



Blue Haven Public School

Communication Policy

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Rationale:

At Blue Haven Public School, we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment with a positive and inclusive school culture that promotes the wellbeing and success of all. This requires that we promote open communication, fairness and positive relationships where all members are respected and valued. We believe that the relationship between home and school is an important part of ensuring children are happy, secure and ready to learn. As a school community, we are dedicated to working together to meet the various needs of our school community. Central to achieving this is trust and open, effective communication between all members of the school community.

Aims:

This policy aims to provide procedures that will result in a harmonious school community with parents, carers, staff and students all working together. The policy will ensure that:

- effective communication between all school community members takes place;
- processes allow for open and honest communication amongst school community members;
- confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations;
- all stakeholders can confidently voice their opinions and concerns in an appropriate manner and have these acknowledged;
- clear and fair processes and guidelines are provided that ensure the resolution of issues or concerns in a timely, effective and respectful manner, in accordance with Department of Education guidelines;
- open and respectful, two-way communication is available to all members of the community; and
- parents, carers and school staff are assisted in organising a time to communicate safely and confidentiality.

Actions:

1. Guidelines for implementation
2. Curriculum and class information
3. Communication guidelines – Sentral Parent Portal
4. Communication guidelines – Phone
5. Contacting procedures – Classroom, intervention or RFF teacher
6. Contacting procedures – Contacting other school personnel
7. Sentral Parent Portal protocol

1. Guidelines for implementation:

Blue Haven Public School will use a range of strategies to communicate effectively with the school community.

- The main source of school community information is the fortnightly newsletter, which acts as an integral tool for communicating the school events and procedures to the school community.
- The school newsletter is supplied in electronic form, but can be obtained from the office in paper form.
- It is the expectation and responsibility of the parents and carers to read the newsletter to stay up to date with the current happenings at the school.
- The main source of direct parent-teacher communication is with the Sentral Parent Portal. This acts as an integral tool for direct communication between teachers and parents or carers.
- It is acknowledged that teachers have time constraints during the school day and issues or concerns are best dealt with when uninterrupted time and proper attention can be given to them. Wherever possible, appointments should be made in advance with the classroom teacher.
- In all cases, if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student or a staff member, someone within the school, particularly a Senior Executive staff member, should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed.

2. Curriculum and class information:

Classroom teachers and Assistant Principals will communicate curriculum information formally at:

- The beginning of the year during meet the teacher meetings;
- The beginning of Term 2, during parent-teacher interviews;
- The beginning of Term 3, during 3-way parent-student-teacher conferences; and
- The end of Term 2 and Term 4, through academic reports.

3. Guidelines for communication - appropriate use of Sentral Parent Portal:

Blue Haven Public School considers the Sentral Parent Portal to be a vital communication tool and recognised the importance of proper content and speedy replies. Sentral Parent Portal can be accessed via: <https://bluehaven-p.sentral.com.au/portal2/#!/login>. Nevertheless, the high volume of communication traffic and the resultant impact on workload issues necessitates some guidelines for all users of the school community.

When using the Sentral Parent Portal, seek to:

- Facilitate a speedy response by limiting messages to less than 200 words;
- Write clearly to explain your question or concern; and
- Acknowledge teachers are not always online, due to teaching and meeting responsibilities. Their response times may take from 1-2 days within the working week.
- An exception to the 1-2 day response time may be found in the situation that a teacher works at a part-time capacity or is on leave.

- In classrooms with a shared teaching role, be mindful that only the teacher with the main teaching load will receive Sentral Parent Portal messages.
- Hours of contact for Sentral Parent Portal communication should be restricted to the hours of 8:00am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday, in accordance with school hours.

4. Guidelines for communication – Phone:

Blue Haven Public School encourages parents and staff to use the telephone as an important tool to communicate personal issues or concerns that cannot be discussed via the Sentral Parent Portal. It is also important that all conversations by all parties are respectful and courteous.

Telephone communication is also useful for queries, urgent messages that need to be provided to students and teachers, and student absences.

Staff may not always be able to return telephone calls during the normal school day and may take up to 2 working days to return the call. Sentral Parent Portal may be used to respond to your call to arrange a meeting time.

5. Contacting procedures: Contacting a classroom, intervention or RFF Teacher:

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child, the procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the issue. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

- Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the front office, and ask a school administration officer to arrange for the teacher to contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not usually available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching hours or whilst on playground duty.
- Contact the appropriate teachers in writing via: a handwritten note or the Sentral Parent Portal, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time.
- Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching, leading students or on playground duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

6. Contacting procedures: Contacting other school personnel:

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider affects the whole school, their child's wellbeing or related to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to either:

- Send a message to the class teacher through the Sentral Parent Portal, which will be forwarded to the most appropriate staff member;
- Email the school, where the office will triage the email and forward it to the most appropriate staff member;
- Send, bring or post a letter, addressed to the school or relevant individual, which will be provided to the staff member indicated. When appropriate, this may be forwarded to a staff member responsible for monitoring and supervision of the identified provided information; or

- Call the school, where the office will ask some questions to clarify the purpose of the call, they will then triage it and provide the details to the most appropriate staff member.

