

Penola Primary School Communications Policy



Rational

At Penola 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 positive working partnerships with your child's school and teachers. It is important families and staff follow certain communication protocols.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to:

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

Expectation for Whole School Communication

- We will use Seesaw, Schoolstream and Facebook as our primary methods of communication for whole school information and events.
- Emails are also an efficient, effective and preferred mode of communication.
- Individual classroom teachers and specialist teachers will use Seesaw to share learning experiences, work samples and any relevant information/notes/messages relating to their specific class. Administration will share any whole school reminders or information via Schoolstream and Facebook.
- It is not always possible for staff to post instantons pictures/messages/work samples on Seesaw. Staff will aim to upload posts on Seesaw at a convenient time.
- The school also has a webpage with information regarding policies, school based information, staff and a link to an electronic concerns/complaints form: <http://www.penolaps.sa.edu.au>

Expectations for families

- If urgent communication is required throughout the day or a change in expected routine, please communicate this **via a phone call** to the front office (87372 300) and they will pass on the message to the appropriate staff.
- When there is a breakdown of communication and /or an issue arises, the first point of call is to make arrangements with the associated staff member to discuss and resolve the matter. It is recommended that any issues or concerns should be raised within 48 hours.
- Families must be respectful and courteous in their interactions with staff. Families must be calm and not over react with high levels of emotion.
- Families must provide up to date contact information such as email address, phone and postal address. When personal details have changed, or if you are unsure contact information is up to date, please contact the Front Office staff.
- Families must communicate absences for their child/ren through Seesaw, Schoolstream or by contacting the school. Communicating absences is a Department for Education requirement. Teachers will follow up unexplained absences.
- Families should be familiar with and adhere to the school grievance procedure.
- During excursions and camps, families are to only contact staff via the school mobile (TBA) for emergencies. General check-ins wither via Seesaw, email or phone are not permitted.

- Should anyone wish to raise a formal concern or complaint to the Principal or Governing Council, a form must be submitted, available on the school's website. If you do not have access to the internet, a hard copy is available at the front office.
- It is expected that families will read the school newsletter and any notes sent home.
- Families are also able to send their child to school with a note for the office or their teacher/s.

Electronic Communication

- 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. Are you simply providing information or are you expecting action or follow up?
- Electronic communication is to be respectful and constructive. If it relates to a concern or problem, the focus must be about understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- Negative or confrontational messages must be avoided. We never say in an email or message what we wouldn't say to the recipient's face. Goodwill and understanding come from good communication, not unreasonable demands and negativity.
- Families to send **non-vital messages** through electronic modes only. For example, do not send communication regarding OSHC or alternative 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.
- 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.
- When sending messages outside of work hours, including weekends, holidays, sick days and non-working days, 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. It is expected that staff will reply within **2 working days**.
- Please remember that electronic messages are not necessarily confidential and can be subject of Freedom or Information (FOI) regulation. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or in person.
- Staff have other whole school commitments once students are dismissed each day. It is strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with relevant staff should you require more than just a short conversation.
- Families are required to download and use the relevant school apps including Seesaw and Schoolstream. If you are unable to have access to these Apps, please communicate this with your class teacher/s to ensure alternative forms of relaying information is available. A school Facebook page is also available.
- Messages containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without permission from the sender.

Face-to-Face Conversations and Phone Calls

- Families are to remain calm and respectful when communicating face-to-face or over the phone.
- 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, as staff have a duty of care to all students and require that time for organisational matters and general communication with families.
- When phone calls are made through the school, families are to be aware that staff have other obligations to adhere to during the working day. Staff may not be able to take your call immediately. A message will be passed on to the appropriate staff member and they will make contact within **2 working days**.
- Families are not to contact staff members using their personal contact numbers, unless a staff member has given direct consent to do so.

Expectations for Staff

Electronic Communication

- Classroom teachers will communicate classroom concerns, work samples, curriculum overviews and relevant information through Seesaw.
- Communication through electronic means is best when communication is brief and informative. Issues or concerns 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 will reply to any form of parent/caregiver communication within **2 working days**.
- Staff are encouraged to respond to work related messages at a sensible time. There is no expectation to respond to these messages outside of school hours (**8:00am – 4:30pm Monday-Friday**).
- Staff are not to respond to offensive or abusive emails; it should be forwarded to the principal.

Face to Face Conversations and Phone Calls

- Staff are expected to be available for phone calls or scheduled meetings between **8:00am – 8:30am** and **3:15pm-4:30pm** during the week.
- Any concerns or communication that requires an in-depth or lengthy conversation should be prearranged at a mutually agreed and convenient time.
- 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.
- Staff will abort a conversation or meeting should they feel threatened, unsafe or it becomes unprofessional.

Internal Communication

There are a variety of internal communication modes and expectations of staff.

- Staff are expected to check their emails between **8:00-8:30am** and **3:30-4:30pm** each work day.
- When on leave, staff will inform families of relevant dates.
- The electronic day book (intranet-bulletin) should be read each morning and each staff member has a responsibility to add any relevant information or messages.
- The whole school calendar must be continuously updated.
- G-Suite may be used for the sharing of documents, resources, automatic updates and storage.
- A weekly bulletin is distributed with relevant information and meeting dates.
- Internal electronic means of communication should be respectful, informative and succinct.
- 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, a meeting should be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.
- For non-vital information the school Facebook group 'Penola Primary School Chat' may be used. Please be mindful that not everyone has access to this group so if the information is for everyone, this platform should not be used.
- Alternatively, the whole school email can be used - dl.0763.staff@schools.sa.edu.au (for whole staff) or dl.0763.teachers@schools.sa.edu.au (for teachers and leadership).



Government of South Australia

Department for Education