

Communications Policy

VISION STATEMENT

GERALDTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL WILL PROVIDE OUTSTANDING EDUCATION AND A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY, CULTIVATING PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY, INDEPENDENCE OF MIND AND A LOVE OF LEARNING.

Introduction	This statement outlines the Geraldton Grammar School policy on internal and external communication.
Scope and application	Policy applies to all employees of Geraldton Grammar School.
Related legislation and guidelines	Reference to professional learning and best practice communication from Edge Communications (Perth) Reference to Communications Policies from Ozford College, Bindoon Primary School, Aranda Primary School, Saint Mary MacKillop Primary School, and The Illawarra Grammar School
Related Policies	
Evaluation	

Date	Action (issue, reissue, amendment, replacement of pages, etc)	Initials
26/03/17	Implementation of new policy	NJE
11/04/17	Amended	NJE

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

RATIONALE

Geraldton Grammar School is committed to open, transparent and effective communication.

The School has a variety of means to establish effective communication. This policy's implementation enhances the quality of the school community through:

- Promoting understanding and co-operative teamwork between the School, parents/guardians/carers and students
- Promoting active participation of the whole school community in effective communication
- Providing school expectations regarding communication standards
- Ensuring processes are in place which allows for open, honest and timely communication amongst all school community members
- Ensuring that confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- Providing clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner

POLICY

Electronic communications will be the primary means of communicating within the school community. This includes the school website, email communications, SEQTA direct messages, the newsletter and social media accounts.

This policy also provides a basis for the review and evaluation of Standard 7 of the *Professional Teaching Standards – Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/guardians/carers and the community*.

In addition, there will be regular face-to-face communication through formal and informal events and meetings.

1. Communication

Parents and carers wishing to contact the staff about a matter related to school have a number of options.

In the primary school, parents should telephone administration or contact the classroom teacher directly, if it is a classroom issue. If the matter is urgent, the Head of Primary may be contacted through the administration office or directly via email.

In the middle school, parents should telephone the administration or contact the classroom teacher directly, if it is a classroom issue. If the matter is urgent, the Year 7 Co-ordinator (year 7) or the Head of Middle School (year 7, 8 and 9) may be contacted through the administration office or directly via email.

In the senior school, parents should telephone the administration or contact the classroom teacher directly, if it is a classroom issue. If the matter is urgent, the Head of Senior School may be contacted through the administration office or directly via email.

Key contacts:

Administration – Teletelephone 9965 7800 email ggs@gegs.wa.edu.au

Director of Early Learning – Mrs Jayne Caley – jayne.caley@gegs.wa.edu.au

Head of Primary School – Mrs Berrice Lodge berrice.lodge@gegs.wa.edu.au

Year 7 Co-ordinator – Ms Sharon Cole sharon.cole@gegs.wa.edu.au

Head of Middle School – Ms Anne Faichney anne.faichney@gegs.wa.edu.au

Head of Senior School – Mrs Jenni Winterbine jenni.winterbine@gegs.wa.edu.au

Head of Educational Administration – Mr Derek Lange derek.lange@gegs.wa.edu.au

Business Manager – Mr Graeme Munday graeme.munday@gegs.wa.edu.au

Principal – Mr Nick Johnstone nick.johnstone@gegs.wa.edu.au

Key contact staff details are available on the School's website –

www.geraldtongrammarschool.wa.edu.au

2. Staff communication with parents/guardians/carers

Regular positive communication with parents/guardians/carers will build relationships and generate trust.

3. Academic communication in the primary school

Minor academic issues, such as missed homework or assignments, appropriately begin with a note in the student diary. Similarly, the student diary may be used to communicate positive work habits, academic progress or improvements in attitude or effort by a student.

When there is a concern for the academic progress of a child, such as the need for extra class attention, tasks for follow-up at home parents/guardians/carers should be contacted by telephone or by organising a meeting seeking their input. This type of communication is to be noted in SEQTA.

Follow-up telephone calls or a meeting should be held on a regular basis when a child is at risk academically.

During the reporting period, parents will be notified prior to a child receiving a D or E grade by the class teacher. The report should not be a surprise to the student or to the parent.

4. Academic communication in the middle and senior schools

Minor academic issues, such as missed homework or assignments, appropriately begin with a note in the student diary. Similarly, the student diary may be used to communicate positive work habits, academic progress or improvements in attitude or effort by a student.

