



ST ANDREW'S PREPARATORY
SCHOOL

Communication Policy

This is Prep's best practice of communication between staff internally, between staff and parents, staff and children and staff and the general public.

Please note that we are moving toward a paper-free environment and our communication will eventually all be electronic.

THE AIM OF THIS POLICY

For Prep to be a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our children, with their parents and with members of the wider Prep community. We must ensure that communications between all members of the Prep community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

All communication at Prep should:

- Keep staff, children, 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 methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Be compatible with our core values of integrity, humility, care, respect and compassion.

HOW WILL THIS POLICY BE MONITORED AND EVALUATED?

This policy will be monitored through on-going evaluation. The Headmaster will use a variety of methods to evaluate this policy with staff, parents and children.

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For Prep's Parents

1. The entire Prep community (all Prep academic staff, administrative staff, grounds and maintenance staff, interns, student house masters, children, parents and sports coaches), whilst wearing the school uniform or not, in or out of business hours, on the school campuses or not, understand that they are representatives of Prep. As such, they ensure that communication between themselves and others is kind, caring, compassionate, respectful and confidential where necessary.
2. Parents understand and embrace the Prep Values.

OUR VISION

We aspire to grow children who love, care, respect and discover; True Blue Preppies, whose actions speak for themselves.

OUR VALUE STATEMENT

To live Christian lives according to the values of integrity, humility and compassion in service to our children, families, community and country.

3. Parents understand that Prep teachers:
 - accept as their primary professional responsibility the guidance of Preppies in the pursuit of learning, and in the development of their full personal potential
 - are loyal to the school, obey all lawful instructions and regulations and conduct all school business through the correct channels
 - do their best to maintain friendly co-operation with the parents of the children in their care
 - do everything possible to uphold the children's confidence in their own homes and school
 - keep the parents of their children adequately informed of the well-being and progress of their children
 - accept their responsibilities as members of a profession that leads the community in the value of education and a values-based education
 - contribute to the dignity and public image of the teaching profession by their professional and personal conduct
 - value the opinions and feelings of the children in the school
4. Respect and speak well of Education as a whole.
5. Understand that Education is an ongoing relationship between the school and its families.
6. Respect and speak well of Prep and our community.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Letters and E-mails

- Staff will respond to parents' letters and emails within 48 hours (two school days).
- Any written complaint must be copied to the relevant HOD and the Headmaster.
- Copies of all correspondence to individual parents, records of meetings and consultant reports (OT, Speech Therapy, Scholastic, Educational Psychological) are stored on the school database.

- Copies of general letters to parents are retained on the school database as part of the correspondence log.
- All e-mail correspondence to parents is stored on the school database.
- Parents should check that their email system trusts the following email address from which official system emails are sent:
 - SAC DSG PREP Communications <7039339@Capita-Intouch.co.uk>

Text Messages

Prep has a contact system which it uses to communicate with parents via text. These messages go to the Parent App which all parents should have on their phones. All staff are able to use the system to communicate with parents.

Telephone calls

Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency. Staff will not answer cell phone calls during lessons.

Written Reports

Twice a year (at the end of the first semester in June and at the end of the academic year in December), we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for development. New boarders receive a "settling-in" report from their Housemaster at the end of the first half term of the year. All school reports are stored on the school database and made available to parents via the Parent App.

PAT Chats

Twice a year we engage parents in PAT Chats about the progress of their children. Children may be required to be at these meetings. Records of these meetings are stored on the school database.

Newsletters

Newsletters are e-mailed out to the entire Prep community usually on a Tuesday.

The Daily Notice

A daily notice with information pertaining to activities on that day is emailed to the community by 9am each day.

Sport Communication

- Information about sports teams appears on Prep's Sports Portal found at sport.saprepsschool.com Team information for weekend games (Friday and Saturday fixtures) appears on the above link by 12:00 on a Wednesday. Team information for all other weekday fixtures appears on the above link by 12:00 the day prior to the fixture.
- The weekly sport fixtures programme is also published in the weekly newsletter every Tuesday.
- Sport cancellation notices are e-mailed and are also sent to parents via the Parent App by 12:00 of the day of a practise or match. Information may also be distributed via the class WhatsApp groups.

