



# Newberry House

MONTESSORI SCHOOL

## **STAFF, BOARD AND PARENT COMMUNICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Good communication between school staff, parents and students is imperative to the quality of education provided by Newberry House Montessori School. Within the service of educating young people there are bound to be differing opinions between home and school. Where these are smoothly managed the educational process continues to develop in a positive manner. Where the relationship is damaged, due to intolerance, disrespect or other unacceptable behaviour, the growth of the child may be adversely affected.

We strive for open, positive and meaningful communication in everything we do. We support each other in the exchange of ideas and in maintaining an environment where people feel their views are valued and respected and where they feel they have been heard. Our school leaders lead by example.

### **2. REASON FOR THIS POLICY**

This policy is to ensure that all parents, students and staff understand the procedure for communicating issues which affect the education of the students. The teachers have a need to communicate with the parents at regular intervals and the parents are invited to communicate with the school staff as and when it may be required.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

Effective communication enables the school to share aims and values through keeping students, staff, parents, stakeholders and the wider community well informed. All communication at Newberry House Montessori School should:

- Reflect the values of Newberry House Montessori School by being open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon-free, plain language which aims to be understood by all.
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of all relevant legislation and school policies.
- Be compatible with our core values reflected in our Mission statement.

### **4. DEFINITIONS**

SGB: School Governing Body

SMT: Senior Management Team

PA: Parent Association

Parent: A parent as defined in the South African Schools Act, 1996

### **5. CHANNELS FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS:**

- 5.1.** Communicate via email or set up an appointment with the director of the plane to discuss matters irrespective of what the issue is. In difficult matters, the director of the plane may request the Head of Department to attend. The Head of school must be

informed off all meetings between parents and staff. If the matter remains unresolved then;

**5.1.1.** Refer to the Head of Department. If the matter remains unresolved then;

**5.1.2.** Refer to the Head of school (who if necessary will communicate either with the SMT or SGB.) If the matter remains unresolved then;

**5.1.3.** The Head of school must take the matter to the SGB.

Any communication to discuss concerns must go through the Head of school prior to be taken to the SGB.

If, in relation to a particular matter, a parent believes that it would be inappropriate to follow the aforesaid channels, the parent must discuss the matter with the Head of school who will then decide on the process to be followed.

## **6. FORMS OF COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:**

### **6.1. Written:**

- All formal letters should be typed/written on the school letterhead and follow formal letter writing procedure.
- All letters or notes to parents which contain matters of a sensitive, confidential or potentially contentious nature should be proofread by at least one senior academic member of staff before the note is sent home. It must be sent to the Head of school for final approval.
- A copy needs to be made and put in that student's file of such letters or notes sent home to that student's parents
  - All written communication should be professional, courteous, and contain contact information allowing the parent to respond to the staff member.
  - If the letter/note is hand written, make sure that it is legible. If it is typed, make sure that it meets the school standard for font (Calibri) and font size (11).

### **6.2 Electronic:**

- Copies of any correspondence via electronic form should be printed and filed.
- Ensure that all text/graphics are large enough to be seen or read.
- Be sure to run spell/grammar check on any electronic communications.
- Emails and text messages are to follow the same professional style as used in a formal letter.

### **6.3 Phone**

- Be polite and courteous.
- Before you make the call, write down everything you need to communicate. Be organised with your thoughts.
- Keep a phone log. Record the date, time, and reason for calling.
- If you leave a voice mail; identify who you are, what you are calling about, and leave information for them to return your phone call.

### **6.4 One to One meeting with parents:**

- Create a comfortable atmosphere. If possible, don't place a desk between yourself and the parents.
- Be prepared. Have your agenda ready. Have materials available that reflect the point of discussion.
- Always start the meeting out with something positive.
- Be attentive, listen carefully and make notes of the parent's concerns and comments.

- Never talk about other students or teachers.
- End the meeting with something positive.
- If the situation becomes difficult, call the office for assistance immediately.
- Keep a meeting journal. Record the date, time, reason, and key points discussed.

## 7. **ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION**

### 7.1. **Communications between the Head of school and staff members**

- Much communication will occur through email and as such it is essential that all staff respond to all work emails within forty-eight hours (due to current infrastructure limitations) unless physical circumstances don't permit.
- Weekly departmental and senior management meetings will be held to go over relevant information and discuss events happening within Newberry House Montessori School. These meetings are mandatory.
- One-on-one meetings with every staff member will be scheduled during each term. These are used as an opportunity to see how each staff member is doing, identify needs, and to listen to ideas.
- Should there be a need for an additional meeting, the office manager will set one up at the request of staff or the head of school.

### 7.2 **Absenteeism/Sick Leave/Emergency Leave**

- Staff who know they are going to be absent, timeous prior written permission is required from the Head of school. The Head of Department and the office manager must be notified as soon as possible.
- If an emergency happens after school hours, please call the Head of school as soon as possible, but not less than one hour prior to the start of school. If the Head of school is unavailable, please inform the Head of department. Leave a communication via text message with the Head of school.
- A leave request form must be completed if you know you are going to be absent. Please note that unpaid leave must be applied for and authorised by the Head of school at least five days prior to the requested leave. If it is an emergency situation the Head of school must be informed as soon as possible and a leave request form must be completed on return to school.
- A doctor's certificate must be submitted for sick leave for two days or more, or on any Monday or Friday.
- All teachers taking leave during term time, need to put a substitute packet together. The information must be sent to the Head of Department in either electronic or paper form and should include (but is not limited to):
  - Lesson planning for the days off
  - Reference to materials to be used as part of the lesson plan
  - Class schedule/s (if necessary)
  - Safety procedures and plans (in the event of an outing)
  - Required documentation in the event of an outing
  - Miscellaneous information which may assist the substitute teacher

## 8. **ACCEPTABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS:**

Newberry House Montessori School expects all parents and staff to communicate with each other with dignity and respect. All legitimate and fair concerns need to be addressed between parents and teachers in the following manner and must meet the requirements of communication as stated above:

1. Telephonically via the School office;
2. A pre-arranged meeting at the School.

- Where confidential or sensitive information is communicated it must be sent to the recipient in a sealed envelope.
- Interview requests via the communication book or homework diary must be cordial and respectful without divulging information that could be harmful.
- Telephonic contact via the School office is acceptable provided that parents understand that teachers cannot return calls immediately. Calls will be returned as soon as possible.
- Sensitive issues should never be discussed with the staff unless they are in the line of command.
- Interviews will be arranged at times that suit both parties. Where either party is unable to attend the interview the other party needs to be notified timeously. Should the interview be missed an appropriate apology to the other party must be offered.

All communications must be recorded and referred to the Head of school.

#### **9. UNACCEPTABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS:**

- Communication which is demeaning and derogatory in nature.
- Notes on scrap paper will not be accepted nor responded to.
- Interviews will not be conducted in the classroom without a prior appointment.
- Sending sensitive messages in the communication book, homework diary or anywhere else where children are able to view the information is unacceptable.
- Whilst cell phones facilitate better communication between people they do invade privacy. Cell phones (whether via a text message or a call) should be used with discretion and for urgent issues only and should not be used during lessons.
- A parent should never contact a teacher on his/her cell phone or home telephone unless expressly invited to do so by a teacher in a specific instance.

#### **10. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every two years with input from the senior management team, parents association and student representatives.