When a significant academic change is being contemplated, such as a student moving to a different academic grouping or class, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians/carers in advance, and an opportunity provided for discussion about this change.

- If the change is within the same learning area, then the letter is written by the Head of Learning Area
- If the change is into a different learning area or class group, then the letter is written by the Head of School.

A copy of this letter is to be added to SETQA.

Repeated minor issues or failure to submit formal assessment tasks in year 7 to 10 will result in discussions with the student and telephone or email contact with the parents/guardians/carers. If the telephone contact is made by the class teacher, it must be discussed with the Head of Learning Area or Head of School beforehand. Notes must be kept and entered into SEQTA. Those with pastoral responsibilities such as Home group teachers and Heads of School should be alerted by email.

During the reporting period, parents/guardians/carers will be notified prior to a child receiving a D or E grade by the class teacher. After discussions with parents/guardians/carers, it may be appropriate for the student to attend an interview with the class teacher and/or the Head of Learning Area where the student is informed that a letter will be sent home to parents/guardians/carers. A copy of these letters will be added to the student's file on SEQTA. Those with pastoral responsibilities such as Home Group teachers and Heads of School should be alerted by email.

Failure to submit formal assessment tasks in years 11 and 12 will result in a student interview with the teacher and the Head of the Learning Area. The Head of Learning Area will communicate to the student that the parent/guardian/carer will also be contacted by telephone or email and a follow-up letter to outline the issue and where improvement can be sort. A copy of these letters will be added to the student's file on SEQTA, and the Head of Senior School will be informed. Should the behaviour become a pattern, the Head of Senior School will organise an interview with the student and the parent/guardian/carer to discuss potential solutions. Those with pastoral responsibilities such as Home group teachers will also be alerted by email.

5. Pastoral and disciplinary communication across the School

This section relates to communication by staff with parents/guardians/carers about pastoral issues and ongoing or serious discipline issues of a student.

Early and regular communication with parents/guardians/carers will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with. The School will create opportunities for parents/guardians/carers to meet with or have contact from key pastoral care staff, particularly when families are new to the School.

Less serious issues - For less serious one-off classroom discipline issues (disrespect for others, interfering with the learning of others, being unsafe) the classroom teacher would apply normal classroom management strategies. Parents/guardians/carers may be contacted by a note in the student diary, telephone call or email. Similarly, the student diary may be used to communicate improvements in attitude or effort by a student.

Pastoral issues - Where a Home group teacher, classroom teacher or Head of Learning Area has concerns regarding pastoral issues or ongoing or serious classroom discipline issues relating to a student, it would be appropriate to first check SEQTA for any pastoral or discipline alerts or student history. It may be necessary to contact the Head of School for background information if access in SEQTA is restricted.

In-class serious issues - If a serious issue is identified, parents/guardians/carers will be contacted as soon as possible (preferably on the day) by telephone or email, by either the classroom teacher or Head of Learning Area or Head of School.

Notes are to be made of any telephone contact or face to face interviews and saved in SEQTA for future reference and communication.

A formal letter will be sent by the Head of Learning Area or Head of School to inform the parents of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied. Information will be emailed to the student's Home group teacher and Head of School.

Follow-up contact with parents/guardians/carers will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe.

Out-of-class serious issues - For serious discipline issues outside the classroom, a member of the Senior Management Team will contact parents preferably on the day or within 24 hours. If an investigation has not been completed, this contact is to inform parents/guardians/carers that the matter is under investigation.

Notes are to be made and kept of any telephone contacts or face to face interviews and recorded in the student's file on SEQTA.

A telephone call (or email if telephone contact is not successful) or face to face interview should be made, followed by a formal letter sent by the Head of School to inform the parents of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied.

Follow-up contact with parents/guardians/carers will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe.

When an investigation results in the possibility of serious sanctions being applied, such as suspension or expulsion, the matter would be discussed with the Principal. The initial contact will be a telephone call, followed by a formal letter sent by the Head of School to inform the parents of the outcomes of any investigation and any sanctions imposed. All correspondence will be recorded in the student's file in SEQTA.

