

NORTHCLIFF PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. AIM

To provide a framework for effective communication between parents, teachers and other stakeholders. We strive to manage the process of communication smoothly in order for the development of positive relationships.

The home is central to the development of the learner and a mutually supportive relationship is desirable in order for the learner to reach his/her maximum potential.

2. OBJECTIVE

To ensure that all parents and teachers understand the procedure for communicating issues that could affect the education of learners at the school. The lines of communication between parents work in two directions:

- from the school to the parents
- from the parents to the school

Lines of communication within the school tend to be networked as well as linear.

3. DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action co-ordinated.

We should also remember the importance of listening.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognize that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility has been carried out.

4. PRINCIPLES

All communications at Northcliff Primary should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Take account of relevant school policies.



- Written communications with parents and other external contacts must comply with agreed policy.

5. GENERAL COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMUNITY

- 5.1 A weekly newsletter distributed to oldest and only learners. The newsletter is distributed on a Friday.
- 5.2 The School Communicator, which can be downloaded onto a computer or Smart Phone. The content has news alerts, a calendar and homework and resources per Grade.
- 5.3 A webpage – provides information about the school to the wider community.
- 5.4 A Facebook page.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

6.1 Responsibilities of the School

The following list, which is not exhaustive, indicates the main structures in place, initiated by the school, to facilitate communication between the school and parents:

- Written communication for parents passed via their child which they may or may not be required to return.
- School diary and/or Parent-Teacher Message booklet.
- Telephone calls – used by staff where a private conversation is deemed necessary.
- Email (or SMS where the parent has no access to email) is also seen as an efficient and effective communication tool.
- Parental interview – likely to be requested by a teacher, Grade Head, a Head of Department, the Deputy or Principal.
- The school calendar.
- Parents' Evening (twice a year) – recorded on the school calendar and parents will be notified in advance via the newsletter.
- Parents' Information evenings for Grades 1, 4 and 7 at the beginning of the year.
- Newsletters, the Communicator.

6.2 Responsibilities of Pupils

We expect our pupils to:

- Relay information to parents on a regular basis about school activities and events that affect them.
- Pass on any written communication from the school to their parent(s) and return the same, duly completed, where required.

6.3 Responsibilities of Parents

We expect our parents to:

- Develop close links with the school and attend specific pastoral and academic parents' evenings relevant to the age of their child/children.
- Collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their children.
- Support the Staff and School Governing Body in their implementation of policy and procedure.
- Become actively involved in the Parent Association, attend school functions and help build a sense of community.



- Participate in policy review and changes (via the School Governing Body).
- Recognise and respect the professional status of teachers.
- Work with the school in a climate of mutual respect.
- Remain courteous and dignified in their communication.
- Refrain from requesting to see teachers during teaching time.
- Make an appointment to see a teacher or other members of staff and keep the appointment made.
- Adhere to the Interview procedure within this policy.

6.4 Policy on Interviews

- 6.4.1** Academic, extra-mural or cultural activity issues should be discussed with the class teacher/coach as the first step in resolving matters of concern.
- 6.4.2** Should the matter not be resolved, the next step would be to set up an appointment with the Grade Head in charge of that phase/activity, through the office. Please note that it is our policy that the educator/coach you initially approached, **has** to be present at such a meeting.
- 6.4.3** Should the matter still not be resolved, an appointment including all attendees of previous meetings should be made with the HOD and the educator/coach, through the office.
- 6.4.4** If a resolution to the issue still not be achieved a meeting with the Deputy must be scheduled. Please note that **all** the parties previously consulted, **have** to be present at this meeting.
- 6.4.5** As a last resort, an appointment with the Principal and the above parties may be requested. However, should you not have followed the above steps; you will be referred back to the responsible member of staff. Please note that **all** the parties previously consulted, **have** to be present at this meeting. Under no circumstances will any of the parties previously consulted be excluded from this meeting.
- 6.4.6** If the matter under discussion is still not resolved to your satisfaction, you may contact our I.D.S.O. (Mr Morobi Ledwaba), at District Office D10 on 011 694 9300. Please note that the I.D.S.O. will not entertain grievances that have not been taken through steps 1 – 5.
- 6.4.7** For any other matters you wish to discuss with the Principal, or any other member of staff, it is imperative that you contact Mrs Cock to assist you in setting up an appointment – **kindly refrain from confronting educators in their classrooms, on the sports field, or on the corridors.** Please note that discussion of actions of members of staff will only be done in their presence.

Please remember: Your child's welfare and progress is our primary concern. Please follow our professional advice when it is given. Should we deem it necessary, we will refer you for professional advice outside the school environment, and together we will work towards a solution to the problem. At no stage need any of our learners or parents, who have voiced a problem/concern, be afraid that they will be victimized or discriminated against by any of the staff. It is imperative that we establish a working **partnership** in the interests of your child/ren.

6.5 Teachers Responsibilities regarding communication to parents



Northcliff Primary School has 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. 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.

6.5.1 Letters: Staff will respond to parents' letters within 48 hours (2 school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to HOD/Grade Head immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the HOD/Grade Head before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files. Serious complaints must be escalated to the Deputy or Principal.

6.5.2 Email: The school has an email system it uses to communicate with parents. If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be printed. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Grade Head and should always be sent to the Deputy or Principal if the content is a serious complaint. A hard copy of any email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the Learner Profile. All emails requiring an answer should be responded to within 48 hours (2 school days), even if it is just to note the email.

6.5.3 Social Networking Sites/Blogs: Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as "friends".

6.5.4 Written Reports: Four times a year, we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas of future development. Parents are expected to sign and return all but the final report.

6.5.5 Parents' Evenings: Parents meet their child's teacher twice during the year for a consultation at Parents' Evening. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.

6.5.6 Individual Meetings: When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly. Minutes of these meetings will be kept and the parent must sign the minutes. Parents may have a copy of the minutes if requested.

7. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

7.1 SMT

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.

7.2 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.

7.3 Internal Methods of Communication

All new staff receive an Induction Handbook providing them with important information about organization and procedures within the school.

An integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. staff meetings, phase meetings, Grade and Subject meetings.

All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda.

Time put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to workshop on certain areas.

For all other meetings notes should be taken and feedback given to staff.

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information. However, it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.

Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffroom, which staff must check daily.

Changes of plan which affects the operation of the school must be communicated timeously and effectively. All staff, unless on duty, must attend the Staff Briefing each morning to be updated on activities or planning for the day or week ahead.

Staff meetings take place every second week. Events are discussed in advance at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions. Minutes are taken and distributed to staff.

Within each individual class, class teachers organize their own methods of communicating information to the children. This may be a classroom board or other type of notice board. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.

8. PROMOTION OF ACCES TO INFORMATION ACT 2 OF 200 AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ACT 4 OF 2013

8.1 Privacy

These Acts promote the privacy of a person's private and confidential information. As such, any information related to a child or a parent may not be communicated to another person without the permission of that person.

As such, the sensitive and confidential information about a child is to be respected and shared amongst staff bearing this principle in mind. It also means that a parent's information, e.g. a phone number, cannot be given to another parent.



8.2 Transparency

This Act also means that in terms of transparency, a parent has the right of access to information pertaining to their child, e.g. referrals made to the District Office. If a member of staff is in doubt, assistance must be sought from a member of the SMT.

8.3 Staff Information

Teachers are under no obligation to share personal information, e.g. their personal cellphone numbers with parents. The personal cellphone numbers of other members of staff may also not be share without permission.

Reviewed: September 2015

Mrs JE Kerr



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