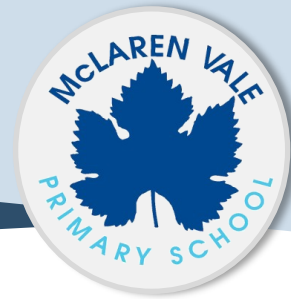


# MVPS COMMUNICATION POLICY



Updated February 2024

## RATIONALE:

At McLaren Vale Primary School, we believe in building good relationships and having a strong partnership between the school and its community to promote a positive learning environment for students. We are committed to open, honest and timely communication which is both respectful and constructive. Open communication is vital in establishing a positive working partnership with your child's school and teachers. We also value our staff's wellbeing so have a commitment to support the careful balancing of workload and expectations. The processes within this policy support our staff to maintain their focus and time on improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes for the children in their care. It is important that families and staff follow certain communication protocols to support this.

**AIM:** The aim of this policy is to:

- Clearly express our school's commitment to the use of electronic and other forms communication.
- Establish clear expectations for both staff and parents in the use of electronic and other methods of communication.
- Implement a policy which maintains a safe workplace for staff and supports them to balance their work and home life.

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION USED:

- **AUDIRI:** The primary method for general whole school communication is **Audiri** (email & app notification). This will be used to communicate whole school information and events.
- **EMAIL:** When communicating urgent or notable information at times we will also use emails to those parents/caregivers listed as PG1 and PG2 on children's enrolment forms. Non-classroom teaching staff will also communicate to parents/caregivers through email.
- **SEESAW:** The primary method of two way communication between classroom teachers and parents/caregivers is **Seesaw**. Specialist teachers at times will also use (providing information to the classroom teacher to post for them). This will be used to share learning experiences, work samples and any relevant information/notes/messages relating to their specific class.
- **GOOGLE CLASSROOM:** Google classroom is a platform used for assigning learning tasks where teachers can provide feedback and mark tasks. Parents are provided information by their teachers of how to access this information.
- **Qkr! APP:** **Qkr!** is our preferred platform for the parents/caregivers to make payments for school fees, uniform, excursions, camps, Chromebooks, etc. Cash/eftpos is available at Student Services or credit card payments can be made by phone.
- **WEBSITE:** The school also has a webpage with information regarding policies, school-based information and staff, as well as a our Parent Complaint policy and link to Unreasonable customer conduct.
- **WHATSAPP:** Whatsapp is used at times for small group communication including Class Parent Reps and Governing Council committee groups.
- **FACEBOOK:** A school Facebook page is also available, however is not used as a primary method of communication.

## EXPECTATION FOR FAMILIES AROUND COMMUNICATION:

- **Families are expected to be connected and attentive to the school's communication methods:** Families are required to check emails and use the relevant school apps including Audiri, Seesaw, Google Classroom, Whatsapp and Qkr! If you are unable to have access to these Apps, please communicate this with your class teacher/s to access support to get connected.
- **Responsibility to provide accurate contact details to the school:** Families are expected to provide up to date contact information such as email address, phone and postal address. When personal details have changed, or if you are unsure if contact information is up to date, please contact the Front Office Staff.
- **Communicating absences:** Families must communicate absences for their child/ren by contacting the school through phone or using the Audiri app, please do not contact the class teacher via Seesaw as they may not see the message or have time to record. This will ensure correct recording occurs. Communicating absences are a Department for Education requirement.
- **Urgent communication:** If urgent communication is required throughout the day or a change in expected routine, please communicate this **via phone call** to the front office and they will pass on the message to the associated staff. Families to send **non-vital messages** only through electronic modes. For example, do not send communication regarding OSHC or alternate pick-up arrangements as teachers may not see the message in time or there may be a relief teacher without access. Remember that given work demands, teachers may not see the message until the end of the day. If you need an answer more promptly, please contact the school via **phone**. Students are not allowed to use personal phones or smart watches as per MVPS Mobile Phones and Personal Devices policy and should not be directly communicated with during school hours.
- **Communication during camps and excursions:** During excursions and camps, families are to only contact staff via the school for emergencies. General check-ins either via Seesaw, email or phone are not permitted or feasible. Camp/excursion staff will communicate with parents/caregivers if needed. Staff attention is needed with the students directly throughout the day to meet duty of care obligations. The contact number for the campsite will be communicated on the camp cover note.

