the teacher to arrange a time, or arrange this through the office.

In other cases, parents may wish to discuss their concerns with the Principal. On these occasions it is essential that parents contact the office to arrange a mutually suitable time to meet with the relevant person regarding their concerns, as little can be done to address issues which are not communicated directly.

It must be understood that it is not always possible for the action which is requested to be followed or for the desired outcome to be attained.

It is hoped, though, that if concerns are communicated at the time they are felt, then everybody can do their best to get as close as possible to a fair and workable solution.

“Always our Best”

VISITORS' AGREEMENT

This agreement has been developed to ensure that the school community is aware of the conditions and procedures regarding visitors and volunteers to Gravesend Public School.

The school as part of the wider community seeks to provide an open and friendly learning environment, which values and actively promotes and encourages visitors to our school. At the same time, we recognise our duty of care to ensure a safe environment for our students and staff, and we recognise our responsibility to protect and preserve our resources against theft, vandalism and misuse.

GPS AIMS:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for our students, staff and resources.
- To establish protocols and procedures that effectively monitors and manages visitors, whilst not compromising the open and inviting nature of the school.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

- Whilst we actively encourage an inviting and open school, the safety of our students, staff and resources remain our highest priorities.
- Visitors are defined as all people other than staff members, students, and parents/guardians involved in the task of delivering or collecting children at the start or end of the school day.
- All visitors will be required to report to the School Office prior to undertaking any activity within the school, where they will be required to sign a Visitors Book. Similarly, visitors will be required to report to the office at the end of their visit to "sign out" in the Visitors book.
- Contractors will be required to present identification, sign in and complete necessary paper work in relation to their work at the school. Appropriate identification should be displayed by contractors, delivery personnel, sales staff and anyone else on the school site for business purposes. If this identification is not displayed, the principal will determine legitimacy and deny or permit the person entry onto the school premises.
- Parent helpers/volunteers need to present at the office to sign the Visitors' Register.
- Volunteers working in any capacity with children will be required to complete a *requirements for Working With Children (WWCC) as stated in the DoE WWCC Policy*.
- Parents who are collecting children prior to finishing time at 3:00pm or dropping children off after 9:00am are required to report to the office and sign their child in or out.
- Visitors within the school who have failed to follow this process will be reminded to do so.
- The principal reserves the right, and has the authority to prohibit any potential visitor from entering or remaining within the school, and also has the authority to invite or exclude people from using or being within the school boundaries outside school operating hours.
- The school's emergency management procedures will ensure that visitors within the school at the time of any emergency or practice drill will be recognised and be appropriately catered for.
- In the event that the office is unattended, visitors must remain at the front office or communicate with the teacher in the primary (big) classroom.

Related School Procedures

- Wellbeing Procedures
- Working With Children Check Procedures

Related Documents and References

- DoE Prohibited Employment Policy
- Child Protection Legislation 1997
- Inclosed Lands Protection Act (1901) and Amendments
- DoE Legal Bulletin Issue 31

VISITORS CODE OF CONDUCT

We have an outstanding level of parental support at Gravesend Public School. Our school could not function at the optimum level without this support. All parents who enter onto any school premises do so in the knowledge that the school community and the Department of Education expect them to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times so that student learning and school programs do not become compromised.

Parents and visitors to the school are expected to:

- Treat all persons associated with the school with respect and courtesy
- Keep clear of all buildings and entrances
- Make appointments in advance rather than expecting to obtain an interview immediately
- Leave the grounds if requested by the Principal or nominee
- Comply with Government Legislation in regards to no smoking or alcohol on school grounds
- Allow staff to supervise, investigate and manage students without interference
- Never directly approach another person's child as the school will deal with issues between students as part of the school's Wellbeing Procedures
- Discuss issues or concerns about the school, staff or students through the correct procedures, by raising concerns with the principal
- Request permission to enter the school when they have a lawful excuse
- Follow school procedures governing entry and behaviour on school grounds, including any restrictions that may be imposed i.e.
 - All visitors must sign in and out at the front office.
 - School functions involving large numbers of visitors, such as presentation days, sports day, school concerts, open days and the like are precluded from signing in procedures

Visitors and volunteers are also expected:

- to be outstanding role models for all students
- to work under the professional direction of staff, following school procedures
- to speak in a kind and friendly way to all students and staff
- to maintain confidentiality
- to report any issues of concern to teachers (and not directly intervene)
- to keep a safe and professional distance from all students

Failure to abide by this Code of Conduct, or when any of the following occur, will lead to the provisions of the *Inclosed Lands Protection Act (1901) and its Amendments* being followed:

- Actual physical assaults or threatened physical assaults on students, staff, parents or community members at the school or during the course of school activities
- Behaviour in a manner in the presence of students, staff, parents or other visitors to the school that causes alarm or concern to the students, staff, parents or other visitors
- Use of offensive language (i.e. swearing) in the presence of students or staff
- Persistent interruptions to the learning environment of the school such as entering classrooms without permission
- Persistent entry to the school site without permission or legitimate reason.

Under the terms of the Act, the Principal (or nominee) has the legal authority to:

- direct the person to immediately leave the grounds
- call the police to remove the person should he/she refuse
- restrict or withdraw future permission (by letter) for the person to enter the grounds without permission of the principal
- seek further legal avenues

Approaching the School

From time to time parents or other members of the school community may need to approach the school in order to:

- Discuss the progress or welfare of own child
- Express concern about actions of other students
- Enquire about school procedures
- Express concern about actions of staff

It is therefore necessary to have procedures that will help solve problems as soon as possible so that a safe and harmonious school environment is maintained. The best results usually flow from working together.