When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with a Senior Executive staff member by contacting the school office, either by phone or coming into the office personally, and asking the office staff to arrange a suitable meeting time.

In all cases, if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, staff member or school community member, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed.

The Principal may determine it is appropriate for someone else to resolve the issue and redirect it accordingly.

In relation to any complaints made, the Principal will adhere to the Department of Education’s Complaints Handling Policy by following the School Community and Consumer Complaints Procedure.

7. Sentral Parent Portal Protocols for Teacher and Parent Communication:

Protocols for Sentral Parent Portal use:

Sentral Parent Portal may be a fast and convenient way for you to send messages, but this may not be the case for many of our teachers. Teachers read emails at different times of the day and so an immediate reply is not possible. In fact, you may not receive an email reply at all, since the staff member will determine how best to contact you: by the Parent Portal, phone call or to schedule a face-to-face meeting.

To use the Sentral Parent Portal effectively in a school setting, we have developed the following guidelines for parents/ carers:

Sentral Parent Portal is appropriate for:	Sentral Parent Portal <u>IS NOT</u> appropriate for:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brief enquiries about general school matters; 2. School related issues only; 3. Passing on relevant information to the appropriate personnel (e.g. - classroom or Intervention teacher); 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your child’s academic progress. This is best addressed through a telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting; 2. In depth discussion about your child; 3. Submitting your child’s homework; this should be the responsibility of the student; 4. Sending time-sensitive messages throughout the day. As teachers are in class they generally will not see any

<p>4. General communication between teachers and parents;</p> <p>5. Requests for a phone call or parent / teacher meeting; and</p> <p>6. Reporting an absence or forthcoming appointment for a child/ child.</p>	<p>messages until after the school day has finished. (e.g. changes to how your child will be going home);</p> <p>5. Sending non-vital messages (e.g. child has no crunch and sip for the day);</p> <p>6. Threatening or offensive language; and</p> <p>7. Sensitive information about your child or an incident that has occurred. This is better communicated in a more confidential way (e.g. - phone conversations or face-to-face meeting).</p>
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When sending a message on Sentral Parent Portal:

- Identify yourself during first contact, and if appropriate state your relationship to your child.
- Ensure that messages are respectfully written as meaning can be misinterpreted.
- Response to Parent Portal messages received by staff can take up to 1-2 working days.
- Staff are only expected to respond to messages on the Sentral Parent Portal between the hours of 8:00am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.
- Staff are not required to respond to messages on the Sentral Parent Portal on weekends, school holidays or when on leave.

**Please note: It is not appropriate to share correspondence received from staff with students.*

Please remember that while we will maintain confidentiality, some documents retained within schools can be subpoenaed or subject to the Government Information Public Access Act (GIPA).

Appendix

Communication Quick Reference Guide	
Concern	Appropriate Action
General enquiries	Contact BHPS school front office; ph: 4399 0167
Enrolment enquiries	Contact BHPS school front office for information regarding enrolment and to schedule an appointment with a Deputy Principal. School tours are held regularly and are booked through the school's website.
Financial enquiries	Contact BHPS school front office; ph: 4399 0167
The academic progress of your child	Contact the classroom teacher to organise a suitable time to discuss.
The welfare or wellbeing of your child	Contact the classroom teacher first to organise a suitable time to discuss the concern. If you believe it needs greater attention after having spoken with the classroom teacher, contact the stage Assistant Principal.
Change of information relating to your child/ children (medical details, emergency contacts, address change, legal or custody documents)	You can do this in a number of ways; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come to the office and complete the Changes to Details form. • Email, bring or send a note with the changes to the office. • Make changes in the Sentral Parent Portal. <p>You may be required to provide documentation.</p>
School policy or practice	Contact the BHPS school office and request a meeting with a Deputy Principal and/or the Principal.
Student late or leaving early on a school day	Come to the school's office to sign a student in or out - do not take them directly to or from their classroom. On special days carers/parents will still need to sign their child out. A reason will be requested by the office staff; Parents may be requested to attend a meeting to address concerns relating to numerous late arrivals or early leaving.
Change to pick up arrangements or late pick up of students	Contact the school's office to inform them of the change. Please do not call within 15 minutes of the end of the school day to collect your child early, as this is consistently a busy time and your request is likely not going to be met.
Extending student absence (illness or extended holiday)	Contact the school's office and inform staff of the student's return date. This is a legal requirement. If you are going on an extended holiday (more than 5 school days), contact the school at least 2 weeks prior to leaving to complete and submit an exemption form.
Moving and changing schools	Contact the school's office to let them know the following details; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address that you are relocating to; • Name of the school your child is being enrolled at (including interstate); • Date moving and last day of attendance at Blue Haven Public School