

East Kimberley College



COMMUNICATION POLICY

December, 2019

EAST KIMBERLEY COLLEGE COMMUNICATION POLICY

At East Kimberley College (EKC) we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive educational environment. This objective is only achievable if open communication, respect, fairness and positive and professional relationships are valued and promoted.

This Communication Policy (Policy) is part of the EKC Policy Framework (Framework). The Framework has been prepared to ensure that everything at EKC is done in a consistent, transparent and informed manner, and includes the Staff Contact Protocol, Social Media Policy, Code of Conduct, Commissioner's Instruction No. 7 – Code of Ethics, Staff Conduct and Discipline policy, Bullying in the Workplace, Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment policy, Occupational Safety and Health policy, Child Protection policy, Students Online policy, Student Behaviour policy, Duty of Care for Students policy, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

This Policy will be interpreted and implemented in accordance with the high-level direction and context provided by the Framework.

Policy Background

We are committed to working together to meet the various needs of our College community. What happens at the College and the relationship between home and the College is critical to ensuring that:

- students are happy, secure and open to learning;
- staff are valued, informed and high performing; and
- the College community is supported and engaged.

Central to achieving this is trust, and open and effective communication between all members of the College community.

This Policy outlines the principles and actions that will be applied to achieve our communication objectives and support the achievement of broader EKC objectives.

Policy Rationale

Communication at East Kimberley College is central to everything that we do. Communication facilitates awareness, understanding, involvement and learning.

Communication is used both inside and outside the classroom. Including between:

- students;
- students and staff;
- staff;
- staff and existing and prospective parents/families; and
- the EKC community and the wider community.

Appropriate communication is a critical life skill that should be taught and modelled within our educational setting. The manner, mode and content of communication is also a reflection on East Kimberley College, impacts on East Kimberley College's cohesiveness and success, and impacts on the reputation of the College community (collectively and individually).

Policy Principles

To ensure:

- All communication contributes to a positive, productive and harmonious school environment for all.
- All communication is directed to the successful development of our students and our school community.
- That expectations, guidelines and standards are clearly communicated to all current and prospective students, staff, parents and families and other community members.
- Communication is appropriate in manner and content:
 - That communication promotes respect, equity and understanding;
 - That proper consideration is given to the individual needs and characteristics of recipients;
 - That communication does not and is not used to discriminate, bully, harass or offend in any way;
 - That communication is courteous and appropriate for a place of work; and

- That communication otherwise complies with professional standards and legal obligations.
- The mode of communication is appropriate:
 - That effective, informative and relevant communication occurs between all school community members;
 - That processes are in place for open and honest communication amongst all school community members.
 - That all communication is optimised, efficient, properly targeted and timely;
 - That communication is considered holistically, and consideration is given to multi-modal strategies;
 - That proper consideration is given to the individual needs and characteristics of recipients;
- That confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- That clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines are provided which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner

SCHOOL COMMUNITY BODIES/POSITIONS

Administration

The Principal is responsible for managing all College communication (including delegation of communication management).

All staff will comply with any directive given by the Principal regarding College communication.

Parents and Citizens Association (P&C)

The P&C communicates with the College community on events, projects and fundraising. P&C communications are limited to P&C business.

The primary mode of internal P&C communication will be the P&C meeting (held twice a term). The Principal will be invited to attend each P&C meeting.

In addition to P&C meetings, the President will be proactive in keeping the Principal informed and updated on P&C issues and activities.

The P&C must communicate, as needed, to ensure that its role and activities are understood by the College community.

All correspondence regarding P&C business should come through the President and Principal.

P&C communication to the College community must be authorised by the Principal prior to being sent.

P&C communications to the College community must not detract from wider East Kimberley College communications. P&C communications should, where possible, form part of wider EKC communications.

Bulk use of email information is encouraged, along with the newsletter, Facebook and website formats. Where email communication occurs, parent email addresses must always be kept private and confidential – use the BCC address box.

School Council

The School Council communicates with the College community on strategic direction, overall College performance and satisfaction.

School Council communications are limited to School Council business.

The primary mode of internal School Council communication will be the Council meeting (held twice a term).

In addition to Council meetings, the Chairperson will be in regular contact with the Principal regarding School Council activities.

School Council communication with the College community will, at a minimum, be through the newsletter and Annual Reports.

The School Council must communicate, as needed, to ensure that its role and activities are understood by the College community.

School Board communications to the school community must (except in exceptional cases) be authorised by the Principal prior to being sent.

School Council communication to the College community must not detract from wider East Kimberley College communications. School Council communication should, where possible, form part of wider EKC communications.

Bulk use of email information is encouraged, along with the newsletter, Facebook and website formats. Where email communication occurs, parent email addresses must always be kept private and confidential – use the BCC address box.

