



Albion Primary School

COMMUNICATION

PURPOSE

At Albion Primary School, we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that builds positive relationships. We believe that the relationship between home and school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. As a school community, we are committed to working together to meet the various needs of our school. Central to achieving this is open, effective communication between all members of the school community. The school's values of respect, honesty, care, learning and achievement underpin any form of communication. Communication within the school context is multi-faceted and all aspects are essential to the correct and smooth running of Albion Primary School. It is required to uphold our duty of care to students, and comply with departmental and legal requirements. This policy complements, but does not relate directly to the normal curriculum based communication to be found within a classroom environment that is centred on teaching and learning.

OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that effective communication takes place between all school community members
- To ensure that processes are in place which allow for open communication amongst all school community members
- To ensure that confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- To ensure that clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines are provided which allow information, issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner, and
- To ensure that a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained.

SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, parents, visitors and carers.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Our school is committed to open and cooperative communication. This practice, however, recognises that staff members have legal, departmental, local, professional and social obligations to the communication of information. Information must be provided to the school community in a timely and punctual manner. It needs to be accurate and exhibit a high level of professionalism.

Communication within and beyond the school community can take many forms, including but not limited to:

The dissemination of information to the school community and beyond

- Staff meetings are held once a week. Daily happenings are written on the whiteboard in the staff room. Email is a regular communication channel used by staff to disseminate information. A daily memo of events is recorded on Compass.
- Consultative Committee Meetings are held when an issue for discussion is tabled. Extraordinary meetings to be held as necessary.
- The school website www.albionps.vic.edu.au is a public source of information about the school. It is updated on a regular basis to ensure information is current and correct.
- The policies of Albion Primary School guide and describe the main processes, functions and operations of the school. The development and review of policies is part of an agreed process to ensure that key stakeholders are part of the consultation and review process.
- New policies will be added and modified as required.
- All policies will use the school policy format, meet legislative and compliance requirements, and have a designated review period.
- When developing a new policy, the Principal will consult with appropriate personnel in order to draft the initial policy statement. The Department policy templates will be used as a basis of each policy format. Policies that have been recommended for consultation or ratification by the School Council may be circulated for comment to the staff. These will then be tabled in School Council meetings.
- Policies will be developed taking into account departmental policies, memos and circulars relating to a particular policy area.
- A policy booklet is kept as a database of policies and a review schedule is included at the front of the booklet to provide a timeline for reviews.
- Changes as a result of policy developments and/or reviews will be widely advised to students, staff, parents and carers as appropriate.
- Staff will be given opportunity to provide input into the policy development or review process as it pertains to them.
- The focus of all school policies must reflect the needs of students and school operations.
- Policies are communicated to relevant parties as required. (See Communication Action Plan following).
- All staff have access to school policies via the staff server. Staff are consulted when policies are reviewed.
- Electronic communication of events and happenings are 'pushed' via email to those who have provided email addresses
- The school newsletter is produced fortnightly during each term and hard copies are sent home to families. An electronic copy is on the school's website. It is also available electronically to parents who have provided the school with an email address.
- Letters and notes home to parents/guardians about excursions, incursions, sports days, camps, competitions, class or subject activities. These are on school letterhead and are to be approved by leadership before they are reproduced and sent home. An electronic copy is put onto the staff server and onto the website where possible.
- Albion Parents' Association meets once a week.
- School assembly notices are presented to the community
- New parents are provided with an enrolment pack and information booklet.

Educational reporting

- Two comprehensive written reports are provided to parents/carers each semester.
- Results of national competitions and NAPLAN (National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy) testing for students in years 3 and 5 are distributed.
- The school's annual report is available as a hard copy on request or on the school's website

Parent/Teacher Communication

It is imperative that teachers seek to maintain open lines of honest and timely communication with parents, and vice-versa. This is achieved through diligence and effort on the part of the teacher, and is a reflection of the respect and care that we value at Albion. Communication with parents and teachers includes:

- Parents readily communicating with teachers face to face at any mutually agreeable time throughout the school year, electronically by sending an email through to the school's email account or teacher's edumail account, or in written format directly to the teacher
- Active input from all in our school community with the primary approach to seeking parental input through the members of School Council
- Broader consultation throughout the school community where required and this consultation will be inclusive and non-discriminatory
- Student diaries for older students
- Reading record book for younger and middle primary years
- Parent/Teacher conferences. These take place in term 1 for the purpose of information dissemination to and from the school and family. Early in term 3, following the first semester report, a three-way conference between parent, teacher and student is conducted
- Informal in person, telephone, email or written communication
- Advice to parents/guardians regarding educational matters
- Additional meetings for students on Individual Learning Plans or those funded under the *Program for Students with Disabilities*
- Some policies distributed to all families as a hard copy at the beginning of each year
- Some school policies are located on the school website for parents to access, and
- Parents requesting school policies as hard copies or being directed to access the school's website.

Communication required for administrative, legal or government purposes

A number of items of written communication are required to meet school administrative, legal or government regulations. These are as follows:

- Absence notes – written notification of absence is required. Parents can write a note or access electronic absence notification via the website. Parents are able to call the school and give verbal notification of absence. This absence information is then recorded on Compass.
- Early departure notification – Students who are departing early from school must be 'signed out' at the office by a parent/carer/responsible adult and a member of staff. An early departure note is then given to the classroom/specialist teacher explaining the reason for the early departure. This early departure is recorded on Compass.