## EXPECTATION FOR FAMILIES AROUND COMMUNICATION CONTINUED:

- **Communication regarding issues/grievances/complaints:** When there is breakdown of communication and/or an issue arises, the first point of call is to contact the associated staff member to discuss and resolve the matter. You only need to email or speak with one staff member, who will follow up or refer it to the person who can help. Please do not raise the issue with multiple staff. It is recommended that any issues or concerns should be raised **within 48 hours**. Families should be familiar and adhere to the Parent Complaint Policy. Should anyone wish to raise a formal concern or complaint to the Principal or Governing Council, send an email to [dl.0251.admin@schools.sa.edu.au](mailto:dl.0251.admin@schools.sa.edu.au) to be forwarded to appropriate person on your behalf.
- **Be respectful:** Families should be respectful, courteous and constructive in all interactions with staff. Families should be calm and not react with high levels of emotion. If it relates to a concern or problem, the focus must be about understanding the problem and finding a solution. Negative or confrontational messages will be avoided. We never say in an email or message what would be deemed inappropriate to say to the recipient's face. Goodwill and understanding comes from good communication, not demands or negativity. Keep an open mind and be aware that there may be different views and perspectives about a situation. Staff and families are not expected to respond to electronic communication that is disputable or requires ongoing dialogue. Communication that exhibits unreasonable conduct may not receive a response.
- **Be clear:** Communication through electronic means is most effective when communication is brief and informative. Issues/concerns requiring more detailed discussions or information need to be addressed either face-to-face or over the phone at an agreed and convenient time. Please be clear with your communication. Provide factual details about the issue, including things like dates and names of people involved, and what resolution you are seeking. *Let the staff member know – are you simply providing information or are you expecting an action or follow up?*
- **Is it appropriate for electronic communication?** Please don't seek to discuss in detail your child's academic progress, learning expectations or behavioural issues via electronic correspondence. These are best addressed over the phone or face to face in a personal conversation. Please remember that electronic messages are not necessarily confidential and can be subject to Freedom of Information regulation. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or in person.
- **Regarding instances of bullying and behaviour concerns:** Our staff will address these issues in accordance with the school's Anti-bullying policy and Behaviour Support policy. The promotion of a positive behaviour support approach to behaviour rather than punitive and exclusionary measures in place. We recognise parents' rights to discuss issues affecting their child, however, due to privacy and information sharing guidelines, details about other children involved in incidents cannot be disclosed. Reports to parents will focus on their child's experience and feelings rather than management of incidents, details of investigations and their outcomes will not be disclosed to parents unless it directly impacts their child. Please be reassured that we will follow up issues and take appropriate action. Should you have any concerns about the approaches the school is taking to address parent behaviour, you are welcome to reach out to the Department's Customer Feedback Unit and follow the Complaint Management Policy.
- **Communicating issues to other parents/caregivers:** Parents are adults in this learning space alongside our staff, and have a responsibility to support the school's processes. We can only follow up on issues that we're aware of. It is not helpful to air grievances to other parents or on social media. If you're concerned about another child's or parent's behaviour, report it to staff directly so we can work with you to resolve it. It is not appropriate to approach children or their families to raise issues with them. The involvement of parents messaging each other further complicates school processes rather than complementing them.
- **Expected response time to electronic communication and phone call requests:** It is expected that staff reply to phone call requests and electronic communication within **2 –5 working days**. Staff are primarily focused on teaching and learning, as well as having other whole of school commitments once students are dismissed each day.
- **Face to face communication:** For lengthy discussions or queries, an appointment should be made with the appropriate staff member. Please do not attempt to meet with staff formally at morning drop off or afternoon pick up times, staff have a duty of care to the students and require that time for supervising children, organisational matters and brief, general communication with families.
- **Appropriate times for electronic communication:** Staff may choose to send or respond to work related messages at a sensible time, but there is no expectation to respond to these messages outside of school hours. **As a general rule staff will only be expected to access Seesaw between 8.00am-4.30pm Monday-Friday only.** Staff are directed by the Leadership team to set their Seesaw to automated times and switch notifications off to support their own personal wellbeing.
- **Respect staff's non-working hours:** Remember to respect staff personal time, including weekends, holidays, sick days and non-working days. When sending messages outside of work hours, please do not expect an immediate response. While some staff may choose to respond to messages it is not an expectation, nor should it be seen as being disregarded if a message is not responded to during these times. Please note that some staff work part time so they are only expected to communicate on their working days.
- **Families are not to contact staff members using their personal contact numbers or through social media platforms.**
- **Part time staff:** Staff who are working in shared classroom arrangements need to have a clear plan around who is responsible for communication on each day.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR STAFF AROUND COMMUNICATION:

### ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:

- **Use of Seesaw:** All classes will use Seesaw. Teachers are to follow up to ensure that all parents/caregivers within their class are signed up with an account to receive student work samples and information. Seesaw codes go home as soon as possible (if possible on class visit T4 Wk 9 Thursday of prior year). This can also allow teachers to share a welcome letter, term overviews, expectations for first day back e.g. morning routines, pictures of their classrooms, etc. Classroom teachers will communicate classroom concerns, work samples, curriculum overviews and relevant information through Seesaw.
- **Communication protocols:** Communication through electronic means is best when communication is brief and informative. Issues or concerns requiring more detailed discussions or ongoing dialogue need to be addressed either face to face or over the phone. Electronic communication must be respectful and constructive. Staff are not to respond to offensive or abusive emails. If staff receive any please forward to a member of the Leadership Team.
- **Seesaw photo permissions:** All class teachers are expected to check permissions for photos etc. on Seesaw (do not rely on others to tell you). Permissions are sought through Student Services / enrolment processes. Please see Student Services for permission lists for your class.

### COMMUNICATION ABOUT LEARNING VIA SEESAW/GOOGLE CLASSROOM:

Not only is Seesaw a great platform for communication of notices, class events, information, etc. it is also a great tool for teachers to share student's learning progress and achievements.

- All classes will use Seesaw/Google Classroom to communicate each child's learning within the classroom.
- It is expected that brief updates about what is happening in the classroom will be provided at least once a week. This can include photos of children engaging in learning, samples of work, projects, oral presentations, assembly items etc.
- It is expected that classroom teachers post 1 individualised posts per student per term. This may include: a sample of work or photo with a detailed comment about an individual student's learning. These posts might be directly from a student. The student may independently or with support from a peer, buddy or staff member post something that has been directed by and checked by the teacher.
- Specialist teachers will share one detailed whole class post per term to share learning content, progress and achievements and encourage dialogue about specialist subjects between school and home.
- Seesaw/Google classroom processes need to be consistent across your PLC (professional learning community—group of classes that teachers work closely with).

### FACE TO FACE / PHONE:

- **Arranging face to face or phone meetings:** Any concerns or communication that requires an in-depth or lengthy conversation should be prearranged at a mutually agreed and convenient time.
- **Staff availability:** Staff are expected to be available for phone calls or scheduled meetings between **8:00-8:30am and 3:05-4:00pm** during the week (excluding on Tuesday afternoons where all staff attend staff meetings). Staff are committed to whole of school priorities, commitments and meetings and should not schedule any other commitments or meetings during these times unless prior approval from the Principal is obtained.
- **Protocols:** Staff will exit a conversation or meeting should they feel threatened, unsafe or it becomes unprofessional and will report to the Leadership team.

### STAFF TO STAFF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION:

#### Communication protocols and expectations:

- Internal electronic means of communication should be respectful, informative and succinct.
- Staff are expected to check their emails between **8:00-8:30am and 3:30-4:00pm** each day and respond appropriately.
- Most staff are available for a quick face to face catch up in an informal capacity but matters that require more than a couple of minutes of someone's time require a meeting to be scheduled at a convenient time.

#### Forms of communication used:

- Daily electronic day book: staff should be read each morning and each staff member has a responsibility to add any relevant information or messages.
- Weekly bulletin is distributed via email: containing relevant information and meeting dates (all bulletins stored in Google Drive).
- Whole school term planner distributed via email / bulletin and stored in Google Drive. This is kept continuously updated to ensure there is no clash of events/meetings etc. Anything that is not visible on the term planner will be cancelled.
- Google Drive will be used for the sharing of documents, resources, automatic updates and storage.
- For non-vital information the following is used: our school's private Facebook page, Facebook messenger or Whatsapp team chats— please be mindful that not everyone has access to all of these platforms so if the information is for everyone, these platforms should not be used. Please negotiate with your PLC what the most effective communication is to support everyone.