



COMMUNICATION POLICY (Including Grievance Procedures) V9.0

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7.0	16/08/18	Revised
8.0	14/08/20	Revised
9.0	12/05/21	Updated to reflect current practice

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Biblical framework and approach of St George Christian School's (SGCS) whole school approach to communication, including communications involving grievances. It should be used to inform Departmental internal and external communication procedures and practices. It outlines aims, principles and expectations in relation to communication.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 General

This policy establishes a set of guiding principles by which communications approaches, practices and systems can be established within and beyond the school. Communication involves not simply the "sending" of a message but also the receipt of that message. It is therefore an active practice that inevitably involves dialogue and requires processes that invite clarification so that the message received matches the message sent.

This process can be complicated where there is a grievance or difference in expectation. The emotional context surrounding the communication can therefore significantly affect the process and effectiveness of the communication.

Communication occurs in a whole range of contexts within the school involving students, teaching staff, general staff, parents, regulatory bodies (including NESA) and the wider community.

2.2 Biblical Framework

The Bible records God's message to persons. God communicates to us in word (the scriptures), in the physical person of his son, Jesus Christ and in the person of the Holy Spirit. His creation declares his glory and aspects of his character. John 1:1-14 reveals God's message and primary means of communication. It also acknowledges some choose not to receive His message. The Bible acknowledges that within any community people may sin against others, have different expectations and misunderstandings and there may be concerns and grievances as a result. The principle of reconciliation is promoted in this context, where, as a priority, parties seek to come together to understand the issues and address them in a godly way, so that future meaningful relationship can occur.

God's message is one that invites His people into loving relationship with Him, and makes this possible. In light of this, effective and clear relationship and improvement in school performance is the aim of school communication to enable a harmonious and productive learning community as we partner with parents on the education of their child.

3. DEFINITIONS

Departments are the Infants, Junior, Middle and Senior Schools and the School's General Staff.

4. POLICY

The school will seek to promote open & respectful, efficient & timely and gentle & godly communication so that all stakeholders are aware of information which is necessary for their function within the wider school community.

The school is open to all feedback, including grievances, and will seek to:

- Be open and receptive to feedback
- Respond in a timely manner
- Use feedback as the basis to improve the school's policy and practice

4.1 Information

Timely and appropriately detailed information about school calendar, events, practices and expectations is essential to the smooth functioning of the school for parents, students and staff. To this end the following means of communication are used.

4.1.1 Parents & Students

- School Prospectus
- A range of information evenings
- School Website
- Campus Open Days and Information Packs
- ENews
- Family Handbooks
- Orientation Days and Packs (Kindergarten, Years 3 and 7)
- Parent Portal (Sentral)
- Student Reports
- Community consultations as required
- School Newsletter (emailed, on website and in hardcopy by request)
- School Planners & Diaries (Middle School and Senior School)
- Parent Connect meetings
- Notes about specific events
- School Annual Report
- School Policy
- Parent/Teacher Interviews
- Timetables
- Assemblies
- Email

4.1.2 Staff

- Staff Handbooks
- School Policy
- Staff Contracts
- Staff Meetings (Departmental and Whole School)
- Policy documents and training
- Timetables and Variation to Routine (VTR) communication
- Week at a Glance and Term at a Glance communications
- Email

4.2 Procedures

Specific publications and procedures in different contexts and departments reflecting requirements will be practised to ensure effective, timely and informative communication as outlined in 4.1 of this policy.

5. Grievances

Within any school community there will be differences in expectations, opinions, understandings and values. SGCS views expressions of concern as a means of receiving feedback, providing SGCS with the opportunity to improve its performance and to enhance mutual understanding of all parties. They can be learning opportunities for all parties.

The Biblical principles that undergird our processes are outlined in Matthew 18:15 where the desirability of dealing with personal resolution of issues in the first instance is indicated.

The Principal will not allow any member of the School community to be hindered in the exercise of their rights under this policy.

5.1 Procedures for Grievances raised by Parents, Students or the Wider Community

1. Matters may be raised by any member of the school community and discussed directly with the persons involved, e.g. Class Teacher, Year Adviser, Core Teacher or appropriate staff member.
2. Concerns can be raised in person or in writing. Appointments can be made with teachers and other staff members by phoning or emailing the School.
3. Students are welcome to express their concerns, and these may be raised with their Class Teacher, Core Teacher, Year Adviser or appropriate staff member.
4. Raising the concern with the person most directly involved is most likely to facilitate understanding, resolution or clarification. Active listening by each party is essential here in order to clearly understand each party's perspective.
5. If, however, any member of the community feels unable to raise a matter in this way, they should direct their concern to the relevant Head of Department or School Principal.
6. Staff will respond to concerns raised by considering the subject of the complaint and addressing or clarifying matters as relevant. They may seek advice from Faculty Coordinators, Supervisors or Heads of Department in their consideration of the matter.
7. If resolution is not reached at this level concerns may be referred to the Head of the respective Department or the Principal (or the Acting Principal).