POLICY ACTIONS

Modes of Communication

1. Staff to Staff Communication

- Staff meetings.
- Monday Memo – weekly.
- School Development Days – as scheduled annually.
- Collaboration meetings – three times per term.
- Emails – specific staff and staff groups. All Staff emails are to be approved by a member of the Executive Team prior to sending.
- Communication to Office staff regarding student health and well-being when necessary.
- Student/class handover communication annually.

2. Teachers to Parents/guardians and Families

- Emails/Connect – regularly, minimum once a fortnight.
- Face to Face Interviews – as required.
- Parent/Teacher Interviews – as per school and Department Reporting to Parents policy.
- Parents/guardians Information sessions – annually at beginning of Term 1, or as required.
- Notes and Permission Slips – as required.
- Facebook.
- Reports – end of Semester One and Semester Two.
- Website as required.
- Schools Online as per Department system requirements.

3. Parents / guardians to School

- Emails to classroom teacher / front office.
- Phone call to front office. Classroom teachers will be informed of parent / guardian phone calls unless it is inappropriate to do so.
- Informal and formal scheduled face to face meetings. Parents / guardians should be encouraged to contact and discuss class related issues with the classroom teacher in the first instance.

4. Absenteeism notification

- Email – teacher, front office or Year Coordinator
- The SmartLink App.
- Written notes.
- Verbal – face to face.
- Phone call to front office.

5. School to School / Local Community

- Business Plan.
- Annual Report.
- School Handbook.
- Website.
- Media statements.
- Ministerial briefings.
- Advertising / brand development / promotional material.
- Facebook posts / Letters / Newsletters / Emails to from Principal, School Council Chairperson or P&C President.
- Formal and informal meetings with business owners, leaders, community groups and professional forums.

The Principal must be informed prior to any College to Local Community communications. This must include the nature, content and timing of any communication.

Where appropriate any feedback from the communication should also be provided to the Principal as soon as reasonably practicable. This will ensure that the Principal (as the primary spokesperson for East Kimberley College) is in a position to respond to any communications that the College may receive from the Local Community.

6. Staff to Student

The Department of Education's [Guidelines for Use of Social Media](#) imposes restrictions relating to the use of electronic communications with students. Only **transparent, educational discourse** with students is allowed wherever the teacher-student professional relationship exists. The Guidelines state:

Non-legitimate Use

Your overarching obligations for engaging in ethical, professional and appropriate behaviour between staff members, and wherever a staff/student relationship exists are variously governed by legislation, codes, standards, policies and guidelines, and can remain relevant when using social media outside of school hours. Examples of these obligations are:

- Code of Conduct
- Commissioner's Instruction No. 7 – Code of Ethics
- Staff Conduct and Discipline policy
- Bullying in the Workplace
- Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment policy
- Occupational Safety and Health policy
- Child Protection policy
- Students Online policy
- Student Behaviour policy
- Duty of Care for Students policy
- Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Therefore, in general terms when using social media, you must not:

- engage in private live chat conversations on the Internet with students (e.g. Facebook, SMS);
- exchange personal mobile phone numbers with students;
- correspond with students using personal email addresses e.g. Hotmail and Yahoo;
- engage in any online communication with students of a personal nature;
- invite or have students included as 'friends' on your personal/private social networking sites, or accept students as 'friends' from other social networking sites;
- take photographs or videos of students without parent/guardian consent;
- take photographs or videos of students for non-school purposes;
- send or exchange images or videos of school staff, students or any aspect of school operations without authorisation or approval; or
- download and store inappropriate images or other inappropriate material on Notebook for Teachers laptop computers outside school hours and off school sites.

Mode Guidelines

Mode	Details	Audience	Prime Accountability
Facebook	Regular updates of events and student successes	Parents/guardians and wider community	Public Relations Officer
Newsletter	Produced Week 4 and Week 10 each term	All staff, parents/guardians, wider community – sent via email and posted on Facebook and the website	Public Relations Officer
Website	Current, user friendly and informative Annual Reports and Business Plan available School Handbooks available	Internal and external stakeholders	Public Relations Officer
Schools Online	As per Department requirements	Prospective and current parents/guardians Prospective and current staff	Administration
Monday Memo	Distributed weekly – Mondays	All staff	Associate Principals
Emails	Newsletter Teacher - Parent/Guardian contact	Parents/guardians Staff Wider community	Administration All Staff
Assemblies	Primary Assemblies: Fortnightly Fridays (even weeks) Celebrate and showcase to act as a window to our classrooms Highlight behaviour expectations Secondary Assemblies: Twice per term	- Students - Staff - Parents/guardians, families - Wider community As the audience varies from one assembly to the next, assemblies are not an appropriate forum for whole school community communication	Primary: - Classroom - Teachers - Administration Secondary: - Student Services - Year Coordinator/s
Face to Face	Parent Information sessions – early Term 1 (Primary) Formal Parent/Teacher Interviews – Term 1 (Secondary) Informal interviews as required	Parents/guardians, external providers Protocol to make an appointment at a convenient time for all parties	Classroom Teachers Administration
Hard Copy Notes	Permission slips Specific administrative letters as required	Parents/guardians	Administration
Local Media	Contacted made through local journalist	Wider community	Public Relations Officer
General Media	Department of Education protocols must be followed	Wider community	Principal Department Media Unit
School Council	Open meeting for the wider community once per year Meeting summary provided through newsletter	Elected members from: - the college - parents - community	Principal School Council Chairperson
P&C	Open meeting for the wider community Held twice per term Meeting minutes sent to Principal	Parents/guardians, community members	Administration P&C President
External Interpreters	Contacted when required	Parents/guardians requiring an interpreter	Administration

