



Gordon East Public School

Communication and Approaching The School Procedures

Departmental Policy References <https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library>:

- School Community Charter <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/school-community-charter>

Rationale:

The staff at Gordon East Public School (GEPS) are committed to working in partnership with its families and community to develop positive relationships that support the education and wellbeing of all GEPS students.

Effective communication is essential in providing students, teachers, parents and the community with the necessary information to make appropriate decisions. Staff are committed to using processes and techniques that aim to build a positive learning environment for students, staff and parents/carers in order to inspire and educate all students to succeed.

By providing clear guidelines for communication, we aim to maximise the effectiveness, clarity and professionalism of all communications between the school and the community.

Aim

This policy aims to provide procedures that will result in a harmonious school community with parents, carers, staff and students all working together. The policy will:

- provide a guide to ensure that issues are dealt with in a fair and open manner
- ensure that the rights of students, teachers and parents are respected and upheld
- assist parents, carers and school staff in organising a time to communicate in a safe and confidential atmosphere
- establish guidelines for parents to follow if there is an issue with another student or students at the school

Respectful communication is a right

Gordon East is an inclusive school where all people have the right to feel respected. We aim to create an environment that focuses on development of strong partnerships through collaboration, consultation, listening and valuing each other.

We model positive and respectful communication at all times with all members of the community.

Unacceptable and offensive behaviour, including disrespectful language, aggressive approaches either in person, over the phone or via email has no place at Gordon East Public School.

To ensure the wellbeing of students, staff and the community, offensive behaviour and disrespectful communication will not be accepted.

Procedures:

In the first instance, parents/carers are urged to regularly seek information from the established channels of communication: the school newsletter issued fortnightly on even weeks of the school term; the Gordon East Public School website; Stage newsletters (sent home at the beginning of each term); and the NSW Department of Education website.

Should there be further queries or concerns about their child or the school, please communicate with the classroom teacher. This may be by phone, letter, email or in person. Any discussions with staff (beyond brief informal queries) should be via a scheduled meeting, requested via the school office.

Here at Gordon East we have a range of ways to keep you informed and enable communication. To ensure that you are well informed, and we are able to communicate with ease, please find each way detailed below. All parents are encouraged to access all forms of communication detailed below.



School Stream: This app is available for Apple and Android devices. Reminders are sent out via alerts or notification. You are also able to submit an absence by going to the forms tab. Please make sure that you have downloaded the free app and have signed up to the school's school stream page.



Email: Email can be used to arrange parent teacher meetings, submit absences or communicate with the school or class teacher. Not all teachers use their departmental email accounts to communicate with parents. If you are unsure, please email the school directly. All emails for the attention of teachers are forwarded on to the relevant class teacher. The school email address can be found on the front cover of the school newsletter.



Newsletters: School newsletters are a source of detailed information or summaries of what has been happening at school or what is about to happen at school. They include reminders, details, photos, announcements, dates to remember and a range of further information. The school newsletter is distributed each fortnight in the odd weeks of the school term. Each class distributes a class newsletter at the beginning of each term.



Phone: Please phone the school between the hours of 8:30am – 3:30pm week days for any enquiries. Our office staff will answer your question, assist you or forward on your enquiry to the appropriate person.



Website: We are currently working on improving our school website. Please keep an eye out for the improvements as they arrive. The Department of Education also provides regular updates and links on our school website. Currently we upload our school newsletter to the website as well as via email and School Stream.



Notes: Notes are frequently sent home as a means of gaining permission to attend excursions, an expression of interest to join a group, participate in an event or for general information. Sometimes, these may get lost at the bottom of bags, so we ask parents to do a weekly check of school bags for notes etc. Notes are usually distributed on Fridays.



Class Dojo: All classes at Gordon East use Class Dojo to open their classrooms, share learning in the classroom and to convey any reminders with parents only. For other communication, please use phone or email. Class Dojo is not to be used to convey absences or communicate with teachers.

What might you communicate with the school about?

Issues particular to your child:

- attitude to school
- academic progress
- participation
- behaviour
- social relationships
- emotional wellbeing
- physical development
- development of responsibility
- school non-attendance or truancy
- special events and celebrations
- specialised learning programs
- family circumstances or changes

School or class issues:

- homework
- learning environment
- general student behaviour
- wellbeing or pastoral care for students
- school policies and procedures
- conduct of staff
- additional school activities (e.g. extra- curricular activities, choir, gifted & talented programs)



Access to support services:

- school and regional level student services
- including learning support, support for students with a disability and where English is an additional language or dialect EAL/D
- programs for students experiencing difficulties with learning
- specialist facilities outside of school

Contacting the school

The table below is created to assist communication. Please understand that teachers cannot be available at bell times. At these times their duty of care is to ensure all students are safely in class or ready to go home. **Please ring the school, email or send a note to arrange a convenient time and professional setting for your interview.**

When contacting the school, there may be a short delay in responding to your call or email. Teachers are unable to reply to emails during learning time and are often focused on preparing for lessons or completing required duties during break times. Due to this, we aim to respond to your enquiry within 24 – 48 hours.