5.2 Formal Processes

Should the procedures outlined in 5.1 be unsuccessful a formal process can be followed.

5.2.1 Concerns and suggestions can be raised using the Suggestion/Concern Form, available from the School Office or on the School's Website under 'School Community'. Upon receipt of the form, the Principal will:

- Consider the substance of the concern raised in light of the School's policies, procedures and ethos as well as any legal, contractual, or regulatory requirements.
- Investigate or delegate the investigation of any allegations raised in the concern in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the matter and to consider all perspectives.
- Communicate any findings and responses, as appropriate, to relevant members of the community, including the complainant (if appropriate).
- Provide at least an initial response within 14 days of receipt of the form.
- Seek legal advice as necessary.

5.2.2. If there is lack of resolution despite the oversight of the Principal, and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further it may be referred by the complainant to the School Board via the Company Secretary. The relevant contact details can be obtained by contacting the School Office.

5.2.3 Concerns regarding the Principal should be raised with the School Board Chair. The relevant contact details can be obtained by contacting the Company Secretary via the School Office. The Board will follow the principles above in their consideration of the matter.

These procedures are referred to in:

- Family Handbook
- School Website
- Staff Policy
- Staff Handbooks
- Senior School Diary
- Middle School Planner

5.3 Procedures for Grievances Raised by Staff

1. Staff are encouraged to seek resolution with the person most directly involved.
2. If resolution is not reached at this level concerns may be referred to the Head of the respective Department or the Principal (or in his absence, the Acting Principal).
3. Where staff grievances expose or relate to contractual obligations of staff, a process consistent with the School's MEA and the Fair Work Act will be followed.
4. If the staff member has a grievance against the Principal, the assistance of a Head of Department will be engaged to bring the matter to satisfactory resolution.
5. If there is lack of resolution with a staff grievance against the Principal, despite the oversight of a Head of Department, and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further it may be referred to the School Board. The relevant contact details can be obtained by contacting the Company Secretary via the School Office.

6. Whistleblower

A Whistleblower Policy was established in October 2019 in response to the 2019 amendments to the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth). These amendments require that the school has in place:

- Clear systems to protect from detrimental impacts, any employee who 'blows the whistle' (from 1 July, 2019)
- A 'Whistleblower' policy (from 1 January 2020)

This policy was designed to ensure that the School meets these legal requirements. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that those who would draw attention to any potential or actual breach of legal, financial or regulatory requirements by the School or any of its employees are fully protected from any potential negative consequences of doing so.

This policy outlines the processes for the specific case of Whistleblowing and should be concurrently implanted alongside Grievance procedures, as outlined in this policy, when required.

This policy can be found on Sentral under Whole School Policies (for Staff).

7. Student Assessment Appeals Years 11 – 12

The Assessment Committee handles appeals of assessment tasks following procedures outlined in Year 11 and Year 12 Assessment Handbooks.

8. Concerns/Grievances involving Child Protection Issues

The school takes Child Protection seriously and to that end have established a Child Protection Policy and Procedures which can be obtained by contacting the School Office.

8.1 Procedures

1. If any staff member of the community has a concern about child safety (whether a Mandatory Reporting Concern or a suspected case of Reportable Conduct) they should follow the processes as outlined in Section 5.6 of the school's Child Protection Policy.
2. If a student, parent or another member of the community has a concern about a Child Protection issue they should report it as soon as possible to their Head of Department, the Principal, a School Counsellor or another staff member with whom they feel comfortable.
3. The staff member will then follow the procedures as outlined in Section 5.6 of the Child Protection Policy.
4. The person reporting the concern may not be notified of the outcome, if for Privacy reasons or other legal reasons this is not permissible.

9. CONGRUENCE WITH LEGISLATION AND RELATED POLICIES

- Ends Policy Statements and Executive Limitations of the Board of SGCS.
- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- NESA Registration Systems and Member Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual
- Fair Work Act
- The School's MEA Agreements

10. SOURCES

SGCS Board Governance Policy Manual.

11. CONSULTATION

This document reflects the involvement of Head of Departments (schools) and teaching staff who have contributed to the formation of relevant departmental procedures and publications.

12. POLICY ADVISER

Director of Research, Compliance and Accreditation, Mrs Jennifer Howse.

13. FORMS

Concern Form and Idea/Suggestion Form refer to Appendix 1 annexed hereto.