



LAERSKOOL DORINGKLOOF PRIMARY

COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. Introductory Statement

- This policy outlines to parents and staff, procedures for effective home/school communication, including parent/teacher meetings.
- The school recognises that the family and home are central to the social and intellectual development of the child and that the school and the family must strive to be mutually supportive and respectful of each other.
- This partnership is envisaged as a positive working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect, cooperation and a willingness to listen and learn in the best interests of learners' development and progress.

2. Definition of Communication

- Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated.
- All parties within the school environment (teachers, administrators, parents and learners) have a responsibility to support effective communications. Within this context communication is defined as
 - Sharing information through talking / writing
 - Accepting information through listening / reading
 - What we do and the messages our actions send out
 - The tone in which we engage with each other

3. Basic principles

All communications at Laerskool Doringkloof Primary should be:

- respectful;
- open and honest;
- ethical and professional;
- actioned within a reasonable time; and
- aligned to our core values and relevant school policies.

4. Scope of the policy

- This policy will apply to any stakeholder communicating within the school environment, including but not limited to teachers, administrators, non-teaching staff, parents, learners, and members of the School Governing Body.

5. Responsibilities of various stakeholders

5.1. Senior Management Team

- To ensure information is made available to staff and parents in a timely manner and via appropriate channels.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate effectively with colleagues, parents and learners.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep the School Governing Body informed of developments and concerns.

5.2. Teachers

- To communicate regularly with each other to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the parents informed of learner progress and discipline.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in supporting the development of learners through timeous communication with parents and/or other

supportive parties where there is a concern regarding learners' academic, social or behavioural actions.

5.3. Parents

- Develop and maintain close links with the school and collaborate with the school in developing the full potential of their child(ren).
- Participate in meetings in a positive and respectful manner, affirming the professional role of the staff and all staff members in the school.
- To timeously return any written documentation as and when required.
- Utilise the appropriate communication mechanism and respect the guidelines as provided.
- Notify the school at the earliest opportunity if family events/situations occur that cause anxiety to your child and therefore may adversely affect his/her education.
- Speak positively about the school and its staff members and to address concerns directly with a staff member.

5.4. Learners

- To communicate to teachers and all other learners in a respectful manner.
- To listen to teachers during class time and to follow instruction as required.
- To deliver any documentation / letters to parents if required to do so.
- To communicate to all persons around them in a respectful manner when they are in their school uniform; understanding that they are at all times ambassadors of Laerskool Doringkloof Primary.

6. Internal communication

- A staff meeting is held every morning before school.
- Subject / grade meetings are held as and when required.
- Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Teachers should be notified of any communication for their attention received through the admin office via SMS.
- Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffroom, which staff must check daily.
- Important information is placed on the staff notice board.

- The school diary is e-mailed to all staff members on a weekly basis.
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children.
- Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.
- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day and all staff must be informed of messages given to the children.

7. External communication

7.1. Communication mechanisms

- Annual General Meeting for parents held in October/November of each year.
- Formal Parent/Teacher meetings held once a term.
- School Reports which are sent home via the children to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each learner once a term.
- As appropriate, additional meetings between Parent(s) and Teacher(s) concerning pupils who may have special educational needs and/or to discuss pupil progress, behaviour, etc
- On-going communication throughout the school year by means of newsflashes, newsletters, weekly calendars and/or the D6 Communicator.
- Direct communication through SMS and/or phone calls and/or e-mail.
- Web-based, one-way communication through the school website and Facebook page.

7.2. Hard-copy communication

- All communication sent, in hard-copy, from the school to the parent will be sent home with children in their school bags and/or to the child's home address as given on the enrolment form, unless otherwise requested by parents.
- Any hand-written communication delivered to the school admin office for the attention of a teacher, will be responded to (in writing) within 48 hours.
- Any hand-written communication included in a learner's homework and/or class work book will be responded to at such time as the teacher takes in and marks the relevant book. In this regard the onus is on the parent to check whether (1) the book has been marked and (2) a response has been provided.

7.3. Formal Parent/Teacher Meetings

- Formal Parent/Teacher meetings will be held once a term for all grades following the issuing of report cards. These meetings will be initiated by the school and details regarding time, etc. will be communicated to parents.
- The purpose of the Parent/Teacher meeting is:
 - To establish and maintain good communication between the school and parents.
 - To help children realise that home and school are working together.
 - To let parents know how their children are progressing in school.
 - To let teachers know how children are getting along outside school.
 - To identify ways in which parents can help their children.
 - To inform the parents of standardised test results according to school policy.

