



Collaborative, respectful communication: A whole school approach

Respectful communication is a right

At Beechwood Public School (BPS) all people have the right to feel respected. Our school is an environment that focuses on collaboration, consultation, listening and using everyone's strengths to achieve common goals. We pride ourselves in modelling positive and respectful communication at all times; with all members of our community.

Unacceptable and offensive behaviour, including disrespectful language, has no place in our school. To ensure the wellbeing of students, staff and the community, offensive behaviour and disrespectful communication will not be tolerated.

Rationale:

The staff at our school are committed to working in partnership with its parents and community to develop robust, mutually beneficial relationships that support the education and wellbeing of all BPS 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 in becoming active and informed citizens.

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

Links to policy:

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

Whole school communication our school provides:

- School newsletter (fortnightly)
- School website: <https://beechwood-p.schools.nsw.gov.au>
- School email: Beechwood-p.school@det.nsw.gov.au
- Beechwood Skoolbag App <https://skoolbag.com.au/webplugin/?schoolid=8745>
- Parent information meetings
- Information sessions for specific purposes
- Whole school assemblies (fortnightly)
- School surveys
- Notes and leaflets
- BPS Remote Learning Hub: - <https://bit.ly/2JHo7AX>
- BPS P&C Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/beechwoodPandC/>
- Annual School Report (yearly)
- Parent/Teacher Interviews
- IEP / PLP meetings (students with individualised plans)
- Parent help in the classroom
- Parent discussion forums/ focus groups
- P&C meetings (monthly)

Classroom Communication Strategies:

- **Class newsletter:** These are sent home to families once per term and outline the expected learning and structure of the term that aligns with our school's Scope and Sequence documents.
- **Email:** Teacher email addresses are readily available for parents/carers of students within their class. Parents/Carers can email teachers with questions, concerns, clarifications and requests that involve their child's wellbeing and/or education. Teachers will reply to emails (in a timely manner) on days that they work, between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm.
 - Where the email is a complaint, teachers are expected to respond following complaint handling procedures and allow three working days to acknowledge the complaint – For more information about the complaints process, visit - <http://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/complaints-compliments-and-suggestions/guide>
- **Appointments:** Teachers are generally available to meet with parents/carers from 8:30am to 9:00am; throughout the work day during their lunch break; whilst they are on release from face-to-face (RFF), or between 3:00pm to 4:30pm (if they do not have a scheduled staff meeting). This is best organised by making an appointment with your child's class teacher through the school or via email. As you can understand, teachers will not be available to have lengthy discussions with parents during class teaching time or at times where they are required to be on playground or supervision duty. A teacher may ask for his/her supervisor or a member of the school Executive to take part in meetings.
- **Phone:** Class teachers can be expected to make phone contact during school hours with their student's parents/carers throughout the term to discuss wellbeing, behaviour, academics – or just to share information and check in with families. Parents/carers can make phone contact through the school office and a return phone call will be made at the staff member's earliest convenience.

Please be aware of the following:

- BPS staff will not provide their personal mobile or home phone numbers to parents/carers.
- BPS class teachers are unable to report on individual students with parents daily (via phone, email or in writing), unless this is a support strategy incorporated into a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personal Learning Pathway (PLP).
- School Learning and Support Officers (SLSOs) are not responsible for communicating information to parents/carers about student learning and wellbeing. Parents/Carers will need to have direct communication with their child's class teacher.

When communicating with parents/carers, staff members:

- 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 dealing with the school community.
- Make available materials and information for a parent who lives apart from the child/ren upon request.

While some matters may be addressed immediately, it is desirable to arrange meetings to address issues at a time that is mutually convenient and is conducive to a positive outcome.

- Unless unusual circumstances apply, staff arrange interviews with parents in a timely manner.
- Case conferences are held where appropriate and notes recorded and distributed to all participants.

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.

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, such as Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, etc.
- minimise out of school hours communication (outside of 8:30am – 4:30pm, on weekends or during school holidays).

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/changes

School or class issues:

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

Access to support services:

- school and regional level student services including support for students with a disability and where English is an additional language.
- programs for students experiencing difficulties with learning.
- specialist facilities including language development, intensive language, and education support centres.

Can parents/carers communicate with staff through social media?

- It is a breach of the NSW Department of Education's Code of Conduct for staff members to invite students into their personal social networking sites or to accept students' invitations to join theirs.

- Teaching in a semi-rural or smaller community like ours, we understand that some staff members may have pre-existing friendships with parents/carers in our community and may be social networking *friends* prior to their employment at BPS. Regardless of this, all BPS staff are discouraged from inviting parents/carers into their personal social networking sites, or from accepting invitations to join theirs, including text or instant messaging services. Please do not be offended if a staff member does not respond to your personal message or accept your invitation to become 'friends'; they are doing this at the request of their employer and in an attempt to keep their professional and personal life separate. You are encouraged to contact your child's teacher or any BPS staff through the appropriate school channels (phone call, email to teacher, face-to-face meeting pre-organised with staff member, etc).

Emergencies:

- Normally, a parent would not communicate with their child during school hours. In the event of a family emergency, parents/carers are requested to contact the school office, advise them of the nature of the emergency and staff members will facilitate communication with their child/children.
- In the event of a family emergency over a weekend or during school holidays, parents/carers are able to send a private message to the P&C President/Executive (via the P&C FaceBook page) who is able to communicate immediately with the school principal.
- All BPS students who bring a mobile phone or electronic device to school are required to turn their device off and hand it in at the school office (where it will be stored securely) before 9:00am each morning and to collect it at 3:00pm.

The benefits of home-school partnerships are apparent, with research consistently finding that teacher and family relationships are important for young people's social and emotional wellbeing and academic achievement (Desforges & Aboucher, 2003).

These practices and guidelines have been developed to strengthen family, community, student and staff connectedness and engagement in learning, at Beechwood Public School.



Tracey Bromfield

Principal

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