



**St Peter's  
Woodlands**

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# Communication Policy



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## 1. Introduction

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At St Peter's Woodlands a partnership is encouraged between children, parents and school staff, as it is believed that it is with productive partnerships that quality education and outcomes are likely to be achieved.

At SPW we believe good communication is effective, timely, accurate, and honest. We are also committed to communication being respectful, sensitive, and constructive. We aim to strengthen positive partnerships between school and home, and between individuals, in order to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students.

## 2. Scope

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This policy applies to the SPW School Council, all SPW staff, parents/caregivers, and students. It also applies to related organisations, including the SPW Parents and Friends Association (PFA), the St Peter's Woodlands Old Scholars Association, and the SPW Foundation Inc.

## 3. Objectives

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To create documented principles and expectations for SPW staff to follow when communicating with each other and with parents/caregivers

To document clear expectations for parents/caregivers around the way the SPW communicates with them

To outline clear expectations for parents/caregivers around communicating with staff

To detail how school information is disseminated to relevant stakeholders

To provide clear channels of communication and expectations for all parties in order to continuously improve communication methods and relationships between staff, parents/caregivers, students, and the broader school community.

To streamline communication lines, making use of technology to be sustainable, cost-effective, and to make best use of staff time as well as ease of use for all users.

To maintain balance for SPW staff and parents/caregivers – creating and providing relevant and timely information provided, when it is required

To outline protocols around communication between home and school.

## 4. Principles and Expectations

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SPW holds clear and open communication to be a high priority. All staff, parents/caregivers, students, and other community members are expected to communicate with each other in a manner which reflects the following principles:

- a) All individuals are to be communicated with, whether in writing or verbally, with respect and with appropriate language (including body language). Either party has the right to withdraw from an interaction where they are subject to inappropriate language, feel unsafe, or wish to consult another for support.
- b) Teachers' time during school hours is predominantly for working with students. It is usually not possible for teaching staff to respond to requests for communication with parents/caregivers or other staff during this time.
- c) SPW staff are advised to avoid engagement with students or parents on social networking systems.
- d) Parents/caregivers are welcome to discuss their child's school experiences, concerns, celebrations and challenges with the child's teacher/s. To be most effective, parents/caregivers are asked to email their child's teacher/s in the first instance and make a specific time to meet. The beginning and end of the



school day are busy times in classrooms and any conversations other than brief interactions are best scheduled for other times.

- e) SPW staff are not expected to be available outside work hours or at short notice unless for an emergency.
- f) SPW is committed to utilising predominantly digital communication in order to increase equity, reduce costs, and increase sustainability. All SPW staff, students, and parents/caregivers are encouraged to actively engage in the School's digital communication methods. Support will be provided to all individuals who request assistance in understanding and using the digital tools used by the School.
- g) The SkoolBag app is the predominant method for notifying parents/caregivers of school activities. It is expected that all parents/caregivers access SkoolBag on a regular basis. Essential school information is disseminated via SkoolBag, including (and not limited to):
  - Changes to school policies, procedures, and practices
  - Governance information
  - Curriculum information
  - Year-Level Updates
  - Excursions and Camps, including permission forms
  - School Events, including permission forms
  - Sporting activities, including permission forms
  - Music activities, including permission forms
  - OSHC information
  - Extra-Curricular activities
- h) All SPW staff are to respond to emails within 48 hours (where a response is required). This may not mean the email's request is met or the issue completed. The email will be acknowledged and further steps will be indicated.
- i) No personal details will be passed on to third parties (eg requests for an individual's phone number, birth date) without the express permission of the third party.
- j) SPW official channels of communication are the SPW website, SkoolBag, emails from the SPW email system, and branded printed material (whether distributed physically or digitally). SPW has one official Facebook page. Any other sources of information, including parent-managed groups, are not considered official communication methods. Parents/caregivers are asked to consult the official channels when seeking information, and contacting the school for clarification when required.

## 5. Student Communication

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SPW students are expected to communicate with each other, with staff, with parents/caregivers, and with visitors to the school with respect and courtesy. Staff will actively assist students to learn how to communicate in appropriate ways through their time at SPW.

- a) Students in Years 5-6 have access to the student daily notices (Frog) and are encouraged to read these at the beginning of each day. This system also contains such information as rosters and schedules, links to sports and arts information, and information disseminated by their class teacher.
- b) Students in Reception-Year 4 are shown relevant daily notices by their classroom teacher.
- c) Students in Years 5-6 have a student diary which contains pages for students to personalise and plan their personal goals for their learning. The diary is provided to encourage students to learn time management skills, as well as a place to record information. The diary is used:
  - To record homework and daily reading
  - To begin learning how to plan their own personal schedule
  - To record school events and activities
  - As a communication tool between school and home (parents/caregivers are asked to use emails rather than the diary for sensitive or time-sensitive communications)



- d) Students in Reception-Year 2 have a communication folder which holds their daily readers and other information such as sick bay attendance slips. Parents/caregivers are asked to check this folder with the student daily.
- e) Class meetings are held to encourage students to participate in the life of the school and discuss issues which directly impact them. The Student Services Leadership Council assist in leading these meetings.
- f) Students participate in weekly Chapel services and scheduled Assemblies.
- g) Students are encouraged to follow the Grievance Procedure for Students when they have an issue of concern, which outlines communication processes to support the student.

