
Westgarth Primary School is a community of students, staff, friends and family working together to create a diverse, engaging and respectful learning environment.

Rationale

Communication is an essential factor in any partnership. Open communication lines are nurtured and the processes of communication are accessible to all at Westgarth Primary School.

It is essential that members of the school community (staff, parents, school councillors) 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, including privacy and confidentiality.

At Westgarth Primary School we believe the communication and relationship between home and school play a vital role in a child's education and successful learning. Positive, clear and effective processes between the school and community members are an integral part of building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety, and ultimately providing students with an enhanced learning environment.

Aims

The aims of the communication policy at Westgarth Primary School are:

- to ensure that communication of information is carried out correctly, efficiently and in a consistent manner
- to identify, promote and provide the avenues and processes for the exchange of information, ideas, comments and suggestions for all community members
- to ensure that queries, concerns and complaints are addressed in a timely, efficient, consistent and professional manner that complies with departmental requirements.

Actions

How Westgarth Primary School will communicate with parents

It is the responsibility of the Principal to report to the school community, parents and students on the progress and achievements of the school and individual students, as appropriate.

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 1 of 6 |

Information may be in the form of:

- written reports or portfolios on your child's progress, including two written reports each year
- at least one parent – teacher interview each year
- annual report to the school community
- notes, surveys and regular information through the school newsletter, including information from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) about programs and initiatives
- parent information booklets, parent information sessions, and parent education programs such as Building Resilience and Classroom Helpers
- assemblies, sport and special events, celebrations and displays of students' work
- by telephone, mail or email as required
- material and documentation placed on the school website (<http://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/main.html>) and the My School website (<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>)

Parents may want to talk to school personnel about;

- **their child:** their attitude, progress, attendance, participation, social and emotional matters, learning improvement plan/individual learning plan, and access to support services
- **the school:** school council policies and procedures, codes of conduct, the learning environment, teaching staff, homework, general student behaviour, programs for students experiencing difficulties with learning and/or programs for gifted and talented students.

Information available from the school

- Westgarth Primary School Information Handbook
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development policies and guidelines
- school council policies, for example homework, student engagement, discipline, excursions, uniform and parent payments

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 2 of 6 |

- curriculum and program details
- minutes from the school council, parents' association and other community groups / organisations involved with the school

Processes for Communication

Seeking information and clarifying an issue as early as possible can solve many problems.

Once the issue is identified and clarified, it is important that you then follow the steps set out in this policy. You might make a telephone call or send an email to the school to discuss the issue and/or arrange a meeting.

Who do I contact at the school if I have a concern about my child's learning?

Could the class teacher help?
Arrange a meeting and discuss

OR Could a parent representative from school council help? Arrange a meeting and discuss



Could the assistant principal / year level co-ordinator help?
Arrange a meeting and discuss

Refer to appropriate staff member from school council sub-committee.



Could the principal help?
Arrange a meeting and discuss

Present the person's idea / information to appropriate person / staff member / principal or committee



Could the school council president help?
Arrange a meeting and discuss

Contact the parent and provide feedback / outcome by the school council president / principal



Contact the parent and provide feedback / outcome by the appropriate staff

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 3 of 6 |

How do I make a complaint?

Decide whether the matter is a query, a concern or a complaint.

A **query** is an inquiry or a request for information.

A **concern** is an issue of interest which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

A **complaint** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Once you have identified the issue(s), try to stay calm. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concern across more clearly than if you are upset or angry.

Identify the problem and establish the facts as clearly as you can before going to the school. Be wary of second hand information and/or gossip.

Below is a suggested approach as to how resolutions to queries, concerns and complaints might be reached.

School Level Resolution

Stage 1: Discussion with staff member

If the matter involves your child or is about everyday class operation, an initial enquiry should be made to the classroom teacher. This might be in person, via telephone call or by email. You might need to make an appointment to see the classroom teacher. The staff member will work with you to resolve the problem.

Stage 2: Discussion or formal communication with the principal

If the matter concerns a member of the school community, contact the principal who will work with you to resolve the problem.

If that matter concerns a staff member, contact the principal. Principals are responsible for managing complaints made about members of staff.

If you wish to formalise your complaint, this should be done in writing. Include as much factual detail as you can about what is alleged to have occurred.

The principal will write a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint. This response means your complaint has been received and the investigation process has commenced.

The Principal will consider the matter and identify what action is to be taken. The Principal may also need to seek advice from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development about the matter.

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 4 of 6 |

Stage 3: Discussion or formal communication with the school council

If the matter concerns a school policy, e.g. uniform policy, contact the school council president via the school.

After an initial discussion you may want to formalise the matter by writing to the school council.

If the school council regards the issue as an operational matter, it will be referred to the principal who is the executive office of the council.

If the issue is regarded as a policy or governance matter, it will be dealt with at a school council meeting. Your letter will be acknowledged with a written reply as soon as possible, even if a resolution is not available at this stage. You will be advised further about any course of action.

Regional Level Resolution

Stage 4: Regional resolution

If resolution is not reached at the school level, contact the Northern Metropolitan Regional Office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (telephone 9488 9488). Ask to speak with a community liaison officer. If an officer is not available when you call, you will be contacted as soon as possible. This may be the following day.

The community liaison officer will provide advice and assist you to achieve a resolution with the school.

If that is not possible, you should put your complain in writing to the regional director so that the matter can be considered further.

Central Level Resolution

Stage 5: Formal complaints

In an exceptional circumstance where the matter cannot be resolved at the regional level, a complaint can be forwarded to:

Deputy Secretary
Office for Government School Education
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne 3001

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 5 of 6 |

Further information about the Department's policy for addressing parents' concerns and complaints is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschools.htm>

A copy of the Department's Complaint Lodgement Form is also available on the site.

Communication with school councillors

The school council president or a member of school council received correspondence from a parent

If the matter is a policy issue



School council president/vice president emails copy to all school councillors



Matter is discussed at school council and appropriate action taken



Parent informed of outcome by the appropriate member of school council

If the matter is an **operational** issue



Principal/assistant principal replies and emails a copy to all school councillors



Principal informs parent of outcome

Placing item on school council agenda

If it is a policy matter discuss with school council president before the meeting and prior to agenda committee meeting



Agenda Committee will decide whether to put the matter on the agenda for school council meeting and inform the parent of the action being taken to progress the matter.

If it is an operational matter discuss with the principal before the meeting and prior to agenda committee meeting



Agenda Committee

The week before the school council meeting, the president, vice president, principal and assistant principal meet to set the agenda and discuss the most appropriate way to deal with items at the next school council meeting.

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Approval date: | Approved by: | Next Review: | Page: |
| Oct 2011 | School Council | Oct 2014 | 6 of 6 |