

A positive parent-teacher relationship contributes to your child's school success. Communicating well is a key factor for making this relationship work. At St Joseph's School, we use the Parable of the Mustard Seed to inspire us in all our work:

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. *Matthew 13:31-32*

The parable speaks of the role of the school to be a place of nurture that enables the growth, development and flourishing of all who come here.

Good communication is essential in providing the best possible environment for all our families to belong and flourish. To develop a strong and positive partnership between home and school requires effective and clear communication.

One of the best ways that parents can help their children succeed in school is to be involved with their education. This starts with good communication between you and your child's teacher. To minimise the risk of miscommunication there are some basic principles that we ask parents, staff and students to follow.

**Miscommunication is usually the number one cause of conflict.**

Check before you react. Remember that the vast majority of people are good people and want the best for your child and other people. It is important to remember that children often only see a situation from their viewpoint and may not relay the whole incident. We are a Restorative Practice school, solving situations with care and respect for all.

**Go to the staff member closest to the situation.** Speak first to the most appropriate person, do not go 'over someone's head' until you have spoken to them. Please do not discuss issues or people 'in the public arena'. We are very much about building community and supporting each other.

**When to communicate is always a hard balance.** At the beginning of the year when everything is new, sometimes it may be best to wait, but generally speaking, if it is worrying you, don't wait; talk to the staff member closest to the situation. We do not want to solve all of our children's problems, but a quiet word to the teacher can alert them to an issue before it gets too big. Do not wait for a parent-teacher interview. If you want to know how your child is going, then make an appointment to see the teacher.

**The bigger the issue the more time it takes to resolve.** No matter who you see, make an appointment so the person is there and they can put aside enough time to deal with it thoroughly.

**Do not try to sort out a problem between your child and another at school by approaching a child or his/her parent – speak to your class teacher.** No parent has the right to approach a child from another family about a school incident.

**Do not speak on behalf of others** – Delegations and speaking for others often ends up with the “others” not backing you up when the crunch comes. If you have a concern, please raise it with the most appropriate person. Supporting the school does not always mean agreeing with it, but using the communication channels and processes that respect all members of the community, will support us in community building and in what we are hoping to achieve. Gossip never resolves issues.

### **Electronic Communication**

Increasingly parents and teachers are using e-mails to communicate with each other. Email is often a convenient and helpful way to communicate with your child's teacher, however parents and teachers should follow the same guidelines as for any professional communication.

### **Electronic Communication Initiated by Parents**

All emails for staff should be sent to the relevant staff member's school email address. Emails should only be sent for professional purposes.

Please be aware that teachers get many email messages – and will be teaching your child and have many other responsibilities during their day. Staff may not be able to respond immediately to your e-mail.

Staff will check their emails daily on school days (or each day that they work, if part-time). Teachers may request a meeting if the issue is too complex to resolve by e-mail.

### **Some tips for communication with school staff**

- A poorly worded or aggressive email can lead to a break down in communication and neither parent nor the teacher wants this. Following email etiquette can enhance communication.
- Be positive, courteous and diplomatic. You can't take back an email message and email can be easily forwarded. Be calm and choose your words carefully. Do not write and send an email when you are angry.
- Open up your communication with the correct email etiquette to the teacher and use phrases such as "Can we talk about...?" or "I need to check ...". Avoid comments such as "You should have..." or "You must be mistaken." You may not have all the details you need to support those statements.
- Make respectful requests, such as "Please could you send home the information about..." Avoid giving orders to the teacher, be brief, and stick to the point. Use kind words rather than aggressive phrases. For example, "Please, could you..." and "Thank you for all you did," go a long way in building a good relationship.
- Don't forward someone else's email, including a teacher's, unless you have their permission.
- Watch out for viruses and spam - do not spread these around.

This Communication Protocol acknowledges the need for everyone to communicate in a courteous and respectful manner at appropriate times with timely feedback.

We look forward to working in a positive partnership across the whole St Joseph's School community.