

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the communication of information is carried out in a manner that complies with school, departmental and legal requirements.

Building better links between home and school contributes to positive learning experiences and builds the school's reputation in the wider community.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Ivanhoe East Primary School is committed to fair, consistent, open and co-operative communication with parents, students and the wider community. We believe that schools and families benefit from strong partnerships that allow them to communicate formally and informally on a regular basis.

Distribution of the Annual Report to the School Community occurs in the following ways:

- An electronic copy ratified by School Council and DE&T will be distributed by 31<sup>st</sup> March each year;
- A paper copy will be sent home to all families who are not connected to electronic communication used by the school; and
- Hard copies will also be held at the school office for interested parents.

The student achievement data is shared with the school community via the School Bulletin, newsletters and the Annual Report to the School Community.

- Student achievement data is published and used to initiate dialogue with families about school improvement.
- There is a strong commitment to work with families and School Council to develop strategies to support school improvement.
- The Parent Opinion Survey is distributed in various ways. All families are encouraged to participate and provide feedback on the results.
- Parent Opinion survey data results are reflected in the Schools' Annual Report to the School Community and Annual Improvement Plan. Any actions arising from this data are also provided.
- Our school ensures that parents are aware of their rights and are provided with information on how to raise concerns.
- Information regarding parental rights and the complaints process, both within and beyond the school, is made available and the school leadership team ensures parents have ready access to this information.

Regular written communication by school staff to parents and wider community by the school may include the following:

- A weekly School Bulletin with a report from the Principal, curriculum information and other items of general interest is distributed;
- Comprehensive curriculum newsletters from each level of the school are distributed at the commencement of each term; and
- Notices related to up-coming whole school, year level or grade events are circulated in a timely manner. These would include activities such as sports activities, excursions and incursions;
- Publication of IEPS policies in the School Bulletin for feedback and comment;
- Regular distribution of surveys to collect data on specific issues and school policies; and

- Written reports on individual student progress, with related curriculum information, are distributed twice a year.

Other forums provide mutually valuable forums for purposeful communication between school staff and the school community. These include:

- formal parent teacher interviews and three way conferences;
- weekly whole school assemblies;
- special events such as the School Concert/ Dance/ Production, music soirees and concerts;
- regular forums using venues such as our Performing Arts Centre where families are encouraged to communicate in a relaxed, open manner and have an avenue to identify and discuss issues and concerns.
- curriculum evenings and professional speakers; and
- parent education sessions.

When issues arise, parents are asked to request an interview with their child's classroom teacher, Area Coordinator, Principal or Assistant Principal to discuss their concerns. This is an appropriate forum where parents' views are listened to respectfully and acted upon in a considered manner. Teachers are generally unable to conduct informal meetings at the beginning and end of the school day as they have other duties and their core responsibility is to be with their class throughout the school day however in the case of urgent communications, brief discussions can take place, pending the teacher's availability, prior to 8.45am or after school.

Requests for interviews can be made by telephone, note or via email. It is preferable to deal with concerns within a meeting rather than via email as misunderstandings can arise.

#### *ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS*

Consistent with our commitment to sustainability, the School Bulletin is available online. The School website provides copies of all curriculum documents, details of special events and permission notices for parents' convenience.

The staff of Ivanhoe East Primary School is strongly committed to respectful and clear communication in all digital technologies, including email.

- Teachers can be accessed by voicemail through the school telephone messaging system Parents are urged to leave brief messages that are communicated to the teachers via email however parents **do** need to contact the School Office for urgent requests.eg. a parent is late or a child must attend out of school hours care.
- Teachers can also be contacted via email. Parents should be mindful that there is no expectation that emails will be checked during the teaching day. (9.00 – 3.30pm)
- Adverse emails are forwarded to the Principal.
- Emails not considered urgent will not necessarily be dealt with on the same day. Parents are reminded that a response to an email will depend upon the teacher's commitments. E.g. teaching hours, meetings, yard duty, breaks etc.
- Emails sent after 4.00pm on Fridays, on Curriculum Days or during the school holidays will be addressed no earlier than the commencement of normal working hours.

Audio and optical surveillance or filming (by staff, students, parents or any other members of the school community) is clearly prohibited on the school grounds; however, in some circumstances, taping may be 'reasonable' and if so, prior permission from all parties involved should be sought. The information collected in the recordings will likely contain personal information and health information of students. Student information, whether 'personal information' or 'health information' must be managed in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and the *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*

(collectively, the Victorian privacy law) as well as your school's own privacy policy. Such information can only be used or disclosed in accordance with the Victorian privacy law.

Other forums provide mutually valuable forums for purposeful communication between school staff and the school community. These include:

- School Council Annual General Meetings and regularly scheduled meetings that are open to all members of the School Community;
- Meetings of the School Council Sub Committees - open to all members of the School Community;
- Meetings of the Parents, Friends and Teachers Association (PTFA) - open to all members of the School Community; and
- Parent education sessions.

Regular written communication by parent groups within the school to parents and wider community by the school may include the following:

- IEPS School Fair updates;
- PTFA events such as the Trivia Night, Disco and Dinner Dance; and
- guest speakers.

#### *DE&T PROTOCOLS*

- The Information Privacy Act and the Health Records Act 2001 require that schools protect the interests of individuals with regard to their personal information and respect the individual's right to control how their personal information is used and for what purpose.
- The school will only collect consensual information that it requires about individuals, and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.
- It is essential that staff members of the school communicate information in accordance with established protocols so as to preserve the professionalism of the school, to protect the rights of individuals, to uphold our duty of care to students, and to comply with departmental and legal requirements. All communications must be conducted in compliance with the Departmental guidelines outlined in the IEPS Acceptable Use Policy.
- Department of Education and Training employees are free to make public comment on issues relating to education, but in doing so must be careful not to make comments that can be construed as negative criticism of the Department of Education and Training (DE&T), our school, School Council, our community, staff or community members.
- As a matter of professional courtesy, and as a requirement of Section 3.6 of the Teaching Services (Conduct of Duties) Order 1998 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 is informed.

#### *FREEDOM OF INFORMATION*

Any person seeking information from the school that falls outside the school's previous practices must be directed to the Principal who may require that a formal written Freedom of Information request be made. The principal will inform School Council of any such requests.

All such Freedom of Information requests will be referred to the Department of Education and Training's Freedom of Information Unit.

Information sought by police, including interviews of students must be directed to the principal. Requests from Department of Human Services personnel regarding students or

families will be complied with at all times. All staff will comply with court subpoenas to provide information.

### **EVALUATION**

This Policy to be reviewed as part of the school's four-year review process in 2019.

### **RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS**

This policy should be considered in consultation with the following other policies and documents:

Number	Name
103	Privacy
104	Media
210	Assessment
302	Fund Raising
304	Volunteers
305	Class Representatives
307	Visitors
<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/community/Pages/communications.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/community/Pages/communications.aspx</a>	
Communications Tool Kit	