Area	Initially 	Next 	Finally
General Enquiries	Contact the school office		
Excursions	All permission notes are emailed out to families and posted on School Stream. In the first instance please refer to notes, alerts and emails for organisational details.	If you have not received a note, via email or don't have access to School Stream please contact the front office for organisational details. For more specific questions or concerns about your child attending, please contact the office to make an appointment to speak to the class teacher.	For more specific questions or concerns about your child attending, please contact the office to make an appointment to speak to the class teacher.
Curriculum or learning progress	The class teacher is the first port of call when answering questions on aspects of your child's progress, the content of a particular subject, performance in assessment tasks, homework, excursions and behaviour in the class and playground.	The Stage Assistant Principals in matters overall assessment/testing policies and teaching programs.	The Principal is available by appointment to discuss any further concerns in these areas, usually following consultation with the relevant staff member initially.
Student late or leaving early on a school day	Parents & children come to the school office when arriving at school to drop off your child late or collecting your child early. Our office staff will take your child down to the classroom or arrange for them to meet you in the office. Parents are asked not to go straight to the classroom to drop off or collect children.		

Change to pick up arrangements or late pick up of student at 3.15pm	Change to pick up arrangements or late pick up of student at 3.15pm. The office staff will make sure that the class teacher is contacted and your message is passed on to your child.		The Principal is available by appointment to discuss any further concerns in these areas, usually following consultation with the relevant staff member initially.
School Policy, Procedures or Practice	In the first instance, please refer to the parent handbook or school website (About us/Policies and Procedures) for detailed information on school policy, procedures or practices.	Contact the office. State nature of concern and make an appointment to see the principal and/or appropriate member of staff.	
Student absences from school	Parents are asked to ensure that the school has received notification via, email, school stream or phone of a student's absence prior to the start of the school day at 9:10am.		
Student welfare: The welfare of your own child	Please contact your child's class teacher to clarify information and work collaboratively in addressing any issues.	The Stage Assistant Principals for any ongoing concerns with your child's overall academic, physical and social development including matters such as discipline, class and playground behaviour, peer relationships and attendance.	
Student welfare: Actions of other students	Please contact your child's class teacher to express your concerns and clarify any information. <i>Please note: No parent is to directly approach another person's child. The school will deal with issues between students as part of our Discipline and Welfare Policy.</i>	The Stage Assistant Principals will be able to assist with any ongoing issues or concerns in collaboration with the classroom teacher.	

Our School's Approach to Communication

When communicating with parents/carers, staff members will:

- Approach discussion in an open, courteous and respectful manner.
- Listen attentively to the concerns of parents, seeking clarification where necessary.
- Present their own or the school's point of view in professional and objective terms.
- Seek support from executive or colleagues if needed.
- Take into consideration cultural and personal sensitivities and protocols when engaging with the school community.
- While some matters may be addressed immediately, it is preferable to arrange meetings to address issues at a time that is mutually convenient and is conducive to a positive outcome.

When communicating with staff members, parents/carers are expected to:

- Speak with respect; all staff members in our workplace can expect respectful communication. Unacceptable and offensive behaviour; bullying, swearing or insulting, including verbal and non-verbal aggression; abusive, threatening or derogatory language; physical abuse or intimidation has no place in our school community (This includes face-to-face, over the phone or through email/written communication).
- Refrain from communicating with staff through social media sites or other apps, such as Class DoJo, Facebook, etc.
- Minimise out of school hours communication (outside of 8:30am – 4:30pm, on weekends or during school holidays).
- Outline in writing any issues that they wish to discuss prior to meetings.

When communicating parent to parent, parents/carers are expected to:

- Approach discussion in an open, courteous, respectful and constructive manner.
- Listen attentively to the concerns expressed, seeking clarification where necessary.
- Take into consideration cultural and personal sensitivities and protocols when engaging with each other.
- When communications elate to the Parent & Citizens (P&C), acknowledge that P&C members are volunteers and have no school authority and are there to support the school.

Please note: At no time are parents permitted to confront or bring up issues with individual students from other families.

When communicating student to student, children are expected to:

- Speak respectfully to all adults and fellow students.
- Use manners and listen attentively to those who are speaking.
- T.H.I.N.K before speaking: Is it: **T**houghtful, **H**elpful, **I**nspiring, **N**ecessary or **K**ind?
- Politely *speak up*, not *act out* when disagreeing.
- Seek assistance when verbal communication is not working.

