



Communications Plan

OAKBROOK PREPARATORY SCHOOL

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Introduction

What is communication?

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behavior as it is about message. We should also remember the importance of listening.

For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

Every member of staff has the responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognize that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

Successful communication strategies are an integral part of building Oakbrook Preparatory School's reputation and image, both within the school community as well as with the general public. In all environments communication from Oakbrook Preparatory School should be in plain English and be:

- Professional
- Relevant
- Accurate
- Personalize
- Timely
- Consistent

Communication procedures will vary in different situations and between stakeholders; however, the ultimate aim of each communication form is to provide a clear and transparent message leading to shared understandings of expectations.

Stakeholders include:

- Students
- Parents and caregivers
- Prospective parents
- Staff
- Board members
- Friends of the school
- The wider community
- Department of Education

This communication plan sets out to consciously provide:

- Strong relationships between staff, students and parents/caregivers
- A positive and nurturing learning environment for students
- Effective engagement with parents and the broader community
- Contribute to strong relationships between staff, students and parents
- Demonstrate the success of our work and that of our students
- Ensure that the school is open and transparent in its communication
- Build trust, confidence and improve perceptions

Rationale

At Oakbrook Preparatory School we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which promotes open communication, respect, fairness and positive relationships between all stakeholders.

We aim to have clear, effective and positive communication to achieve the best possible outcomes for teachers, students and parents/caregivers which:

- Acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders
- Creates community by building and strengthening relationships based on mutual respect and courtesy
- Establishes positive lines of communication between home and school so that students receive continuity of education, care, support and management within the home and school settings
- Aims to provide an opportunity for parents/caregivers to share their views and needs and to participate in aspects of the child's education
- Features written communications which are accessible and inclusive
- Manages confidential information in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- Ensures processes are in place to allow for open and honest communication amongst all school community members
- Ensures a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained

Communication Objectives

Oakbrook Preparatory School School seeks to:

- Promote the schools' vision, values and achievements
- Provide parents/caregivers and the wider community with information regarding events, results and other happenings at the school.
- Provide staff with information about events, results, expectations and other happenings at the school.
- Provide a two-way channel of communication between the school and parents/caregivers for open discussion.
- Provide parents/caregivers with an avenue for communicating their concerns to teachers and an opportunity to take these further if necessary.
- Enact a two-way channel of communication between staff for expressing their concerns and opportunities.
- Provide an open channel of communication between staff and students for honest discussion and advice.
- Make it as easy as possible for families of prospective students to contact the school and receive the information they need.
- Respond quickly to written, verbal or phoned requests for information or appointments – acknowledging calls within 24 hours (working days) and scheduling an appointment or providing information within 48 hours (working days).
- Respond quickly to concerns raised by families, contacting them within 48 hours.

All communications Oakbrook Preparatory School should:

- Keep staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- Be actioned within a reasonable time
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Be compatible with our core values as reflected in our Mission Statement.

Internal Methods of Communication

Meetings

There is an integrated program of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal. All formal meetings should be structured, minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject leaders' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans. For all other meetings, notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

Availability of Minutes/Notes of Meetings

The approved minutes of meetings are available on request from the Head of School.

Email

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 does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required.

School Email Policy

Email is seen as an effective form of communication between the school and parents/caregivers. Oakbrook Preparatory School expects that parents/caregivers and school staff will use email in a responsible manner. By communicating via email all users agree to adhere to this policy and the expected behaviors it outlines. Users who do not comply may be requested to cease communicating in this way.

Rationale:

The use of email allows the school, teachers and parents/caregivers to communicate together in a quick and efficient manner.

Purpose:

- To ensure the use of email communication between teachers and parents/caregivers is carried out in a mutually respectful manner
- To ensure all email communication is treated in a confidential, legal and ethical manner.

- To provide processes that minimize the chance of inappropriate use and provide clear consequences of such usage.

Email Agreement:

All users MUST adhere to all email conditions below.

- Appreciate that using email to communicate does not result in an immediate response; however, a maximum 48-hour (working days) acknowledgement of receipt is expected. Actual response to an email query may take up to 2 more days depending on the request.
- The recipient of an email agrees to not forward, cut or paste sections of a sender's email for further publication within the school community without the approval of the sender.
- All email communication will be carried out in a professional and appropriate format and tone.

To ensure that each member of staff is using email effectively, the following actions should be taken:

Mobile Phones

Staff - Mobile phones should not be used during lessons (unless they are a part of the lesson) or when in contact with the children. In exceptional cases such as family illness the circumstances should be discussed with the Head of School. During trips and off-site provision, staff should ensure they can be contacted by mobile phone at all times.

Students - All students are advised to follow teacher/school rules regarding mobile phones and personal devices. Any exceptions must be discussed with and approved by the Dean of Students or the Head of School.

Staff Briefings

Staff Briefings take place as necessary through school email and staff meetings.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and caregivers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. In our school, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognize and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Caregiver Letters

Staff will endeavor to respond to parents' letters as quickly as possible. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the Head of School.

Face-to-face meeting

Parents/caregivers must request an appointment via phone call or email to see the teacher or Head of School and should be requested at least 24 hours in advance.

Text Alert/Email

The school has a text alert messaging and email system it uses to communicate to parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Dean of Admissions, Marketing, and Communications or Head of School.