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Communication with Classroom Teachers

Parents should keep the relevant classroom teacher informed of anything that may impact on the child's emotional wellbeing while at the College. This allows the teacher to be proactive in observing and supporting the child through difficult situations. Classroom teachers will communicate this information to Administration in appropriate circumstances (such as where special procedures may be required).

Parents are encouraged to make direct contact with, and discuss, any concerns about their child's progress with the class teacher. Accordingly, class teachers must be open and receptive to parent contact regarding matters of concern.

For quick matters, immediately before or after school are ideal times. For more involved or confidential matters, a meeting will need to be made with the relevant teacher.

Any parent wishing to discuss concerns with the Principal or an Associate Principal regarding their child's teacher will in most cases need to have addressed the concerns with the teacher in the first instance. Should either party wish to be accompanied by a support person this is supported and encouraged.

Procedure for Contacting a Classroom or Specialist 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:

1. Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and ask a school administration officer to arrange for the appropriate teacher to contact the parent to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not usually available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time or whilst on yard duty.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher in writing or via email, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time.
3. Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Procedure for Contacting Other College Personnel

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider affects the whole College, their child's wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to contact the Principal or an Associate Principal, using one of the three approaches outlined above.

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

In all cases if the matter relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the College community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine who is the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and the process to work towards a resolution, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

Issues Arising Between Students and Families

No parent should approach the children of other families or their parents with a school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or an Associate Principal and not discussed with other persons.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Principles

From time to time parents may encounter difficulties or concerns. When this occurs, parents are encouraged to endeavour to resolve the issue informally, initially with the classroom teacher. It often helps to seek information or an explanation about the concern, or to speak directly to the person involved.

East Kimberley College will deal with all concerns and complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. Matters will be investigated and dealt with in a timely manner (no more than four (4) school days).

In working through any issues, a resolution which treats all parties with dignity and respect will be sought. Issues and matters which have been raised will be kept in the strictest of confidence and not discussed with any other persons, excepting those directly involved.

Anonymous complaints will be investigated as a preliminary issue for the purpose of identifying if there is any substance to the complaints. In the absence of clear evidence, anonymous complaints may not be further acted upon.

Contact should be made with the Principal or an Associate Principal if assistance is required in clarifying an issue of concern or for the making of a formal complaint.

Protocol

Resolving matters of concern are best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person. Emails and letters identifying the existence of a complaint and the need for face-to-face contact should be brief (i.e. merely alerting the person to the issue). Such written communications should not be used as a forum for in-depth discussion.

The role of the School Council is not to accept or manage complaints. Should a complaint be received by the School Council, it will be redirected to the Principal for management.

Formal meetings will initially be facilitated by the Principal or an Associate Principal, with a view to achieving the resolution of the complaint in an expeditious, equitable and courteous manner. Depending on the circumstances this may involve separate meetings with relevant persons, conciliation or mediation meetings involving relevant parties, or some other format. Formal meetings will be minuted and all persons attending the relevant formal meeting will receive a copy of the minutes.

Where a complaint is resolved, otherwise than at a formal meeting, the resolution of the complaint will be documented and relevant persons informed in writing.

Any correspondence received by East Kimberley College or created in response to the complaint will be kept in a secure, access restricted and confidential file. The Principal will establish and maintain, from time to time, protocols surrounding the creation, maintenance and retention of secure, access restricted and confidential files.

OTHER REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

1. Staff Contact Protocol
2. Code of Conduct
3. Commissioner's Instruction No. 7 – Code of Ethics
4. Staff Conduct and Discipline policy
5. Bullying in the Workplace
6. Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment policy
7. Occupational Safety and Health policy
8. Child Protection policy
9. Students Online policy
10. Student Behaviour policy
11. Duty of Care for Students policy
12. Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
13. EKC Social Media Policy
14. EKC Style Guide and Logo Guidelines

