

Sacred Heart Primary School Sandgate caters for boys and girls from Prep to Year 7, and as an educational ministry of the Catholic Parish of Sandgate Brighton forms part of the Brisbane Archdiocesan system of schools.

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Rationale

At Sacred Heart, our aim is to be proactive in strengthening positive partnerships between the School, its families, the Sandgate Brighton Catholic community and the wider community of Sandgate and surrounding districts. Effective two-way communication is integral to this partnership.

Values

Sacred Heart School Sandgate partners with the parents of each child in nurturing their faith and providing a balanced education that targets their academic, physical, social and emotional development. The best outcomes for students will be achieved when each contributes their different perspectives and insights to the partnership in open and inclusive communication that is built on, and builds, trust and respect.

Policy Statement

Sacred Heart School strives to –

- Create a culture of open and respectful communication that promotes closer collaboration.
- Foster close communication between parents and the teachers of their children.
- Keep parents regularly informed about its expectations, and their children's activities and development at school.
- Ensure there is well structured formal program of communication with parents, with both school and family responsible for ensuring there is effective communication outside these formal opportunities.

From parents, the school seeks timely, honest and complete information about their child. Parents will ensure that the contact information they have provided to the school remains accurate and current.

All communication between the school and parents will be respectful, professional and underpinned by considerations of appropriate privacy and confidentiality principles.

Implementation

Formal Communication

As circumstances require, this may include –

- electronic and paper documents
- parent information sessions
- meetings, and
- telephone and personal contact.

School Renewal Plan - compiled in collaboration with the school community. It proposes actions for the coming year against key objectives for the School. The Principal reports on the progress achieved against the plan in the previous year by the end of March each year.

School policies - developed by the Sacred Heart School Board in consultation with the school community. They are available on the school's website or upon request from the school office.

Parent Handbook - provided to new families at the time of enrolment. Parents will be notified of any changes to school policy and procedures. A current version of the Parent handbook is available on the school website. (www.shssandgate.qld.edu.au)

School Newsletter - published weekly and distributed to families by email wherever possible (unless families request paper copies). It is posted on the school's website.

Principal's monthly report to the Parents and Friends Association (P & F) - highlights resourcing and operational issues relevant to the general school community. The Principal additionally provides a monthly report to the School Board.

Parent Information Night - held at the beginning of each school year to provide information to the school community. It includes the opportunity for all parents to commence the home/school partnership. Parent volunteer induction training is provided on this night.

Class letter – sent home by class teacher at the commencement of Term 2, 3 and 4. It outlines curriculum issues relevant to their class. (Study themes for the term, homework requirements and proposed excursions as well as opportunities for parents to participate in classroom activities).

Parent-Teacher Interviews – formal interview held at least twice yearly (usually in Term 1 and 3), and at other times on request.

'Celebration of Learning' night – held mid-way through the year for parents to view samples of their child's work. Teachers are available to discuss the curriculum and the samples of work.

Academic reports (written) – issued twice yearly at the end of Term 2 and Term 4.

Communication outside the formal program

The use of emails is the preferred method of distributing information within the school community. Parents should clearly indicate to the school if they have a preference for receiving information in paper form.

Teachers will contact a child's parent as soon as possible (by phone, email or to make an appointment to meet in person) to discuss concerns that arise about a student. Parents are also

contacted by the child's classroom teacher if the child's inappropriate behavior disrupts the teaching and learning process, and/or is sufficiently serious to warrant them being temporarily excluded from the class.

The school administration staff will contact parents if a child is seriously injured at school, complains of illness, or needs to go home for any reason.

Parents need to keep their child's teacher informed about any significant incidents and changes that are likely to affect the student at school, their attendance at school or their completion of homework. This may be via a short note to the teacher. Alternatively, parents can contact the teacher or the school administration by email, telephone or in person.

Parents may approach teachers directly but to avoid disruption to the teaching schedule, they should do so only at mutually convenient times before school, after school or during the lunch break.

Raising concerns

At times parents may have concerns regarding their child's academic progress, social relationships or a general classroom matter. These concerns should be raised directly with the child's class teacher in the first instance.

Procedure for contacting a classroom or specialist teacher

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff the procedure is to contact the teacher involved giving a brief outline of the issue or concern. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

1. Contact the school, either by phone or front the office personally, and arrange for the teacher to contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not usually available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time or whilst on playground duty.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time.
3. Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours and request that they arrange a suitable meeting time.

Where the teacher has been approached but the issue remains unresolved, an appointment should be made with the Principal to discuss the issue further. Except in exceptional circumstances, the Principal will ensure that all pertinent information is relayed to the Staff member involved so that all relevant information may be considered in seeking a mutually beneficial resolution.

The Principal is available to meet with parents where they have an issue, concern or matter of interest about the general operation of the school. Where a mutually suitable time is not available for a period of days the school will offer an opportunity to discuss the concerns with the school's Assistant Principal – Religious Education.

Issues arising between students and families:

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 – Religious Education and not be discussed with other persons.

From time to time differences in expectation and disappointments about delivery will give rise to tensions and disagreement in the partnership between the school and parents. Both school and parents are responsible for respectful communication about these concerns. All matters of concern must, in the first instance, be addressed to the school. Only after this courtesy is afforded to the school may a matter that cannot be resolved locally be referred to Brisbane Catholic Education for resolution. The Area Supervisor for the North Region 3 which includes Sacred Heart School Sandgate can be contacted by telephoning the Brisbane Catholic Education Office.
(ph (07) 3033 7000)

Communication Strategy with the Wider Community

Sacred Heart utilises the Parish newsletter to promote the works of the school and to encourage Parish participation in school activities.

The school endeavours to use the popular media to communicate with the wider Sandgate community. Articles are submitted to the local newspapers to promote the school's activities and to highlight the benefits of attending Sacred Heart School.

As a school we also encourage the wider community to access our school website (www.shssandgate.qld.edu.au) to gain the most current and relevant information about our school community.

Communication on behalf of the school with any external bodies, including the media, must be approved by the Principal.

Sacred Heart School community believes that we exist successfully only within the strong relationships formed with the parents of the students, the relationship of School to Parish, and in the context of the wider Sandgate community. We support and encourage each other in our endeavours to provide the best opportunities for the students in our care, and trust that there is no situation that cannot be addressed through working together in active partnerships between the home and school environments.

In all circumstances our actions must be based "For God; Others; Self".