For pastoral issues where there may be a concern for the welfare of a student, the matter will initially be referred to either the Head of School or Student Wellbeing Officer. The decision to contact parents/guardians/carers would be taken following investigations and consultation with the pastoral care team (Home group teacher, Head of School, Student Wellbeing Officer and the Principal).

When the pastoral issue is "reportable", the matter must be reported direct to the Mandatory Reporting Service (Refer to the Child Protection Policy) by the teacher. Decisions to contact parents/guardians/carers would be based on the procedure in the Child Protection Policy. It is recommended that the Principal is informed when a report has been filed.

6. Communication regarding non-student related matters

The Business Manager is responsible for the operational maintenance of the school with respect to school security, reporting of potential workplace safety issues, reporting of vandalism and general maintenance issues of the school.

The Business Manager is also responsible for external Batavia Hall bookings and management. The Finance Office or the Business Manager may also be contacted for school fee related issues.

7. Responding to and following up parents/guardians/carers enquiries

Telephone contact (inward calls) - Where a parent/guardian/carer has contacted a staff member by telephone or personal interview, notes should be taken and all aspects of the conversation should be clarified to the satisfaction of all parties.

Telephone contact (outward calls) - Introduce yourself at the beginning of the telephone call together with the purpose of the call.

- Be polite and courteous.
- Before you make the call, write down everything you need to communicate with that parent. Be organised with your thoughts.
- Keep a telephone log. Record the date, time, and reason for calling that parent. A record of any difficult calls needs to be recorded on SEQTA and your line manager is to be informed.
- Be direct and mindful of the parent's time.
- If the parent is unable to talk to you at that time, politely ask when would be a good time to call them again.
- If you leave a message; identify who you are, what you are calling about, and leave information for them to return your telephone call.

Incoming calls procedure is attached as Appendix One.

Email contact - When the contact is by email, either directly by the parent/guardian/carer or a message to contact a parent/guardian/carer, they should be responded to within 24 hours of the initial contact.

Where some action is agreed upon following a meeting or communication, a time-frame should be established to either review progress or resolve the issue.

All Home group and primary classroom teachers will contact the parents/guardian/carer by telephone to introduce themselves. This communication should be followed up with an email or direct message introducing yourself as the Home group teacher/classroom teacher and outline key elements such as contact information and the goals and expectations that you have for the year. This correspondence will follow on from the "Meet and Greet" interview that occurred at the start of the school year.

The email will be sent home in the first week of the school year.

Email Expectations

All staff members are issued a personal school email address and staff handbook during staff induction. A copy of the staff handbook is available to all staff on SEQTA.

It is good practice to communicate directly (face to face) with your line manager or with another staff member if possible. The best communication tool is face to face interaction. However, this may not always be possible or appropriate. In such cases, staff are expected to communicate via the telephone or email. Email communication is necessary when written correspondence forms part of the documentary evidence.

Staff are expected to follow a strict business protocol with emails. Staff email addresses and telephone numbers are available to all staff. Please respond to all emails promptly and politely. If communication is becoming difficult or uncomfortable, do not continue with the email exchange. Organise a face to face meeting with the staff member involved and invite your line manager if there is potential for the issue to continue to remain unsolved.

All staff emails require your name, title and contact details in the signature line as well as the school's closing email footer.

The school device must be turned off (preference to save on power) or locked at the end of each day to ensure the security of the device, the teacher account and all correspondence.

Written contact – The Communication Style Guide is to be used when written communication leaving the school is required. This guide is available on SEQTA.

All letters must be sent on school letterhead and typed in Arial Narrow 12. All written communication must be professional, courteous, and have contact information (staff email address and telephone number) to get back in touch with the staff member. All letters must be signed and dated by the sender. It is also recommended that educational jargon and acronyms be avoided.

Letters must be proofread by the staff member's direct line manager before it is sent home.

A copy of all correspondence must be given to Administration. Letters pertaining to a student will be kept on the student's file.

If the information is in relation to a change in the normal routines e.g. change in class, activity or timetable, a copy of the letter must be given to the Head of School or Principal on the day the letter is sent.