## **6. Staff Communication**

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SPW staff will communicate with each other with respect and with the view that all staff are valuable members of the school community. With the school Mission and Values underpinning all we do, staff are to engage in the communication processes of the school with positivity and courtesy.

- a) All staff are to read the daily notices (Frog) before commencing work or as early as practicable in their work day. Essential daily information is communicated in this way.
- b) All staff are to be familiar with the staff Frog system as the repository of school information such as policies, procedures, schedules and more.
- c) Staff engage in meetings according to their role in the school, including team meetings, leadership meetings, all-staff meetings, and professional development sessions.
- d) Staff are asked to avoid 'all staff' emails, and use the daily notices for such communication instead.
- e) All staff are to respond to incoming emails within 48 hours. This does not mean the request/issue needs to be solved within this time; an acknowledgement is required advising the writer that their email has been received and will be acted upon.
- f) All outgoing communication is to be checked by the line manager before publishing.
- g) Staff are expected to engage in SkoolBag to be aware of the communications sent to our parent community.
- h) Staff are expected to contribute to the Yearbook and the SPW eNews, and this expectation will be communicated through Frog.
- i) Staff are expected not to use their personal mobile phones whilst officially on duty, with the exception being staff who are required to use mobile phones for work related issues, eg ICT, Grounds staff, Admissions and Executive Leadership. It is recommended that staff do not use their personal mobile phones to contact parents either calling or with SMS text messages.
- j) Staff are advised to avoid engagement with students or parents on social networking systems at any time (refer to ICT policy and ICT agreement).
- k) Staff are encouraged to forward important whole school information to the Deputy Principal/Head of Primary and the PA to the Deputy Principal/Head of Primary and Head of Learning & Teaching for inclusion in the daily notices.
- l) Staff are to have their voicemail message personalised on their room/office phone.
- m) Staff are encouraged to communicate face to face if there is a possibility that the content of an email could be misread.
- n) Staff are expected to communicate professionally at all times ensuring confidential information is kept confidential.
- o) Official correspondence, which is any correspondence carrying the SPW logo, is to follow a template set up and approved by the Advancement Office. Any official letters need to be on SPW letterhead and need to be signed.



## 7. Administration Staff Communication

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- a) Phone calls should not be put through to teaching staff unless they are urgent; this includes the use of the internal phone system from teacher to teacher.
- b) Front Office staff will transfer incoming calls to the appropriate staff member without announcement, with the exception of ELT Members. Calls will not be put through to classrooms during lesson times except in case of an emergency or the teacher has identified they are awaiting a call, or no other method is available for urgent messages.
- c) Messages from parents at the end of the school day that are required to be delivered before dismissal, will be
  - Phoned through to teacher OR
  - Delivered in person
- d) Staff attending in sick bay will notify class teachers if a child is being sent home or being kept in the sick bay; they will do this via the internal phone systems. In addition, staff can check using iWise to see if a child is in sick bay or has been sent home.
- e) To facilitate the effective use of the phone systems, volume settings must be adjusted accordingly.
- f) Official correspondence, which is any correspondence carrying the SPW logo, is to follow a template set up and approved by the Advancement Office.
- g) Any official letters need to be on SPW letterhead and need to be signed. All letters are to be approved by a line manager before being sent out.

## 8. Parent Communication

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### 8.1. Related Documents

Parents/caregivers are asked to read the following documents, available on the SPW website, which are essential sources of information about communication processes and the School:

- SPW Family Handbook (all families)
- SPW ELC Parent Handbook (for ELC families)
- SPW Parental Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy for Parents

### 8.2. General Principles

- a) Parents/caregivers are encouraged to engage in the School's digital communications by:
  - Installing the SkoolBag app on their mobile device and setting up their Group subscriptions (or accessing SkoolBag via the web);
  - Reading emails and SkoolBag posts and actioning any items promptly; including responding/completing forms before the date due;
  - Following the School's communication lines for advising of absences (see Attendance Policy);
  - Utilising SkoolBag, the SPW website, and SPW staff as the best sources for correct information about the School and school events;
  - Engage in Seesaw to participate in their child's learning during the school day. Seesaw is a digital portfolio and forms part of the school reporting process;
  - Being aware of other digital platforms, including the school website, and our online systems for student-parent-teacher conferences;
- b) Parents/Caregivers are responsible for ensuring they supply a current email address, mobile phone number, and postal address to the School at all times. SPW will carry out an annual database check, reminding families to ensure their data is correct.



- c) Parents/Caregivers are responsible for ensuring they supply names and contact details (phone numbers) of additional emergency contacts wherever possible. These persons will be contacted during the school day in case of emergency or illness and the parents/caregivers are unable to be contacted. SPW will carry out an annual database check, reminding families to ensure their data is correct.
- d) Parents/caregivers who wish to contact students during the school day are to firstly email the class teacher AND phone the Front Office. The administration staff will take the message and pass on to the class teacher. Generally, calls are not put through to classrooms during the school day.

