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PARENT/CARER INVOLVEMENT POLICY



Rationale

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Promote parent/carer participation in a diversity of roles to support children's education
- Affirm parents/carers participation as a highly desirable component of St John's Lutheran Primary School
- Acknowledge parents/carers as first educators of their children and their right to participate in their children's schooling.

Implementation

We believe that Parent/Carer participation at St John's Lutheran Primary School:

- Enhances social and educational outcomes for children, and communication between classrooms and homes
- Allows schools to benefit from socio-cultural and linguistic diversity that children and parents bring to schools
- Provides schools with a broader resource base from which to draw in providing learning opportunities and services to children and families
- Increases participation in decision-making in the community, and
- Enhances community spirit and cohesion.

The scope of parent/carer involvement enables the planning of more inclusive strategies to enhance parent/carer participation. It acknowledges the rights of parents/carers to have their opinions respected and considered, including the need for sensitivity to the rights and roles of adults with different caring responsibilities. The scope covers:

- **Parenting Responsibilities:** the basic parenting responsibilities that support children and which are central to a child's successful participation in schooling.
- **Learning at Home:** participation and support in general developmental learning through childhood and adolescence and in school work at home.
- **Communication:** formal and informal communication between home and school about school programmes, activities and student progress. Communication is a two way process and is one of the most basic elements of supporting home-school partnerships.
- **Volunteering:** the traditional, visible and highly valued form of parent/carer participation in schools. It includes helping in classrooms and other areas of the school, fund raising and support services such as P&F Special Menu Committee and School Council.
- **Decision Making:** the involvement of parents/carers in decision-making at various levels on School Council.
- **Community:** Parents/Carers support students and schools through active roles in community organisations. Examples are sporting organisations, service clubs, after school care and integrated support services for families.

At St John's we aim to acknowledge, encourage and extend parent/carer participation by:

- Creating an environment in which the participation of all parents/carers in schools and student learning is welcomed, where teachers and parents treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinions are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions;

- Involving parents/carers in decision-making at the school, by consulting with parent/carer representatives on education policy, school development issues, including parent/carer representation on committees and advisory groups;
- Encouraging parent/carer participation as volunteers to support schools and classroom activities; (Note: parental assistance is additional to paid, trained teacher assistants and not in place of them).
- Promoting relevant, accurate and timely communication between schools and families about student progress, all aspects of school programmes and policies with respect for the diversity and differing needs of families;
- Developing system and school programmes and strategies that encourage and assist parents/carers to actively participate in their children's education both at school and at home;
- Connecting children and families with community and support services;
- Supporting programmes and activities designed to develop parenting skills; and
- Providing information about the benefits of parent participation and enhancing the skills of teachers and parents in developing effective home-school partnerships.

Responsibilities of St John's Lutheran School include:

- Provide a framework for the development of effective home-school partnerships and encouragement of parent participation in schools and students' learning;
- Facilitate access to information for schools and parents about the benefits of parent participation and programmes to support parent participation;
- Provide opportunities for teachers and parents to enhance their skills in developing effective home-school partnerships; and
- Consult with the representatives of parents on policies and initiatives and include representatives on review committees and working groups.

Responsibilities of the Principal include:

- Establish a school environment that welcomes and encourages all parents to raise questions, participate in school activities and volunteer their services in a variety of ways;
- Ensure that parents are treated as collaborators in children's learning;
- Ensure that parent views are sought in developing policies and addressing school wide issues
- Ensure a school wide approach to communication with parents about school policies, programmes, activities and reporting on students that is frequent, clear and two way.

Responsibilities of Teachers

The responsibilities of teachers in parent/carer participation are to:

- Acknowledge that all parents have positive strengths that contribute to their children's learning;
- Respect diversity of family backgrounds and cultures and their contribution to children's learning;
- Encourage parent involvement in their children's learning and provide advice to support that environment; and
- Provide clear and timely information to parents about the achievements and progress of their children and provide regular opportunities for two way dialogue about progress.

Responsibility of Parents/Carers

- Parents/carers need to comply with all relevant policies, procedures and guidelines that pertain to visitors when they enter a school.
- Parents/carers who have issue with decisions taken by class teachers or principals should attempt to resolve these at the school level in the first instance. Should resolution be unachievable, the issue(s) should be resolved according to the school's procedures for resolving complaints.
- Parents/carers who, in the course of their participation, become a party to confidential information must agree not to divulge the information to any other person.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES OF PARENT/CARERS AS PARTNERS IN SCHOOLING POLICY

Communicating

These activities include school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school and classroom programmes and students' progress:

- Develop a Complaints/Grievances Policy so that parents have clear guidelines to address these issues in the school
- Clear information to parents/carers about choosing schools and selecting courses, programmes and activities within schools
- Clear information on all school policies, programmes, reforms, assessments, appeals and transitions.
- Information packs for parents/carers that include school telephone numbers, important meeting dates, school policies
- Parent noticeboard in the school
- Focus groups for parents to discuss issues related to the school
- Use of interpreters/written translation for non-English speaking background families
- Three way interviews between teachers, parents and students about student progress
- School/classroom newsletters
- Phone calls and other communication by teachers to parents
- Similar events held at different times to accommodate differing family commitments
- Provide opportunities for students to become key participants in communicating within their families about their learning eg. Learning journeys
- Portfolios of student work sent home regularly for parent review and comments
- Annual survey of families on students' needs and families' reactions to school programmes
- Family Fun and Learning Nights that help families understand school programmes

Volunteering

These activities involve families giving their time and talents to support schools, teachers and students by:

- Direct classroom activities
- Assisting with school excursions
- Involvement with the P&F Association
- Fundraising
- Training for volunteers
- Annual survey to identify interests, talents and availability of volunteers
- Class parents, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with required information.

Learning at Home

These activities provide information and ideas to families about the academic work students do in class, how to help with homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions. Teachers can assist parents/carers to support their children in a range of ways with learning at home by:

- Providing assistance to parents/carers on how to support the experiences, interests and skills children develop in the home context
- Encouraging some 'interactive homework' ie homework that involves students in two-way activities and interaction with families and/or community members.
- Ensuring homework is not always based on family involvement for those students who do not have assistance at home
- Promoting shared reading programmes between parents and students
- Supporting parents by providing them with information about how they can develop a learning culture within the home
- Helping parents and carers recognise that the home environment and the broader community provide children with many and varied learning experiences
- Sharing information on how to assist students with skills they need to learn
- Calendars with daily/weekly activities for parents and students to do at home or in the community

Decision-Making

These activities enable families to participate in decisions about school programmes by:

- School Council membership
- P&F membership and involvement
- Distributing draft policies/issues papers to parents for feedback
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives eg class carers
- Including student representatives alongside parents in decision-making.

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