8. Parent Conferences and 3 Way Conferences

- Develop a positive relationship with parents. Try to gain their trust and let them know that you have their child's best interest in mind at all times.
- Dress professionally as is the expectation of all staff at Geraldton Grammar School.
- Create a comfortable atmosphere. Don't place a desk between yourself and the parents unless you are presenting student scripts or a portfolio. Use the same type of chair.
- Be prepared! Have your agenda ready. Have materials available that show the quality of the student's work. Help the parents who use SEQTA to navigate around this resource as well.
- Ensure the actions are outlined on how the student can improve their learning. What is the next step in their learning?
- Record your actions that you have promised as part of the parent conference and follow up on these as quickly as possible.
- Always start the conference with something positive.
- Be attentive and listen.
- Never talk about or discuss other students or teachers.
- Avoid the use of jargon. Keep it simple.
- End the conference with something positive.
- Let them know, that you know and you care about their child.

- If the conference becomes difficult. Stop the interview and organise another time to address these issues in more detail. If this is not possible, call for assistance from a member of the Senior Management Team or your line manager.
- Keep a conference journal. Record the date, time, reason, and key points discussed in the conference. Key points raised need to be recorded on SEQTA.
- All parents need to receive positive information regarding their child at least two times per term. The positive communication will build a positive relationship between the teacher and the parent.
- All negative correspondence with parents should be documented on SEQTA.

9. Staff to staff - internal communication

9.1 Communications from Principal to Teacher

The Principal will send out regular emails to all staff. The email may highlight significant events, remind you of tasks, and offer suggestions for you to use in your classroom.

All teachers need to check their email at least twice per day (before school starts and the end of the school day).

Departmental meetings will occur weekly and cover relevant operational information and discuss events happening within our school as well as to focus on professional learning. Meetings will be every Monday at 3.15pm (in middle and senior school) and on Tuesday (in the primary school – to allow specialists to attend) at various places throughout the campus.

Whole school staff meeting will occur on Monday's of Week 4 and Week 8 each term. These meetings are mandatory.

Be sure to check your pigeon hole daily. The office uses this to disseminate a variety of postal communications as well as grant information, classroom activities and ideas together with information for students and information from senior management.

Classroom visits – expect the Principal to visit your classroom on a regular basis. Carry on with your teaching as per normal. The Principal should be able to ask any student what the learning intention is for that lesson or task and what the success criteria are for that task.

9.2 Assignment of staff to committees, extracurricular activities and school camps

All staff wishing to coordinate or participate in a school committee, an extracurricular activity or school camp will need to apply for that position through the appropriate line manager. Line managers will also approach staff to become involved in these activities due to their previous experience, skill set, interest or opportunity for professional development.

Staff members with previous experience will be taken into consideration for that position first.

If no one applies for a particular position, then the line manager for that activity or camp will approach a staff member who is qualified to coordinate that position.

Extracurricular activities and school camps are part of the expected duties of a staff member at Geraldton Grammar School. All teaching staff will attend at least one camp per year and one

extracurricular activity per year. This is a standard expectation for independent schools across Australia.

10. Communication from Teacher to Principal

The Principal has an open door policy. Staff visits are welcome. The Principal is always happy to answer questions, take suggestions, and listen to staff. The Principal will, however, ask if you have discussed your concern or issue with your line manager during this meeting. Communication and shared understanding are an important part of decision making.

Staff are also welcome to email the Principal of any issue. The Principal will respond to email as quickly as possible.

If an issue or problem comes up after school. Please feel free to call the Principal on his/her school mobile number (currently - 0499657747).

11. Communication regarding teacher expectations for relief lessons

If a teaching staff member or Educational Assistant is going to be absent, please let the Head of Primary or Head of Educational Administration know as soon as possible.

If an emergency happens after school hours, please call the Head of School or Principal at home as soon as possible.

All staff are required to complete a pink leave form if absence is known in advance. If it is an unplanned absence, then a leave form must be completed as soon as the staff member returns to work. The Payroll Office, as part of their regular practice, will place a pink leave form in staff member's pigeon holes when they are absent.

All teachers need to put a relief-teacher lesson together. This needs to be left on his/her teaching desk or with either the Head of Primary or Head of Educational Administration.

Make sure the information is detailed, easy to follow, and state specifically when and what the relief teacher is required to do. Use the relief lesson plan forms available on SEQTA.

If worksheets are included in the lesson plan/s provide sufficient copies for the class in advance. Students who have Curriculum Adjustment Plans or Individual Education Plans need to be outlined in the relief lesson plan.

