

Auckland College Independent School

Whole School Parental Communication Policy

Aims:

- To communicate with parents to ensure clarity of purpose and enable the fullest possible understanding in respect of all school activities.
- To involve parents in all aspects of the school community.
- To operate an Open-Door system that encourages the fullest possible two-way communication between staff and parents.
- To work in close co-operation with Parents, in order to ensure high standards of care and academic achievement for all our children.

Our vision:

At Auckland College Independent School, we believe that success in education comes with working in partnership with parents and the wider school community. We believe that all children and their families have the right to positive educational and life experiences and that clear communication between school, parents and pupils is a key factor in this. We have a commitment to improving parents' understanding of our school and in encouraging parents to be active in their child's education. Through communicating clearly and effectively with parents, we will foster opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of our school.

Responsibilities: This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school

Senior leadership team (SLT)

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep Directors informed of developments and concerns.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

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Directors

- To ensure the use of trusted online spaces when communicating between Directors or with the school
- Using a variety of communication methods to promote and explain the work of the Directors
- Listening to people to hear what is being said about the school

Internal methods of communication

- All staff receive an induction and staff handbook providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school
- An integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. teachers' meetings, teaching assistant meetings, Office meetings, Key Stage meetings, whole staff meetings
- All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda
- E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information, however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required
- Written communications will be sent to staff e-mails and reminders are placed on the noticeboard on SchoolPod, which staff must check daily
- Staff meetings & SLT meetings take place every week and the minutes are placed on the shared drive. Events are discussed in advance at meetings, but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions
- Directors' meeting minutes are placed on the shared drive
- Weekly notices are e-mailed out to staff and placed on the SchoolPod noticeboard
- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent via email and on occasion placed in pupils' bags to hand deliver to parents.
- The school office uses e-mail to communicate with parents, whilst teachers and Senior Leaders use Class Dojo in the first instance.
- Urgent messages for parents/carers will be sent by e-mail or Class Dojo as early as possible and followed up by the office staff by telephone to ensure receipt.

External methods of communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community.

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Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner. Teaching staff will not accept friendship requests from parents on social media.

We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

- Letters: Staff will respond to parents' letters within 48 hours (2 school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Head Teacher immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Head Teacher before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files. A copy of general letters will be placed in a file at the front desk.
- E-mail: The school uses e-mail to communicate with parents. We also use an e-mail system (SchoolPod) which we use to communicate with parents with regards to accidents and detentions. This communication is sent automatically once a member of staff has completed the relevant slip within SchoolPod. If a parent communicates with the school using email with a complaint or a matter that requires an action, a copy should be stored in a digital file or printed & filed. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Head Teacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. All e-mails requiring an answer should be responded to within 48 hours (2 school days). E-mail communications concerning a child are kept for the academic year in a digital folder unless they are required for evidence trailing, in which case a copy should be printed.
- Telephone calls: Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency. It is a parent's responsibility to telephone school to report their child's absence before 8.30am. If not call is received, the school will attempt to make contact via telephone to establish where the child is. When a child is injured, depending on the nature of the injury, the school will either, telephone home and ask the parent to collect the child, or inform them of the injury. If a child is unwell and unable to continue with their school day, parents will be contacted and asked to collect the child.
- Written Reports: Three times a year, we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.
- Parent meetings: We operate an "Open door" system in that all staff will make themselves available to parents at the beginning and end of each day for informal discussion and day-to-day communication. We ask parents to be aware that our first and primary care is for

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the children and exercise discretion in their requirements at these times. Staff are always happy to make appointments for longer meetings at a mutually agreed time. The Head Teacher's office is quite literally "open" (unless a private meeting is already taking place) and Parents are always welcome to call in. The Head Teacher and Senior Managers make every effort to be around the school between 8am and 8.30am for informal contact. Parents meet their child's teacher/s three times during the year for a private consultation at a Parents' Evening. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have particular educational needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly. We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand communication.

- Newsletters: Newsletters are placed via links on Class Dojo and uploaded to our website half-termly.
- School Website/Social Media: The school website, Facebook and Twitter accounts provide an opportunity to share information about the school and are an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. Staff are advised not to communicate with parents via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Staff will not accept pupils or ex-pupils as "friends".
- Class Dojo: Class Dojo is used to communicate with parents on a day-to-day basis. Notices and reminders will be shared, along with good news stories for the whole class and/or whole School. Parents and teachers can also use it as a private messaging service to one another. Parents will also be able to access their child's personal merit record.
- Severe Weather/Emergency Closure: If the school is required to close for safety reasons due to severe weather or in an emergency all parents will be contacted by telephone where possible. Important messages will also be sent out via e-mail, our social media sites and Class Dojo.
- We recognise that Child Protection is a shared responsibility, and that Auckland College should provide a safe and secure environment. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Miss Boyd, or the Deputy DSL, Mr Ramsden, who may share this information with Children's Services.

Parent Acceptable use of Internet

Online channels are an important way for parents/carers to communicate with, or about, our school.

The school uses the following channels:

- Our official Facebook page
- Email groups for parents
- Class Dojo

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Parents/carers also often set up independent channels to help them stay on top of what's happening in their child's class. For example, email groups, or chats (through apps such as WhatsApp).

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school,

Parents/Carers will:

- Be respectful towards members of staff, and the school, at all times
- Be respectful of other parents/carers and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Parents/Carers will not:

- Use private groups, the school's Facebook page, or personal social media to complain about or criticise the school or members of staff. This is not constructive and the school can't improve or address issues if they aren't raised in an appropriate way
- Use private groups, the school's Facebook page, or personal social media to complain about, or try to resolve, a behaviour issue involving other pupils. I will contact the school and speak to the appropriate member of staff if I'm aware of a specific behaviour issue or incident
- Upload or share photos or videos on social media of any child other than my own, unless I have the permission of the other children's parents/carers

We are committed to the highest possible level of partnership and are always open to new suggestions on how we can improve our service and systems.

The school will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through regular questionnaires.

This policy will be reviewed annually unless results of questionnaires prompt an earlier review.

Reviewed: August 2021

Reviewed by: S Boyd