School Website

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

AS A PREP PARENT

1. Please ensure that all communication from a parent abides by the Prep values of integrity, humility, care, respect and compassion.

2. Attend Parent's Evenings, PAT Chats and talks held at the school
3. The carpark and dinner parties or parent/class WhatsApp groups are not sources of school information. Rather contact the appropriate staff member, the relevant HOD, the school receptionist, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster if you are unsure about anything school related.
4. Please return documents in time. It sets a good example.
5. Read your children's reports, the weekly newsletters, school diaries, Parent App notifications, the Sports Portal and your emails.
6. Show an interest in your children's academic progress.
7. Insist that your children grapple with issues. Allow them the space to deal with problems themselves. This builds resilience.
8. Respect the role of Prep. Rather than responding immediately to your child's complaints, speak to a teacher, a coach, a housemaster, the relevant HOD, the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster and give yourself time to understand both sides of the story.
9. If there are issues with teachers or coaches, housemasters or other staff, whether personal or academic, they are to be dealt with through the following channels.
 - a. First contact is with the relevant teacher, housemaster or coach
 - b. If that contact does not resolve the issue, the second contact is with the relevant HOD
 - c. Third contact is with the Head
 - d. If contact with the Head does not solve the issue, parents are directed to the Chairman of the Prep Council Sub-committee

USE OF WHATSAPP GROUPS

Modern communication tools are powerful tools which require a great deal of responsibility. The points listed below ensure efficient, polite, kind and effective communication. We ask that all members of the Prep Community support us in this regard.

- The class WhatsApp groups are not official channels of communication but are used for issues that apply to that particular class.
- Class WhatsApp groups are used for school and school-related matters only; not community posts.
- Messages may not be sent on class groups after 7pm or before 6am.
- Issues or questions that apply to a single child only may not be sent on the groups.
- Be sensitive to a teacher's personal time. Only contact teachers after hours in exceptional circumstances.
- Do not respond to all messages posted on the group, especially if it's a 'thumbs-up' or 'smiley face', only if specific information is requested.
- No complaints or grievances may be communicated via the class group. There are clear channels for such communication outlined above.
- Prep bans social media on our network. This does not eliminate the potential for children to create their own WhatsApp groups. These groups offer particular opportunities for cyberbullying. Parents must monitor their children's WhatsApp groups.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

We encourage parents to share their and their children's school experiences on social media in a positive way. In doing so, we encourage parents to support Prep. Please take cognisance of the following:

- Positive and negative posts remain cached forever, even if the post is deleted. Think carefully before posting something online.
- Be careful with language and spelling, the world is watching.
- The POPI act prevents tagging of children on social media. Be careful when tagging friends or other parents when posting. Keep tagging details vague.
- Teachers are discouraged from accepting friend requests from parents or past pupils.
- Prep reserves the right to post images of our children for marketing purposes. Names and addresses will never be tagged. If you would prefer not to have images of your child published on the Prep website or Facebook page, then please send correspondence stipulating such to the school.
- There are clear communication channels for airing grievances, please make use of these rather than social media. Prep can attend to your concerns, the cyber world can't.
- Keep a keen eye on your children's social media presence. Our young ones are not mature enough to deal with cyberbullying.
- In the spirit of Prep's values of integrity, humility, care, respect and compassion, and as per our Unfair Discrimination Policy, any form of inappropriate content, including, but not limited to, racism and hate speech, will not be tolerated.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

We would like to thank all the parents who have made themselves available to be Class or Grade Parent Representatives. Please take note of the following information regarding their function:

- The PA is in place to act as a communication channel between the school and the parents.
- They help with the organisation of specific school functions.
- They meet with representatives of the Senior Management Team twice per term to discuss various school issues.
- They assist with general questions and discussions.
- Child or staff member-specific issues or questions must be addressed through the relevant channels (outlined above).