If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be saved or printed. Staff should forward emails with complaints to their supervisor or Head of School.

A copy of any email sent to a parent or received by you from a parent should be electronically filed or a copy stored in the school office. The same applies to all internal email transmissions concerning student matters.

Telephone calls

Staff should check their phone messages each day. Office staff should do their best to not interrupt teaching for staff to answer telephone calls. Calls should be made during breaks or class change, if possible, with the exception of early dismissals and emergencies.

Newsletters and Thursday Folders

Schoolwide newsletters (Knightly News) are emailed out each Thursday to all staff and caregivers. These should only be sent by the Dean of Admissions, Marketing and Communication or the Head of School.

Knightly News Special Editions are reserved for special events and information that needs to be communicated to a broader audience.

Lower School staff should send hardcopy newsletters to caregivers via Thursday folders. These newsletters should be approved by the Dean of Lower School in advance.

Philanthropic Letters

The Development Office and any organization approved by the Head of School may send letters to stakeholders to raise funds for the school. Annual Fund, Victor's Birthday, Once Upon A Knight Gala, O Club Booster Club, and Parents Club are included in the approved fundraising organizations. All fundraising requests must be approved by the Head of School.

Organizations may use Jeans Days as fundraisers as approved by the Dean of Students and Head of School. These may be communication via school email and social media.

School Profile

The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school, this is updated every year.

School Website

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

Staff should not communicate with parents or students via social networking sites (such as Facebook). The exception to this rule would be when the school has established a learning platform for the purpose of teaching and learning.

The school’s social media pages are used to highlight school activities and success. All social media pages are overseen by the Dean of Admissions, Marketing and Communications. Additional social media administrators include the Communications Coordinator and Head of School.

Surveys

The Administration will gather feedback via stakeholder surveys via email at a minimum of every two years. All surveys are overseen by the Dean of Admissions, Marketing and Communications and Head of School. Results of those surveys will be shared with the community at large.

Report Cards and Progress Reports

Throughout the year we provide a grade report to each child’s parents on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Report Cards and Progress Reports are available through FACTS or are sent directly to the enrollment responsible caregivers via email or mail. Report cards and Progress Reports may not be distributed to any other parties.

Pathways of Communication 1

Parents/caregivers – General

Methods of providing general school operational information to parents/caretakers.

Channel	Details	Audience	Accountability
School Website	Current, user friendly, informative, enhanced for mobile use	Current and Prospective families Staff	Head of School Dean of Admissions, Marketing and

		Community at large	Communications Communications Coordinator
Chapel, Pep Rallies, Assemblies	Highlights the school's MVV, celebrates special accomplishments of students and staff	Students, staff, families, community	Administration, staff, student leaders
Hard Copy handouts	Lower School Newsletters Specific administrative letters/brochures/flyers Philanthropic letters Special invitations	Parents/Caregivers Community	Administration, staff
Emails - schoolwide and individual	Important, timely school information	Staff Parents/Caregivers	Administration, staff
Social Media Pages	Highlights school and student success Shares timely news and information	Current and prospective families Staff	Dean of Admissions, Marketing, and Communications Communication Coordinator

Pathways of Communication 2

Stakeholder Groups and Committees

Channel	Details	Audience	Accountability
Board of Directors	Monthly meetings	Board members and invited guests	Board Chair Head of School
Parents Club	Monthly meetings	Parents/Caregivers Community members	Parents Club President Dean of Admissions, Marketing and Communication
Face-to-Face Meetings	School or Student-related information	Parents/Caregivers Administration Staff	Administration Teachers
Parents Advisory Council	Bi-Monthly Meetings	Parents/Caregivers and Appointed Members	PAC Chair Head of School

Pathways of Communication 3

Staff to Staff

Faculty Meetings

- Division/All Staff Meetings - Monday afternoons
- Informal meetings – as required

Leadership Meetings

- Administration - Tuesday mornings
- Deans - Thursday mornings

Parents to Teachers and/or Leadership

- Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with teachers and appropriate members of the Leadership Team to assist in queries, concerns or significant issues. The table below indicates the avenues to follow before scheduling meetings with the Leadership Team.

Concern	Details	Prime Accountability
Academic Performance	Teachers	Teachers
Behavioral	Unusual or disruptive behaviors Change in attitude Issues with other students	Teachers Administration
Emotional/Health Concerns	Identified special need Change in emotional state	Teachers Administration

Pathways of Communication 4

Parent/Teacher Meetings

These aim to:

- Inform parents of their children's progress at school
- Inform teachers how children are coping outside school
- Establish an on-going relationship between home and school
- Help children realize that home and school do work together for their benefit

Procedure

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child:

- Contact the teacher via the school office or by speaking to the classroom teacher.
- Provide a brief outline of the points to be discussed

Contacting other staff

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider may affect the whole school, their child's well-being or relates to a school policy matter:

- Contact the Dean of Lower School, Dean of Students, and/or Head of School

Issues arising between students and families

- No parent should approach the children of other families or their parents/caregivers with a school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Head of School as soon as possible.

Communication breakdown

When communication breaks down or an issue is unable to be resolved, Oakbrook Preparatory School has a grievance policy in place to address concerns on the school's website.