### **8.3. Student Academic Reporting**

Student Academic Reporting at SPW includes the following communication methods:

- Getting to Know Your Child meeting prior to the school year commencing
- One formal student-parent-teacher conference per year (Term 1)
- One formal parent-teacher conference per year (Term 3)
- One Learning Journey per year
- The Seesaw app (digital portfolio)
- Two written, emailed, formal reports (mid-year and end-of-year) with assessments aligned to the Australian Curriculum
- Teachers available via email to arrange a personal appointment.

### **8.4. Requesting a Meeting with a Teacher**

- a) Parents/caregivers are encouraged to arrange a mutually convenient meeting time with teachers should they wish to discuss an issue in relation to their child's education. To do this, they will be asked;
  - To request an appointment through the student's school diary (Year 3 and above) OR
  - To request such on their visits to classrooms between 8.30am and 8.45am OR
  - To contact teachers via email requesting an appointment
- b) The expectation for teachers will be;
  - To check student diaries at least once per week (Year 3 and above)
  - To respond to emails within 48 hours, seeking clarification on what the issues might be
  - To arrange a mutually convenient time and to have informed the relevant Head of School if necessary
  - To utilise the expertise and advice of the school's Director of Human Resources when preparing for or debriefing after parent communication if required
- c) The expectation of Heads of School and the Director of Human Resources will be:
  - To assist class teachers to prepare responses, if required
  - To release class teachers at mutually convenient times, if required
  - To participate with class teachers at specific meetings, if required

## **9. Parents and Friends Association (PFA)**

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- a) The PFA is encouraged to use official SPW communication methods, principles and channels.
- b) The PFA have their own logo and are responsible for branding and designing their own communications. They may consult with the SPW Advancement Office for guidance.
- c) The PFA may use SkoolBag to promote upcoming events. A communications matrix is available for the PFA Executive to plan their communication. Once drafted, the communication must be approved by the Principal (via the Community Development Manager) before it is placed on SkoolBag.
- d) PFA representatives are to avoid using social media channels when acting in their roles as PFA representatives (including committee members/executives).
- e) The PFA has a place on the SPW website and is encouraged to provide materials for this area, with the purpose of increasing engagement with the PFA and PFA events within the SPW and greater community.



## 10. Marketing, Development & Enrolments

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- a) The Advancement Office manages the creation, branding, and design of SPW communications, including (but not limited to):
  - School signage, banners, marketing campaigns
  - School website
  - School Yearbook
  - Student Diaries
  - Major printed materials
  - Surveys
  - SPW eNews
- a) The Advancement Office works across the school to create a school voice and assist in streamlining communication to ensure the best possible methodology and experience for both the creator of the correspondence and the recipient.
- b) Official correspondence, which is any correspondence carrying the SPW logo, is to follow a template set up and approved by the Advancement Office. Any official letters need to be on SPW letterhead and need to be signed.
- c) The Community Development Manager advises and assists the PFA and the Old Scholars Association in engaging in school communication processes. Any communications sent out by these groups through official school channels is to meet the requirements of the School and be approved by the Principal or delegate.
- d) The Advancement Office manages the school social media strategy.
- e) The Advancement Office manages Principal's Tours, Transition Programs, and new student events, where significant information about the school is provided in various forms to new and prospective families.

## 11. School Council and School Leadership

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- a) Formal communication to the school community from the School Council or the Principal is usually communicated in the form of an email.
- b) Some communication from the Principal may also be disseminated via SkoolBag.
- c) Formal publications such as the School's Annual Performance Report and the SPW Strategic Plan are placed on the SPW website or as required by regulations.
- d) All media communication is managed by the Principal.
- e) All communication with the police, and all legal documentation is managed by the Principal.
- f) School Council Members follow the Code of Conduct in the School Council Handbook.

## 12. Further Information

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Further information regarding this policy is available from any member of the Executive Leadership Team.

### Relevant Legislation

None

### Related Policies

PRIN-02	Behaviour
PRIN-04	Child Protection
ICT-17	ICT & Social Media
PRIN-54	Parental Code of Conduct



### **Related Procedures & Standard Operating Procedures**

PRIN-04-03	SMS Messaging
PRIN-06-02	Multiple Family (Spilt Family) Communications
PRIN-06-03	SPW Phone System
PRIN-06-04	ELC Phone System
PRIN-06-07	Managing Digital Excursion Reply Forms
PRIN-06-08	Emailing Parents in iWise
PRIN-06-09	SkoolBag
ELC-35-01	ELC Placing Notes on iPads
OSHC-35-01	OSHC Placing Notes on iPads
CURR-EA03	Essential Agreement Seesaw ELC
CURR-EA05	Essential Agreement Seesaw R-7

### **Related Forms & Checklists**

None

### **Related Safe Work Practices & Guidance Notes**

None

### **Related Other Documentation**

School Council Handbook  
SPW Style Guide  
Approved SPW Templates (letters, forms, documents)  
ICT Agreement  
SPW Family Handbook  
SPW ELC Parent Handbook  
InfoSheets (eg Attendance, SkoolBag, SeeSaw)