For Prep's Staff

1. All communication coming from within the school, whomsoever it may be from or to, abides by the Prep values of integrity, humility, care, respect and compassion.
2. All written or email communication is standardised across all platforms with the correct logo, correct colours and a corporate email signature.
3. All written or email communication is of correct grammar and spelling. This is imperative for an institution of learning.
4. All communication from Prep staff must be cognisant of the following important

points:

- a. WHO – who is the communication going to?
 - b. HOW – which platform is used?
 - c. WHY – what is the purpose of the communication?
 - d. WHAT – the message and how we use it to reinforce our Prep values through tone (e.g. if we are teaching manners, we must also say please and thank you).
 - e. WHEN – how much warning are we giving and are we communicating.
5. Erase all assumptions that parents, other staff or children have a pre-understanding of the workings of the school. New staff, new boarder parents, Grade 000, Grade 1 and Grade 4 parents and children need particular attention.
 6. It is the responsibility of every Prep staff member to fully inform themselves on policies, roles, responsibilities and activities at the school.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

Senior Management Team (SMT)

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available and ability to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the correct context.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep all colleagues informed.

INTERNAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

- All staff receive an induction pack providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- A programme of meetings, both formal and informal, facilitates involvement of staff: e.g. the fortnightly staff meeting; the weekly departmental meetings; inter-grade meetings; SMT meetings.
- Minutes of these meetings (where appropriate) are distributed via e-mail or Google Drive. Staff have the responsibility of reading these minutes and reacting to required actions.
- E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffrooms, which staff must check daily and clear regularly.
- The Daily Notice is e-mailed out to staff who must check and respond where

appropriate.

- Prep uses internal WhatsApp groups (Staff Groups, Sports Coaches Groups, House Groups) in addition to the above channels. These groups must adhere to the WhatsApp procedures outlined above.

EXTERNAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and guardians, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and 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 school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner.

We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

PREP STAFF WILL ENDEAVOUR TO:

- Listen
- Remain calm and professional
- Respect the parents and their concerns
- Meet the needs of the child first
- Return calls/messages as soon as possible
- Make themselves available
- Provide professional follow up should it be required
- Keep appointments
- Make parents the first point of contact when serious disciplinary issues or emergencies arise

PREP STAFF WILL NOT:

- Accept verbal abuse
- Discuss children or their parents in public areas
- Accept parent's excuses for the child's responsibility
- Be rude in response to parents
- Ignore messages (if they are received)
- Victimize children
- Ignore genuine concerns
- Tolerate classroom interruptions
- Wait more than 10 minutes from the allocated time for appointments
- Respond to anonymous concerns but will pass them to their HOD's for information purposes only

PLATFORMS AND USE

1. WhatsApp class group for quick reminders, information sharing and urgent messages for that class group only.
2. WhatsApp staff groups for quick reminders, information sharing and urgent messages relating to that group. Messages for individuals are to be directed to that individual's personal WhatsApp account
3. E-mail and the Parent App for official school communication.
 - a. A general class note is sent directly from the teacher through the system. This note remains in the communication log with the details of all recipients.
 - b. A general school note is sent from either the receptionist or the Headmaster's PA through the system. This note remains in the communication log with the details of all recipients.
 - c. An important note from the Headmaster is on an official letterhead through the system. This note remains in the communication log with the details of all recipients.
 - d. Urgent notifications are sent through the Parent App. Records of all communications through the Parent App remain in the communication log.
4. Serious disciplinary issues are dealt with in person, via telephone or Skype with the parent first.
5. Printed official letters for events/camps/surveys/school work that require a signature by return are sent home as hard copy if required, but preferably as editable Word, PDF or Google Docs.
6. The weekly e-news for school events, weekly dates, general and sports news.
7. The School Sports Portal for all sporting information (team lists, dates, venues and results).
8. The Prep website for policies, documents, term dates, applications and general information.

We thank you all for taking note of this communication policy and hope that it assists in defining boundaries and encouraging kindness in all aspects of school life.