These guidelines aim to:

- provide a guide to ensure that concerns are dealt with in an open and fair manner
- ensure that the rights of students, teachers and parents are respected and upheld
- support sensitivity and confidentiality
- help reach an agreed solution
- Remind parents that information is available on the Departments website to assist community and consumer complaints: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/epac/community-and-consumer-complaints>

On occasion, concerns may cause frustration and anxiety. At such times it is always important to organise a time to talk with school staff in an unhurried and confidential atmosphere.

Please note:

Under no circumstances should a parent directly approach another person's child. The school will deal with issues between students as part of the school's Wellbeing Procedures.

CONCERN	APPROPRIATE ACTION
The academic progress of own child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directly contact the child's teacher either by note, by phone or in person to arrange a suitable time to discuss any issues.
The wellbeing of own child	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For minor issues directly contact your child's teacher to clarify information.• For more serious concerns, contact office. State nature of concern and arrange a suitable time to talk with class teacher or appropriate staff member.• To convey information about change of address, telephone number, emergency contact, custody details, health issues etc. please contact the office.
Actions of other students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the class teacher for a classroom problem and minor playground issues.• Contact the Principal for playground problems.
Department policy or school procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact office. State nature of concern and make an appointment to see the principal and/or appropriate member of staff.
Actions of a staff member	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the office and state concerns to the principal.• Arrange to meet directly with the principal.

In very rare cases, where people wishing to express concerns, do so in an aggressive, threatening or violent manner, the principal (or nominee) has the legal authority under the 'Inclosed Lands Act' to:

- direct the person to immediately leave the grounds.
- call the police to remove the person should he/she refuse.
- withdraw future permission (by letter) for the person to enter the grounds without permission
- seek further legal avenues.

Your cooperation is sought in maintaining a safe and happy school.

Parents as Employees

Purpose

This statement has been developed to ensure that the school community is aware of the conditions and procedures regarding teaching and non-teaching staff members as parents of students at our school.

Rationale

As a small community and school our employees both teaching and non-teaching staff may have dual roles as a parent and an employee of the school. In an effort to preserve both the parental, personal and professional roles of our employees we endeavour to facilitate an environment that values the ongoing positive engagement whilst supporting their children in their educational pathways.

Aims:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for our parents, students and staff.
- To establish protocols and procedures that effectively manages the dual role of parent and employee, whilst not compromising the open and inviting nature of the school.
- To establish protocols and procedures that facilitates effective communication procedures for parents as employees of the school.

Parents as Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff:

- Implement and support the School Community Charter, Child Protection, Dignity and Respect in the Workplace and Code of Conduct policies.
- Make appointments in advance rather than expecting to obtain an interview immediately.
- Appointments are to be made through the front office in which an appropriate time will be sort.
- Allow staff to supervise, investigate and manage students without interference whilst respecting the decisions of your colleagues.
- The school will deal with issues between students as part of the school's Wellbeing Procedures.
- Remove yourself from/acknowledge potential conflicts of interests and seek advice from your supervisor.
- Discuss issues or concerns about the school, staff or students through the correct procedures.
- Maintain your professional role at all times when interacting with students, parents and the community.
- Maintain levels of confidentiality and respect your role within the school when engaging with staff, students, parents and community.
- Parent teacher communication is to remain evidence based, factual and focused on the educational pathway of the student in relation to the school.
- Separate the personal from the professional. When having meetings regarding your child acknowledge that you are a parent in the discussion.

Teachers Approaching Parents as Employees:

- Contact parents after school hours have concluded.
- Make appointments outside of school hours.
- Parent teacher communication is to remain evidence based, factual and focused on the educational pathway of the student in relation to the school.
- Maintain your professional role at all times when interacting with the parent.
- Maintain levels of confidentiality and respect your role within the school when engaging with parents.

Informal resolution - Tips for dealing with workplace conflict early

The Department is committed to a workplace that provides **dignity and respect**.

Our daily interaction with others reflects on the Department's reputation. Therefore, all employees are expected to be approachable, courteous and prompt in dealing with other people, including students, other employees (irrespective of their position or seniority), and members of the community. It is preferable to try to settle a problem early rather than allow it to escalate into a larger and more difficult dispute. In the event an informal resolution can not be reached, refer below.

Listed are some tips on how to deal with workplace issues as they arise. Practice these techniques and you will feel more empowered and your colleagues will appreciate your openness and candour.

Timing

- Choose a good time to approach the other person so that neither of you is rushed.
- Find a place where you can both be comfortable and speak quietly for a while without interruption.
- Explain that something has been worrying you and you would like to sort it out.

Planning

- Think about what you want to say beforehand.
- It is important to state clearly what the problem is and what you would like to see happen.

Language

- Try to use "I" language instead of "You" e.g. "I need to have, do or feel 'whatever'".
- "Can we work this out?" usually works better than - "You didn't do 'whatever'" or "You made me feel 'whatever'". This implies that the other person is in the wrong or is to blame

Listening

- Let the person know you are listening. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to talk to someone who does not appear to be listening.
- Give the person a chance to tell you the other side of the story. Be prepared to relax, listen, and take everything in. Do not be tempted to interpret the other person's behaviour. You may get it very wrong. Ask clarifying questions to make sure you have understood what they are saying. Say that you are glad you are talking about the problem - and mean it. This helps to ease the tension and is a great help in moving things towards an agreement.

Resolving

- Try to work together to generate solutions.
- Ask "what if..." questions.
- Let's try..." approach
- Chunk the problems – break them up into sections
- Encourage a tentative agreement; and
- Agree to check with each other to see how things are going.

Related Documents and References

- Informal resolution - Tips for dealing with workplace conflict early: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/epac/feedback-and-complaints/staff-complaints-toolkit/informal-resolution-tips-for-dealing-with-workplace-conflict-early>
- School and Community Charter: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/media/documents/school-community-charter.pdf>