If it is possible, write a personal note to the relief teacher making them feel welcome and giving them any information that might help them.

12. Communication and treatment of students

All students are to be treated fairly and with respect. If you expect them to respect you, then you have to respect them. The Principal expects the learning environment and the school climate more generally to be positive, open and caring.

You need to have an open door policy with all of your students. Let them know they can trust you. Allow them the opportunity to come in, talk to you, ask you questions, and voice their concerns and opinions. This positive communication and care is your primary role as a teacher. These conversations are best had in public venues as to protect your professionalism.

It is Geraldton Grammar School's expectation that you provide all students with the optimal opportunities to learn. The School needs to create an atmosphere that fosters learning and enhances a student's ability to do so.

All students, regardless of race, colour, background or gender, should be given equal opportunities and fair treatment by their teachers, administrators, and peers.

All students should be encouraged to ask questions, and all teachers need to provide a response as accurately as possible.

All teachers should have every student's best interest in mind.

APPENDIX 1:

INCOMING TELEPHONE CALLS PROCEDURES

Incoming telephone calls are handled in a professional, courteous and prompt manner.

Definitions **Standard telephone phrases** are the responses which should be used by employees of the organisation to deal with specific telephone situations.

Procedure:

Answering the call

Answer all incoming telephone calls by the third ring.

Calls to the general telephone number (08 9965 7800) will be answered by the administration staff and transferred to the relevant extension as necessary.

Standard telephone phrases to be used

The following phrases should be used when answering incoming telephone calls:

Incoming call situation	Administration	Teacher or Support Staff Member
External call	<i>Good morning/afternoon – welcome to Geraldton Grammar School. My name is May I help you?</i>	<i>Good morning/afternoon – welcome to Geraldton Grammar School speaking.</i>
Internal call	<i>(Name) speaking.</i>	<i>(Name) speaking.</i>
<p>To Transfer a call to another extension: Press Hold to put the call on hold Dial Extension Number or press One Touch Key (if on the telephone), Announce call Press Transfer OR Advise of line number Hang up. The call is transferred.</p>	<p>(Repeat the name of the person wanted.) <i>One moment please.</i></p> <p>Before the transfer takes place – introduce the caller together with any background information that is required. Please also let the recipient be aware of the tone of the caller if that is applicable. e.g. Mr Johnstone, Mrs Mary Parent is on the line and would like to speak with you about the Information Evening tonight. Are you able to take the call?</p> <p>If the extension is busy: <i>That extension is busy at the moment. Would you like to hold or may I take a message?</i></p> <p>If the person is unavailable: <i>(Name) is not available at the moment. May I take a message or a message may be left on their message bank service?</i></p> <p><i>Administration staff will check SEQTA to see if that staff member is teaching prior to transferring the call.</i></p>	

<p>Taking a telephone message</p>	<p>Take the message and repeat the details back to the caller. Caller's name (and organisation if applicable) Contact number Recipients name Topic of message or message detail Time and date This message will be emailed to the recipient or a note placed in their pigeon hole.</p> <p>When a caller asks for Line Manager/ employee: <i>May I ask who's calling, please?</i></p>	<p><i>Take the message and repeat the details back to the caller.</i></p>
<p>Screening a call (If the Line Manager or other employee asks for their calls to be screened.)</p>	<p>When speaking to Line Manager/ employee to see if they will take the call: <i>(Name) wishes to speak with you. Do you wish to take the call?</i></p> <p>When the Line Manager/employee wishes to take the call: <i>. . . I am transferring you now.</i></p> <p>When the Line Manager/employee does not wish to take the call: <i>. . . is unavailable at the moment. May I take a message?</i></p>	
<p>Ending a call</p>	<p><i>Thank you for calling. Goodbye. Let the caller hang up first.</i></p>	<p><i>Thank you for calling. Goodbye. Let the caller hang up first.</i></p>

Creating messages on answering machines or a voicemail service

Follow the manufacturer's or telephone company's instructions when creating a message.

The message should be: Welcome to Geraldton Grammar School, *(Name) is not available at the moment. If you leave your name and number, (name) will get back to you as soon as possible.*

Personal telephone calls

Keep personal calls to a minimum. While all employees will receive personal incoming calls, the quantity and length of these calls need to be monitored, so they do not affect the employee's capacity to undertake their assigned duties.