



Silver Tree
STEINER SCHOOL

Communications Policy

2018

This procedure is applicable to: Parents, Teachers and Staff

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COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This should be read in conjunction with the:

- Newsletter Guidelines and Procedure
- Concern and Grievance Policy
- Internet and Email Usage Policy

RATIONALE

At Silver Tree Steiner School, our aim is to be pro-active in strengthening positive partnerships between the School, its families and the wider community. Effective two-way communication is integral to this partnership.

The School communicates to parents in the following way:

- Kindergarten Handbook
- Primary Handbook
- School newsletter
- Parent nights
- Class Carer e-mails
- School reports
- The School Website
- Policies and Procedures
- Text Messaging Service
- Parent teacher appointments
- Class Communication Books
- Facebook sites
- Direct e-mail communication to parents

POLICY STATEMENT

Silver Tree Steiner School strives to:

- Create a culture of open and respectful communication with the School community and external to the School community.
- Foster communication between parents and the teachers of their children.
- Keep parents regularly informed about their children's activities and development at school.
- Ensure there is well structured formal program of communication with parents.
- From parents, the school seeks timely, honest and complete information about their child. Parents will ensure that the contact information they have provided to the school remains accurate and current.
- All communication will be respectful and underpinned by considerations of appropriate privacy and confidentiality principles.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Primary and Kindergarten Handbook

This is provided to new families at the time of enrolment. A current version of the Parent handbook is available from the School office.

School Newsletter

The School Newsletter, *Silver Leaves*, is published every second week and distributed to families by email and a hard copy is distributed to the eldest child in the family.

The School Newsletter will contain, each edition, news from the Head of School, diary dates and an article from Early Childhood and from each Primary Teacher.

Any communication from the P&F or whole school rosters will be published in the newsletter and the P&F minutes will be attached to the newsletter e-mail.

Parent Nights

These are held once a term and are a source of valuable information.

Parent-Teacher Appointments

Teachers are available by appointment if parents would like to discuss their child. Appointments can be booked via reception.

Class Carer e-mails

Messages from the P&F for *class specific rosters only* go through the Class Carer. Communication from your teacher can be sent through the Class Carer.

School Reports

Are issued from Kindy 6 to Class 6 twice yearly at the end of Term 2 and Term 4.

The School Website

General parent information can be found on the school website including emergency information

Policies and Procedures

These are available on the school's website or upon request from the school office.

Text Messaging Service

Emergency information is sent via text message e.g. in the event of a fire evacuation or school shut down. It is vital that you keep your details held at the School updated.

Class Communication Books

These are held, at the discretion of the Teacher, on the verandah and are used to leave short messages for the teacher regarding your child.

Facebook Sites

Friends of the Silver Tree Steiner School group and Silver Tree Steiner School page are used to re-iterate communication which is sent through the above channels.

Direct Communication

Parents are able to e-mail the teacher directly at name.surname@silvertree.wa.edu.au, providing the content of the e-mail is respectful and it is understood that teachers are not available for immediate response via e-mail communication.

Teachers will contact a child's parent as soon as possible (by phone, email or to make an appointment to meet in person) to discuss concerns that arise about a student.

The school Administration staff will contact parents if a child is involved in an incident, accident, is seriously injured at school, complains of illness, or needs to go home for any reason.

Parents need to keep their child's teacher informed about any significant incidents and changes that are likely to affect the student at school, their attendance at school or their completion of homework. This can be via a letter with the child, school administration by email, telephone or in person.

Parents may approach teachers directly but to avoid disruption to the teaching schedule, they should do so only at mutually convenient times, this is usually once the children have left at the end of the day. Unless there is no other way to contact your child's teacher, please respect the teacher's time in the morning when they are setting up the class.

RAISING CONCERNS

At times parents may have concerns regarding their child's academic progress, social relationships or a general classroom matter. These concerns should be raised directly with the child's class teacher in the first instance. Appointments can be booked via the Receptionist. If an issue is not resolved with the teacher, the Concern and Grievance Policy should be followed.

ATTACHMENT 1: EMAIL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER AND PARENT COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Silver Tree Steiner School recognises that electronic mail (email) is a valuable communication tool that is widely used across our society. Staff members are provided with Silver Tree Steiner School email accounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of parent/teacher communication and internal staff communication.

The school reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to the school's educational mission.

EMAIL PROTOCOLS FOR TEACHER AND PARENT COMMUNICATION

FOR PARENTS

When using email to correspond with staff, parents are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for communications with staff.
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only. When any doubt exists, or contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is good practice to have a trusted relative/friend preview the wording prior to sending the email.
- Email messages to staff should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Keep emails succinct and avoid assumptions.