7.4. Informal Meetings

7.4.1. Pre-arranged meetings

- Formal parent/teacher meetings take place as indicated under point 7.2. (above). However, if a parent wishes to arrange a meeting at any stage during the year to discuss their child, they may do so by prior appointment.
- In the case of separated parents, requests can be made by both parents to meet their child's teacher(s) individually for parent/teacher meetings.
- Appointments to meet with teachers should be made using the following procedure:
 - The parent contacts the school admin office.
 - The parent clearly state the name of the teacher with whom he/she would like to make an appointment and well as his/her child's name, grade and class.
 - The admin office relays the request to the relevant teacher.
 - The relevant teacher contacts the parent within 24 hours to set up an appointment.
 - During the conversation to set up the appointment, the parent should clearly indicate the reason for requesting the meeting / the topic to be discussed so that the teacher can prepare sufficiently.
 - The meeting time must be mutually acceptable to both parties (parent and teacher).
- Following the meeting a brief summary should be provided, in writing, to the appropriate member of the Senior Management Team, given the nature of the meeting content.

- Pre-arranged appointments facilitate better quality communication between the parent and teacher, rather than the more rushed and distracted type that takes place when the teacher has to supervise the pupils in the class from the classroom door while at the same time communicating with a parent.
- Pre-arranged meetings allow for more discreet communication and avoid potential embarrassment for a child when his/her parent is talking to the teacher at the classroom door

7.4.2. Urgent, ad hoc meetings

- It is understood that from time-to-time certain 'sensitive/urgent' situations (eg serious illness of family member, family crisis, etc) will arise which will require a parent to arrive at the school without appointment and such situations will of course continue to be facilitated.
- In such cases the following processes should be followed:
 - The parent presents him/herself at the school admin office.
 - The parent clearly state the name of the teacher with whom he/she would like to speak as well as his/her child's name, grade and class.
 - The school admin office will either request the teacher to meet with the parent at the school offices or will accompany the parent to the relevant classroom.
 - Parents should not arrive at the classroom door unannounced/without appointment to seek a consultation with a staff member. This includes before and after official school hours.

7.5. Electronic communication : e-mail and sms

- The school newsletter is sent out to all parents once a month via e-mail. Any parent who requires the newsletter in hardcopy should request this, in writing, from the school office clearly indicating the name, grade and class of their eldest child in the school. The newsletter will be provided in hard copy to the learner.
- Newsflashes and the weekly school calendar will be provided to parents once a week via e-mail.
- Principal primary is used to notify/update parents of events via SMS.
- Requests sent to school via e-mail should be sent to the relevant e-mail address as indicated on the school website. This may include sport@dories; culture@dories; discipline@dories; info@dories; academics@dories; sgb@dories; etc.

7.6. Social media : Facebook

- Laerskool Doringkloof Primary has a formal Facebook page which is managed by an administrator associated with the school.
- No parent will be given access to post directly onto the Facebook page.
- Parents are, however, encouraged to send photos and information to the administrator via Facebook messaging. Photos and messages deemed appropriated and moderated by the administrator may be placed onto the Facebook page.

7.7. Academic communication : assessments, tests and exams

- **Continuous assessment** requires that learners complete in-class assessment throughout the academic year. These assessments are placed in an assessment file which is sent home once a term (usually at the end of the term) for parents to sign. In principle we support parent having regular insight into their child(ren)'s progress but teachers are not required to send the file home after each assessment as all teachers are required to submit the files to the Education Department and learners tend to lose these files when they are taken home on a regular basis. For this reason we invite any parent wishing to view their child(ren)'s assessment file to make an appointment to do so as per the procedure outlined in section 7.4.1. of this document. No teacher may deny a parent the right to view their child(ren)'s assessment file at any given time.
- **Formal tests** are written at specific intervals. All marked tests are to be sent home for parent(s) perusal and signature within 10 working days (2 weeks) after the date on which the test was written.
- **Formal exams** are written at specific intervals. All marked tests are to be sent home for parent(s) perusal and signature within 15 working days (3 weeks) after the date on which the test was written.
- In the event of marking and/or moderation of formal tests/exams taking longer than expected, it is the responsibility of the subject teacher to notify parents of the delay using the Principal Primary SMS system.

7.8. Communication re sick / absent child(ren)

- In the event of a child(ren) being sick or absent from school, parents are required to send the doctor's note or personal note to the register class teacher upon the child(ren)'s return to school, explaining the reason for the child(ren)'s absence.
- Parents should contact the school admin office and request a summary of work / homework missed during the time of absence.

- Parents should clearly state the learner's name, grade and class, as well as the period for which the information is required and the method in which they would like to receive the information (e-mail or fax).
- The relevant information will be e-mailed / faxed to the parent using the template included as Appendix A.