Resolutions

There may be times, despite ongoing communication, where members of the school community are unsure, disagree or believe there is a problem or issue concerning their child. Parents should not wait for a small issue to grow into a large one:

- If the matter involves your child or is an issue of everyday class operation, parents should make an appointment to see their classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment. The classroom teacher will be the first point of contact.
- If the matter involves operations beyond the classroom or concerns that are not easily resolved, an appointment should be made with a member of the school executive. For class or Stage based concerns, please make an appointment initially with:
 - ES1 (Kindergarten) and Stage 1 (years 1 & 2): Mrs Hwa Choi
 - Stage 2 (years 3 and 4): Mr Luke Fowler
 - Stage 3 (years 5 and 6): Mrs Denise White
- Following this, for further concerns, or if you feel the issue has not been resolved, please contact the school to make an appointment to see the Principal: Mrs Ruth White.

If all avenues have been exhausted and a satisfactory outcome has not been reached then you may consider lodging your suggestion, complaint or allegation in writing. In such cases the policy "Responding to Suggestions, Complaints and Allegations" is available at <https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/complaints-handling-policy> will be followed.

Disruptive disputes

It is an expectation that meetings are focused on a collaborative problem-solving approach between the school and community. In any meeting where the communication is not progressing the issue, school staff reserve the right to adjourn and rearrange the meeting to a future date for resolution. For any meeting where there is aggression, unacceptable or offensive behaviour, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled to another time.

If a domestic or personal dispute occurs on the school grounds and/or impacts school routine, all parties will be asked to leave the school grounds.

Failure to act in an acceptable manner may lead to exclusion from the school grounds under the *Inclosed Lands Protection Act (1901) and its Amendments* following procedures established by the Department of Education for:

- Actual physical assaults or intimidating behaviour on students, staff, parents or community members at the school or during the course of school activities;
- Behaviour in a manner in the presence of students, staff, parents or other visitors to the school that causes alarm or concern to the students, staff, parents or other visitors;
- Use of offensive language (i.e. swearing) in the presence of students and staff;
- Persistent interruptions to the learning environment of the school such as entering classrooms without permission;
- Persistent entry to the school site without permission or legitimate reason.

Ratification

This Policy has been developed in conjunction with:

- Principal: Ruth White
- Gordon East Executive Team & School staff
- Parent representatives : Nils Bown (President), Kiah Wolton-Phillips (Vice President)
- Tabled at P&C Meeting: 01/12/2020

Appendix



School Community Charter

Collaborative. Respectful. Communication.

The following School Community Charter outlines the responsibilities of parents, carers, educators and school staff in NSW public schools to ensure our learning environments are collaborative, supportive and cohesive.

We treat each other with respect

What our schools provide

NSW public schools work to create positive environments for students, staff and the entire school community that support student learning. We strive to ensure that every student is known, valued and cared for.

The best education happens when parents and schools work together.

The School Community Charter aligns with the NSW Department of Education Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022.



Positive environments

It is important that our NSW public schools are positive environments and that parents and carers are kept informed of students' progress and school announcements.

Parents and carers can expect:

- To be welcomed into our schools to work in partnership to promote student learning.
- Communication from school staff will be timely, polite and informative.
- Professional relationships with school staff are based on transparency, honesty and mutual respect.
- To be treated fairly. Tolerance and understanding are promoted as we respect diversity.

We prioritise the wellbeing of all students and staff

Unsafe behaviour is not acceptable in our schools

We work together with the school

Ensuring respectful learning environments for all members of NSW Public Schools communities.



We create
collaborative
learning
environments

We
all play
our part

We work
in partnership
to promote
student
learning

Communicating with our schools

Our staff will find a time to talk to you when they can give you their full attention. Please remember that while our staff are in class or dealing with other matters, they may not be available to answer your questions immediately.

Our schools and communities will make sure that written communication is appropriate, fair and easy to read. We encourage you to use email and social media appropriately to connect with your school and stay up-to-date with up-coming events in the school community.

Our guide for parents, carers and students provides useful information about the complaints process:

education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/complaints-compliments-and-suggestions/guide-for-parents-carers-and-students

Respectful communication is a right

In all workplaces people have the right to feel respected. Unacceptable and offensive behaviour has no place in our school communities.

To ensure the wellbeing of students, staff and the community in our schools, steps will be taken to address unacceptable behaviour. This may include restricting contact with the school community or, in more serious cases, referral to NSW Police.



Unacceptable behaviour may include but is not limited to:

- Aggressive or intimidating actions, such as violence, threatening gestures or physical proximity.
- Aggressive or intimidating language, including the use of obscenities, making sexist, racist or derogatory comments or using a rude tone.
- Treating members of the school community differently due to aspects such as their religion or disability.
- Inappropriate and time wasting communication.



Collaborative.
Respectful.
Communication.

School Community Charter

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