GUIDELINES FOR EMAILS INITIATED BY PARENTS

Please be mindful of the following:

- Most teachers prefer to speak directly to individual parents in person or via telephone and use email mainly for setting up meetings or for issuing reminders.
Please note that some teachers read their email messages in the morning before school, some read them at the end of the day, and some read them during the school day.
- Teachers have many children in their care. Please be aware of the potential for a very large number of emails that your child's teacher may receive in any one week.
- For these reasons, please remember that if you choose to send an email message to a staff member, you will receive a timely response, however it may not be immediate, and it may not be via return email.

When using email:

Please remember that your child's teacher holds your child's well-being and your concerns

with the utmost care and respect. Please ensure all correspondence with your child's teacher reflects your own care and respect so that healthy outcomes for all can be achieved.

- Please use email for non-vital or non-urgent messages only. The staff member may not receive an email message by the end of the school day.
- For vital or urgent messages please use the telephone to contact the office.
- Your child's academic/learning progress is best addressed by scheduling a personal conference with your child's teacher. Use email to set up the meeting.
- When agreed between the teacher and the parent (following a face to face meeting) email may be used in place of a communication book as a form of regular communication about a student's day at school.
- To fulfil the school's legal obligations, all correspondence regarding absences must continue to be sent to welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au
- Please remember that email is not necessarily confidential and can be subject to Freedom of Information regulations. Confidential information is best conveyed by personal contact.
- The school maintains email accounts for teachers to facilitate parent/teacher communication and internal as well as system-wide staff communication. The School reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to the school's educational mission.
- Please be mindful of the appropriateness of your email content. Amusing or special stories not directly related to your child, jokes, chain letters, or commercial solicitations are not helpful and reduce valuable teaching and preparation time.

Always include:

- Something positive
- Kind thoughts as you formulate the email. This will ensure a respectful tone.

Always avoid:

- Initiating an email or responding to one if you are feeling emotional or "triggered"
- Any discussion or personal information related to other students, parents or staff members.

GUIDELINES FOR EMAILS INITIATED BY STAFF

When using email to correspond with **parents**, staff are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for parent communications
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only. When any doubt exists, or the contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is important that staff seek the approval of the contents from the Head of School or Education Coordinator prior to sending the email.

- Whole class emails need to be passed via the Education Coordinator before being sent out. Simple reminders for parents may bypass the Education Coordinator.
- Use the **BCC** field when emailing more than one person.
- Email messages to parents need to be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Keep emails succinct and avoid assumptions.
- Use the most current class list to ensure up-to-date email addresses are used.
- Care should be given when using student names. Refer to students by first name, initials or your son/daughter depending on the content. Do not discuss non-related students.
- Please be reminded that some parents may not check emails daily, thus your message may not be received in a timely manner.
- Please be aware of the potential for a very large number of emails that families may receive from the school in any one week and keep your correspondence to a minimum.

The school email can be used for:

- General information such as; class activities, curriculum, projects, tests, deadlines and special events.
- To arrange a meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue e.g. I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance.
- To follow-up on an issue that has previously been discussed
- On-going communication about a student instead of a Communication Book
- General or specific school related queries of fellow staff members

Always include:

- Something positive.
- Kind thoughts as you formulate the email. This will ensure a respectful tone.

Always avoid:

- Initiating an email or responding to one if you are feeling emotional or “triggered”
- Any discussion or personal information related to other students, parents or staff members
- Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent. (e.g. 'I am concerned that your child's work has deteriorated recently and was not at school again today.')

- Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face-to-face. (e.g. I am concerned that your child may have a learning disability)
- If you have any doubts about sending an email, forward the email to the Education Coordinator or Head of School before sending.
- If you have received an email that triggers strong emotions, **DO NOT RESPOND IMMEDIATELY**. Wait until at least the following day and speak with the Education Coordinator or Head of School for support before sending a response.

Generic Email Response

If a staff member believes that a topic is too sensitive for an email reply, here are some examples of generic responses:

Thank you for your email. I feel this concern is too sensitive to discuss in this way. I would prefer to speak in person regarding this matter. I will call you on (state the date and time) to discuss this matter further. Thank you.

Thank you for your email. Silver Tree Steiner School does not use email to discuss sensitive and/or confidential student information. To best address your concerns and quickly answer your questions, please feel free to call me at 92954787 and I will be happy to discuss this with you further. Thank you.

Staff to Staff emails

When using email to correspond with **other members of staff**, all staff are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for school related communications.
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only.
- When any doubt exists, or the contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is important that staff seek the approval of the contents from the Head of School or Education Coordinator prior to sending the email.
- Email messages to fellow staff members need to be consistently respectful.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Use the CC field when emailing more than one person, so that all recipients are aware who has received the correspondence. This will ensure clarity when staff members are required to discuss issues.
- Be mindful of whether you are replying to sender or replying to all recipients and of the impact your return comments may have upon others in the conversation.