- Advanced notification of planned student absences for periods in excess of three days is required. This can help students' families and staff effectively plan and cater for extended absences. This may include student illness and family travel.
- Notifications of enrolments and exits from the school. Enrolment forms need to be completed prior to enrolment and appropriate documentation cited. Students exiting the school require transfer notifications.
- Notices and permission forms regarding excursions, camps must be completed and stored at school.

STAFF

Staff have the responsibility to keep their students and students' parents informed of teaching and learning that is happening in the classrooms. This occurs through:

- Displays around the school
- Unit newsletters
- Notices
- Homework
- Informal meetings
- Student Showcase evening
- Information on the school website, and
- Emails to parents.

As a matter of professional courtesy, staff will communicate with the Principal before making public comment or formal statement on educational issues or that bears on the organisation or program of the school or place of work. The Principal and School Council President will ensure that each other are informed.

PARENTS

Parents have the responsibility to ensure medical information that can affect the health and wellbeing of their child is communicated to the school. They must provide medical action plans to the school for health conditions including anaphylaxis, diabetes and asthma.

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child, the procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the issue. Contact can be made using one of the following approaches:

- Speak with the appropriate teacher to request a meeting, either before or after school hours, but not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty.
- Contact the school by phone on **9311 1325** or by coming to the office personally. Ask a school administration officer to arrange for the teacher to contact you to make a suitable meeting time. Teachers are usually not available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time or whilst on yard duty.
- Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via the school email address to organise a suitable meeting time. The school email address is albion.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au
- No parent should approach the children of other families or their parents with a school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

The information below outlines key contacts to ensure that members of the school community are directed to the most appropriate person to assist them with their queries:

- To report a student absence, please contact the Business Manager, Jan van Berendonk.
- To report any urgent issues relating to a student on a particular day, please contact the office staff or your child's classroom teacher.
- To discuss a student's academic progress, health, camps or excursions please contact your child's classroom teacher.
- To make an enquiry about the Program for Students with Disabilities or transition, please contact the Assistant Principal, Andrea Murray.
- To discuss a concern about a student's wellbeing or safety, please contact the Child Safety Officer/Wellbeing Coordinator, Jann Turner.
- To make a complaint, please contact the Principal, Adrienne Williamson or the Assistant Principal, Andrea Murray. Please also refer to our *Parent Complaints* policy for further information.
- To report a potential hazard or incident on the school site, please contact the school office either by phone or in person.
- For parent payments, please contact the business manager, Jan van Berendonk.
- For all other enquiries, please contact the school office.

School staff will do our best to respond to general queries as soon as possible and ask that you allow us 2 – 3 working days to provide you with a detailed response. The school will endeavour to respond to urgent matters within 24 hours where possible.

When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with the Principal by contacting the school office, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and asking the office manager to arrange a suitable meeting time.

In all cases if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and the process to work towards a resolution, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

If a parent has a complaint, they should refer to the *Parent Complaints* policy. Parents may raise issues with the School Council, address School Council at a scheduled meeting and attend School Council meetings to contribute to an agenda item by prior arrangement with the Principal.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Parents and carers are generally entitled to information ordinarily provided to parents, including school reports and newsletters.

Parents and carers seeking information that is not ordinarily provided to parents are encouraged to apply for access through the Freedom of Information process, or, if the information is sought for use in court proceedings, by issuing a subpoena.

Freedom of Information requests should be directed to:

Manager – Freedom of Information Unit
Department of Education and Training
2 Treasury Place

EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
03 9637 3134
foi@edumail.vic.gov.au

STUDENTS

All staff members are required to ensure that all students in their care are able to address requests for information or concerns to the appropriate person. Students are encouraged to communicate directly with their teachers or through the Wellbeing teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal and support staff.

- Students are encouraged to raise issues through the Junior School Council.
- Student feedback is part of all classrooms and across all school activities.
- Outbound communication with students is through school assembly, Junior School Council, letters, school newsletters, notices and verbal means as appropriate.

MEDIA

Any public comment made on issues relating to education should be such that it cannot be construed as a negative criticism of the school or its students or staff. As a matter of professional courtesy, staff will communicate with the Principal before making public comment or formal statement on educational issues or that bears on the organisation or program of the school or place of work. The Principal and School Council President will ensure that each other are informed.

OTHER EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

At times during the execution of teaching duties, staff members will have to make contact with external organisations. At all times, staff members need to speak and act in a professional and appropriate manner. This includes:

- Speaking to suppliers in order to garner relevant information for ordering educational teaching materials or supplies.
- Making bookings for visiting speakers, excursions and camps. It is imperative that approval is sought from the Principal or Assistant Principal before committing to any of these external providers.
- The school will only collect consensual personal information that is required and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.
- Any person seeking information from the school must be directed to the Principal or delegate who may require that a formal written *Freedom of Information* request be made.
- Requests by police and/or other external government agencies for information and interviews must be directed to the Principal or delegate.
- All staff, in consultation with the Principal, will comply with court subpoenas to provide information as requested.

EVALUATION

This policy was updated in September 2019. It will be reviewed in September 2023.