



# COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

November 2022



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## Communications Policy

Communication is essential for sharing school news and information with our families and broader community. In today's age, we can often feel overwhelmed by the amount of information shared with us. It is the aim of this policy to make our communications to stakeholders clear, timely, accurate and appropriate. Our communication will protect staff, students' and parents' privacy, maintain clear boundaries and ensure that bullying and harassment does not occur.

St John's Lutheran School uses a range of traditional and digital formats to communicate with our school families and the broader community. Our main formal communication method with school families will be by the regular school newsletter sent home fortnightly, formal notes home on school letterhead or official email as required. Any announcement/s from school including our School Board and Sub-committees will be through these formal methods of communication.

Social media is not considered formal notification, as not all families are connected in this way. At St John's, social media is used as a promotional tool or to provide informal information to the school community. We have a Social Media Policy to address the particular issues arising from the use of social media.

We expect our school community members to conduct themselves appropriately when using any form of communication. If a message needs to go home to the school community, it must be approved by the Principal and sent to our office staff for distribution.

In particular, we ask that if parents use electronic communication:

It should be restricted to school matters

It must not offend, intimidate, humiliate or bully another person

It must not be misleading, false or injure the reputation of another person or the school

It should respect and maintain the privacy of members

It must not bring the school into disrepute.

Teachers and others who work with children and young people must direct electronic communication through the child's parents.

### Traditional Communication Methods

**Newsletters:** The school newsletter (The Informer) is sent home via email (and is also available on our website or in hard copy by request) every fortnight. It contains information relevant to our school community – notices, coverage of events, birthdays and celebrations. It will also contain announcements from our Parish and the wider Eudunda community where appropriate. As a part of our annual enrolment package, the school will ask for parent/guardian approval before posting images and/or names of students in the newsletter. Parents can change their preference at any stage by informing the school office staff.

**Class Newsletters:** Teachers will send home a class newsletter at the beginning of each new term.



**Notes Home:** These are only sent home when the need arises. They may be a quick reminder, a special event notice (e.g. School Photo order form) or else a message regarding our uniform requirements. Usually these will also be posted on Seesaw (See below) by the classroom teacher.

**Parent Information Evenings:** These are held at the start of each school year by classroom teachers. They provide parents with information about the program for the year, class expectations, possible excursions and camps that will be held and other general pieces of information. Important information is provided in the class Parent Information Handbook, which is available at the Parent Information Evening

**Three Way Conferences/Student-led Conferences:** These are face to face meetings held once each Semester. Three Way Conferences are held in Term 1 and are meant to be times where information is shared between the class teacher, the student and their family. It is also a time where school goals for the year are set. Student-led conferences are held late Term 3 or early Term 4. Each class teacher will set the date for these face to face conferences where students are encouraged to take the lead in sharing their work with their families.

**Appointments with Teachers:** Parents can arrange to meet with their class teacher by first phoning our office. We generally prefer to have appointments after school as teachers are busy preparing the day's work before school.

## Digital Communication Methods

### Website

Our website includes current information on the school. Its purpose is to provide general information about our school and be a first point of call for people interested in finding out more about St John's Lutheran School.

If we intend to publish a photo of a child, we will first seek permission from his or her parents and take care not to provide identifying information. If parents/guardians are uncomfortable with their children having their photos used please contact the school and we will stop using their images. Each year, parents sign a consent form for their child's photo to be used in the Parent Pack sent home at the end of the year in preparation for the next year.

We will seek feedback from school members to improve the information available on the site.

### Seesaw

Seesaw is an application (app) that is used by class teachers to share samples of students work and important messages to students and their families. Messages will be limited with a weekly overview being sent home before the start of the new week. This app builds a portfolio of students work over the years which can be shared with other family members. Teachers will share instructions on how to install Seesaw at the start of the school year.

## SMS and email

**St John's staff will not share their personal phone numbers and email addresses with parents, unless in exceptional circumstances.**

Teachers and Administration staff may use SMS and email to provide information about the school, important and urgent notices such as bushfire alerts however:

SMS messages will be short and about urgent school matters

email communication will be used when more information is required

communication involving students will be directed through their parents. Parents are reminded that staff may not respond to messages/phone calls on weekends or between 6 pm and 8am on weekdays

When on a sleepover or camp, staff will take the school phone for urgent communication between the home and the camp teacher. As camps are designed to increase independence, parents are asked to only contact the camp leader/teacher in the case of an emergency.

## Social media websites

We treat all social media postings, blogs, status updates and tweets as public 'comment'.

Postings (written, photos or videos) will be family-friendly and feature positive school news and events.

We currently maintain two Facebook sites - the open page (which anyone can see) and the closed group (which only current school members can see). Both are administered by our Administration Staff.

The closed Facebook (FB) group specifically targets the delivery of information to our school families - eg. casual day reminders, special menu reminders, no bus reminders as well as photos and possible live streaming of special events. Information that is only relevant or appropriate to our immediate school community will be posted on our closed Facebook page.

The Open FB Page is a tool the school uses to reach the broader community. As a school we are aware that posts on this page should not include names of children. This page is used for promoting what's happening at the school including special events, achievements, upgrades to the school, etc. No one should re-post any images without first receiving permission.

No personal information about our students will be disclosed.

No statements will be made that are misleading, false or likely to injure a person's reputation.

No statements will be made that might bring our school into disrepute.

Abusive, discriminatory, intimidating or offensive statements will not be tolerated. Offending posts will be removed and those responsible will be blocked from the site.

We ask parents not to share photos of students (other than their own) on personal Seesaw/Facebook/social media pages.

## Non-compliance

The school will take immediate action and suspend any member of the school community from its closed Facebook group or See Saw account if the above points are not followed.

School and or community members may face disciplinary action for sending inappropriate electronic communication or posting online content or comments that harass, offend, intimidate, or humiliate another member, as outlined in our code of conduct.

Under certain circumstances, cyber bullying (e.g. bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, a chat room, discussion group, instant messaging or website) is a criminal offence that can be reported to [esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au) and/or the police.

In addition, members who publish false or misleading comments about another person in the public domain (e.g., Facebook, YouTube or Twitter) may be liable for defamation.

**Policy Approved, November 2022**

