



St Columba's School Bayswater

Grow in Faith Seek Wisdom Live in Peace

Communications Policy

VISION STATEMENT

St Columba's Primary School aims to foster the total development of each individual, within a loving community, that is totally committed to supporting the Catholic faith, principles and ideals within the framework of the Mercy Values.

Art Lombardi

19 January 2018

Document Title: Communications Policy 2018				
Approved By	AL	Next Review Date	2019	Printed copies of this document are not controlled.
Originally Released	2013	Review Frequency Annually	Reviewed	2015, 2017, 2018

Rationale

Communication forms an integral part of the way that the school conducts its business and for this reason this policy has an overarching nature. The flow of information within the school community is a critical aspect of the functioning and success of the school. If managed correctly communication is a tool that will foster a sense of community by providing a voice for all and enabling us to belong. It will also allow us to meet our statutory obligations with regard to government and educational authorities. The onus is on all involved if the communication networks are to be successful.

Objectives

The school strategic plan, previous Board decisions and a thirst for continuous improvement have led to the development of the following objectives to meet our communication needs.

- Communication within the school community has been identified in the school strategic plan as an area of focus to increase inclusivity in the St Columba community.

Objective 1

The school will endeavour to communicate more effectively to promote a greater awareness of the school, culture, services and achievements to parents, staff and the broader community via various events and notifications.

- The School Board decided to go paperless in 2012. The environmental and economic reasons are self-evident, however, for some people this change has led to disengagement requiring the Board and Principal to re-engage with this group.

Objective 2

The school will identify the methods for communications via the school website and at parent information meetings to educate and improve participation rates.

Objective 3

The school will use paperless methods of communication except when regulations require otherwise or the Principal or Board deem a more effective method is required.

- Due to the changing nature of technology and the multitude of communication methods and tools available, the school will need to consider these factors periodically to determine the most suitable methods and tools required.

Objective 4

The school will investigate the most effective methods for receiving and disseminating information to the school community by reviewing available technology and surveying stakeholder preferences at a minimum of every review of this policy.

- Timeliness and efficiency of communication are essential to good relations.

Objective 5

Communications requiring a response or participation/attendance are to be released with sufficient time to allow an adequate response or time to organise participation in the event.

Processes for dealing with correspondence

Dealing with correspondence, inward and outward, can be a time consuming process and as such streamlining the process as much as possible to improve efficiency is desired. The following information deals with the classification and formality of correspondence, followed by a summary of methods used and processes for dealing with correspondence inwards and outwards.

It goes without saying that not all correspondence is equal and as such this is an important factor in participation with the process. Too much information leads to overload and disengagement where critical information can be missed; or too little information leading to frustration and disenchantment. Essentially it is a matter of balance and determining the importance of the message and how best to engage with the target audience with the methods available.

There are four broad categories that correspondence will belong to:

1. Critical correspondence requiring a response
2. Critical information
3. General correspondence requiring a response
4. General information

It is important to remember that what the sender might consider critical the receiver may not and vice versa. As such consideration should be paid to highlighting the relative importance of the correspondence.

[Annex A: Communication Interactions](#) highlights the majority of communicating groups and methods used at St Columba's. As the table in Annex A highlights there are many methods already in use and different levels of formality required. The correct level of formality and method of communication needs to be determined for each situation by the individual or group and their professionalism and respect for others should lead to valuable interaction. [Annex B: Correspondence Flow Charts](#) illustrates how correspondence can be dealt with in a consistent framework.

Communication methods

As stated in the objectives, St Columba's aims to be a paperless school and currently is in a transition phase towards meeting this goal. As such and where possible, all correspondence should aim to use a non-paper format.

Currently, the communications methods used for outward correspondence are generally based upon two key factors; the classification category of the correspondence and the time available to deliver and respond to the correspondence. The current methods for each category are listed in the table below.

Table 1: Current communication methods used for the four categories of correspondence outward

Category of correspondence	Preferred method(s)
Critical correspondence requiring a response or consent	Letter (hard Copy), interviews

Critical information	Letter (hard copy), website (notification via email and including newsletter), booklet, meetings, email
General correspondence requiring a response	Attachment to newsletter, email
General information	Website (including newsletter), meetings, email, assemblies

These are preferred methods but may be altered if required e.g. If General correspondence requires a response at short notice then a hard copy letter may be required. Also, responses to 'Inward Correspondence', where possible, should be by non-paper methods. Additionally, the preferred methods and tools may change during the life of this document.

The use of other paperless methods of communication will require the research of tools available, their cost effectiveness and their engagement with our stakeholders if the aim of a paperless school that maintains good communications is to be achieved.

Authority to release information

Correspondence distributed under the auspices of the school needs to be controlled to the extent that the reputation of the school is maintained at a high level and is not damaged. For these reasons anyone wishing to release or disseminate information using the school name requires the appropriate authority to do so.

Authority to release information is obtained from the Principal, Acting Principal or the Principal's delegate. This will ensure the consistency of the content and the standard of correspondence released.

To keep the approval process from becoming cumbersome it is understood that if permission is sought and granted for an activity/function/event/task/other then it is inherent in the approval that approval for correspondence relating to such is granted. If the Principal requires further information about the correspondence to be issued then this should be made clear at this time.

Annex A: Interactions

Communications Interactions (most common and not exclusive)

To / From	Principal	Staff	Parents	Students	Board	P & F	Parish	CEO	Government	Local Community	Contractors and SP
Principal		Meetings written verbal	Interviews newsletter website notes	Assemblies; F2F**	Board meetings; email; functions	P&F meetings; email	Board meeting Email;	Post; email; meetings; telephone	Post; email; telephone	Website	Email; phone; written agreements
Staff	Verbal; meeting; email	Email; verbal; meetings	Interviews; email; notes;		Via Principal	Via class rep	Email, phone, F2F	As per requirement	As per requirements	Verbal, mail	As per requirement
Parents	Verbal, email, F2F, assemblies	Email, phone, F2F	F2F, school functions, P&F		correspondence in	P&F reps, Locked box				Participation in events	As per instructions
Students	Verbal	As per instruction	Verbal				Mass			Verbal	As per instruction
Board	Board meetings, email	Via Principal	Newsletter, website		email	Via P&F rep on Board	Via Priest	Written, verbal as per Board instruction	Written	Website, written	Written, email
P & F	Meetings, email	P&F reps	Reps, notes, website	Notices	Rep	Email, meetings	Email		Written	Participation	Written, email
Parish	Email, written, verbal	Mass, liturgies, email	Via priest, school, Mass	Priest - mass	Meetings functions	Board meeting				Mass	Email, written
CEO	Written, email		Written, via school		Written	Written					
Govt	Written		Written, signs, reps at openings		Written						

Local Community	Written, verbal	Written verbal	Written verbal	Written verbal	Written verbal	Written verbal					
Contractors and SP*	Written, verbal	Written verbal	Written		Written verbal	Written verbal					

SP* – Service Provider; F2F** – face to face; Note: Written includes email; Shaded area – minor, inconsequential or not relevant to this policy

Annex B: Correspondence

Ultimately, all correspondence from the school is made at the behest of the Principal. The Principal may delegate responsibility for various communications to others as required but it is a shared responsibility to ensure that all correspondence meets the level of professionalism that is expected from our school.