7.9. Ad hoc academic queries or requirements

- Whilst the school promotes learner independence and the fact that learners should take accountability for documents provided in their care, we do recognise that (at times) learners may lose important documentation and/or not have clarity on formal assessment / project / test requirements.
- In these instances parents may contact the relevant teacher through the following procedure :
 - Submit a written e-mail clearly stating the subject, teacher name, learner name, grade and class to academics@dories.co.za or submit the request in hard-copy to the relevant teacher via your child(ren) or the school admin office.
 - From this point it will be routed to the relevant teacher.
 - Clearly state the information needed or question to be answered.
 - If appropriate the teacher will forward the relevant documents / information to the parent within 48 hours of the time that the message was sent.
 - If the teacher believes that it is not appropriate to forward the relevant documents / information, then the parent will be informed of this fact and the reasons therefor within 24 hours.
- The school reiterates the need to promote learner independence and accountability. Therefore a teacher may deem it inappropriate to forward the required document/ information if a learner repeatedly requires this type of intervention between parents and teacher.
- The definition of "repeatedly" will be determined by the teacher and Grade Head.
- Parents will be notified by the Grade Head in the event of a learner being seen as abusing this system.

8. Communication guidelines

- In order to ensure consistent and respectful communication parents may expect any SMS received from the school to include the following
 - A respectful opening (Dear....)
 - A clear indication of the school from which the message is sent (Dorie parents)
 - A clear indication of the grade / activity if applicable (Grade 1 or Andante or netball etc)
 - A clear, concise and detailed message

- A respectful closing (regards / yours sincerely)
 - The name of the teacher / staff member sending the SMS
- In order to ensure that messages left on parents' cell phones are unambiguous, all messages should include
- The teacher / staff member's name
 - That they are calling from Doringkloof
 - What the status of the call is (urgent should be used only in case of emergency)
 - That they would like to speak to the parent/guardian of (learner's name)
 - A request for the parent to call them back
 - Clearly articulated number on which to call back
- As there is no guarantee that the number as dialed belongs to the relevant parent, teachers / staff members **should not under any circumstance divulge the details of the call's content** on a voice message.

9. Parent engagement

- In order to give parents the opportunity to provide feedback on / input to school matters, the school may from time-to-time engage parents in surveys related to various aspects of school life / functioning.
- Surveys will be run off an on-line platform via e-mail. However, any parent may request any survey in hard-copy from the admin office. These hard-copy surveys should be returned to the admin office.
- High level feedback on / results of all surveys will be provided to parents via the SGB member responsible for the Communication Portfolio.

10. Complaints Procedure

- It is acknowledged that complaints regarding communication between the school and home may arise from time-to-time but the school would wish that these would be dealt with fairly and quickly.
- Complaints may include
- Non-adherence to turn-around times w.r.t communication
 - Refusal to meet with a parent
 - Disrespectful communication
 - Non-adherence to guidelines as indicated in this document
- Experience has shown that where a mutually respectful willingness among parent(s) and teacher(s) / staff member(s) exists to discuss difficulties and to engage in a solution-driven approach to addressing

such disputes/challenges, then the majority of such matters are resolved speedily and to the satisfaction of all involved. For this reason any complaints or dissatisfaction should first be raised directly with the relevant teacher / staff member.

- Where a satisfactory resolution of the communication issue is not achieved between the two parties, then the parent/guardian may approach the Principal with a view to resolving it.
- If the complaint is still unresolved the parent/guardian should raise the matter with the SGB member holding the Communication Portfolio with a view to resolving it.
- If the complaint is still unresolved and the parent/guardian wishes to pursue the matter further she/he should lodge the complaint in writing with the Chairperson of the SGB.
- The Chairperson should bring the precise nature of the written complaint to the notice of the teacher and provide direct feedback to the parent within 5 working days of receipt of the written complaint.

11. Success criteria

The school evaluates the success of this Policy through:

- Positive and supportive engagement and participation of parents, staff, and learners in the education process.
- The extent to which there exists a mutually-beneficial, supportive and positive atmosphere and relationship among all members of the school community.
- Feedback, as appropriate, from all members of the school community.
- Indications that the smooth and efficient running and organisation of the school is enhanced through the implementation of this policy.
- The indications that the facilitation and implementation of the Communication Policy are enhancing the learning opportunities of the pupils of the school.

12. Communication and ratification

A copy of this policy is available to all members of staff and parents on the school website.

Thus adopted by the Laerskool Doringkloof Primary SGB

APPENDIX 1

Learner name : _____

Learner Grade and class : _____

Homework for period : _____ to _____

SUBJECT	HOMEWORK COMMENTS
ENGLISH Teacher name:	
AFRIKAANS Teacher name:	
MATHEMATICS Teacher name:	
NS & TECH Teacher name:	
SOCIAL SCIENCES Teacher name:	
CREATIVE ARTS Teacher name:	
PSW Teacher name:	

NOTES : _____

Date sent : _____

Sent by : _____