St Bernard’s Primary School Berowra Heights

Communications and Social Media Policy

Rationale:

St Bernard’s is a community which is inspired by our Catholic Faith and Values and a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. We endeavour to develop and support positive relationships within the school and parish community and to encourage communication that is constructive, honest and courteous. The Principles of Catholic Social Teachings and the Australian Government’s Privacy Act and Australian Privacy Principles underpin this Policy.

We believe that:

All members of the school community, parents, teachers and students:

- have the right to be treated with respect and dignity
- should be treated in a caring and polite manner
- need to uphold and comply with applicable State and Federal laws including Privacy and Defamation.
- need to uphold and comply with applicable Diocesan Schools System (DSS) and School Policies
- should recognise that social media forums¹ are not private domains and as such consideration of other people’s privacy is paramount.

Aims:

- To provide a proactive and positive approach to all types of communication within the school community.
- To provide guidelines for the use of social media within the school context, so that it can play a valuable role in building school spirit, as well as supporting and informing the school community.
- To encourage all members of the school community to act in a constructive, polite and respectful manner.
- To ensure that the conversations within the community and in social media forums remain positive and constructive.
- To ensure that any concerns, challenges or feedback are directed to the school rather than posted to social media.
- To prevent the posting of malicious, misleading and incorrect content.

¹ Social media forums include online social sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Kik, Snapchat etc.
In practice:

- All communications within the school community, online, in writing or in person, should be positive and constructive, respecting the values of the school.
- All members of the St Bernard's School Community are encouraged to be positive and proactive in their interactions with other members of the community.
- Social media forums are not private and all postings to such should be made with an expectation that the post is public, may be broadly accessed, read and passed on.
- There are state and federal laws and school policies that we must comply with.
- While parents are allowed to take photos of their children at school events, the publishing of images of other people’s children on social media without the consent of parents is not permitted.
- Reproducing school documents (copying, scanning or photographing) is not permitted on social media forums without the approval of the School Principal.
- The school should be the first point of reference for all Parental concerns or questions (not social media) and therefore parents are expected to work collaboratively with the school to resolve any issues and to follow the ‘Communication Flowchart for Parents’.
- Parents, students and teachers should not intentionally cause alarm or concern to others, nor participate in threatening behaviour or harassment.
- Using the school name, school logo, a staff member’s name, a parent’s or student’s name on a social media forum without authorisation, may be in breach of privacy, defamation and/or copyright laws.

Other Policies to be considered:

- DSS Privacy Policy
- The DSS Sustaining Strong Catholic School Communities Policy
- DSS Social Media Policy
- DSS Enrolment Policy

To be reviewed in 2017
Communication Flow Chart for Parents

Rationale:

Effective communication between parents and teachers is vital to the development of a positive relationship, which is so important for the education of the children in our care.

At St Bernard’s we are committed to developing an educational and organisational culture based on mutual trust and respect. The dignity of each individual is valued and the rights and beliefs of all members of the community are respected. We acknowledge that parents may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable.

Complaints or concerns pertaining to classroom issues or that relate to other children are to be dealt with by school personnel.

*It is not appropriate for parents to approach other parents or their children with the intention of resolving the issues.*

The recommended procedures for parents with a concern or complaint are:

- The first point of contact is the classroom teacher.
- Contact the school office to make an appointment to speak to your child’s teacher.
- Parents are reminded that there is more than one side to a story and whilst it is important to maintain open communication with your children, it is also important not to jump to conclusions or make accusations.

If parents are not satisfied with the solutions offered or believe that they have not been given a fair hearing, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to discuss the issues further.

If parents are not satisfied with the response from the school, they can contact the North Shore Schools Consultant at the Catholic Schools Office on 9847 0000

The recommended procedures for parents with recommendations for the school community are:

- Recommendations for the support of the school and the school community such as fundraising, social or pastoral items
- Recommendations for the core business of the school such as educational issues.

- Contact a member of the P & F Executive and suggest an agenda item for the next P & F meeting. These meetings are held each term. If you are not familiar with the P & F Executive, please contact the school office and your community recommendation will be forwarded to the P & F President.
- Contact a member of the School Advisory Team (SAT) If you are not familiar with the parent representatives on the SAT, please contact the school office and your community recommendation will be forwarded to the chairperson.