

Communication policy

Purpose

The policy will provide guidelines for the provision of effective formal and informal communication between parents/guardians, committee, volunteers and staff at Boroondara Preschool.

Policy statement

1. Values

Boroondara Preschool is committed to:

- Promoting a friendly, collaborative and cooperative relationship between committee, parents/guardians and staff
- Listening and respecting parents'/guardians' ideas, opinions and suggestions
- Providing opportunities for parents/guardians to share information both formally and informally with staff and committee
- Nurturing a spirit of respect and cooperation between parents/guardians, staff and the committee
- Providing an environment that is sensitive to the cultural and social values of families and the community.

2. Scope

The policy applies to parents/guardians, staff, volunteers, committee and any other persons participating in the programs at Boroondara Preschool.

3. Background and legislation

Parents/guardians are key contributors to their child's development, and research has shown that parent involvement in the early childhood program leads to greater outcomes for children.

Centres in receipt of kindergarten funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are required to ensure that:

'A range of communication strategies are in place to enable and encourage parent participation in kindergarten activities, including input into kindergarten policy, decision-making, quality assessment processes, and user satisfaction surveys. Parent/guardian participation in the planning and operation of the centre, and in addressing issues relating to children's care and development.'

*Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria update,
Department of Education and Early Childhood Education*

Legislation may include but is not limited to:

- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2009*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic.)*

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- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cwlth)*
 - *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic.)*

4. Definitions

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD): The state government department responsible for the funding, licensing and regulation of children's services in Victoria.

Effective Communication: A reciprocal sharing of information and ideas of written, oral and non-verbal information according to a common set of rules.

Proprietor: This includes the owner of the centre, the primary nominee and any person who manages or controls the centre.

Qualified staff member: A staff member who is a teaching staff member (minimum early childhood teaching degree or equivalent approved by the secretary of the department), or an approved two-year full-time or part-time equivalent post-secondary early childhood qualification or equivalent.

5. Sources and related centre policies

Sources

- *DEECD, Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics
- Victorian Legal Aid and DHS 1999, *Legal Aspects of Child Care*

Centre policies

- Code of conduct
- Complaints and grievances
- Enrolment
- Inclusion and equity
- Privacy
- Program participation

Procedures

The committee is responsible for:

- Ensuring a noticeboard is provided in the main entrance of the centre
- Displaying information required by the CSR r40
- Providing information to parents/guardians as required by the CSR r41,43 and 44
- Providing a regular newsletter, in consultation with the staff, to inform parents/guardians of centre events, changes to policies, information on the children's program, etc
- Ensuring the centre handbook is reviewed annually and copies are available for new families
- Providing access to interpreters, translated materials and other resources as needed

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- Ensuring that parents/guardians are aware of the procedures for raising ideas, comments and complaints (refer to Complaints and grievances policy) with the committee of management, such as a suggestion box beside the attendance book and contact details for adding items to the committee meeting agenda
 - Displaying the minutes or summaries of committee meetings on the notice board for members to read, ensuring compliance with the centre's Privacy policy
 - Involving parents/guardians in policy reviews and in developing new policies
 - Updating resources for the parents'/guardians' library and communicating to parents/guardians of the opportunity to borrow from the library
 - Ensuring parents/guardians are informed of students participating in the program via a notice on the main noticeboard, detailing the nature of the placement and a photograph of the student
 - Ensuring parents/guardians are informed of relief/emergency staff when employed by the centre via a notice on the main noticeboard
 - Ensuring the details of the nominated contact person/s on the committee are available to parents/guardians
 - Providing opportunities for staff to meet formally and informally, such as at staff meetings and social events
 - Ensuring opportunities are provided for communication between parents/guardians, staff and committee; for example, informal discussions, surveys, noticeboard displays, social events and newsletters or formal interviews.

The staff are responsible for:

- Using a variety of forms of communication, including verbal, written and electronic media to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts
- Communicating in ways that acknowledge racial, cultural, linguistic and economic diversity
- Communicating with children (and parents/guardians) whose hearing and/or sight is impaired in ways that include them into the 'mainstream' of the centre's life
- Communicating in ways that support children's learning
- Ensuring their communication and program practices acknowledge and respect the cultural heritage of the families in their centre
- Ensuring there is respectful, effective and efficient communication within the staff team, committee and the parent/guardians attending the centre
- Contributing to newsletters in consultation with the committee and using a range of communication methods with parents/guardians; for example, noticeboards, formal meetings, informal daily contacts and communication books
- Providing access for parents/guardians to the centre at any time their child is attending a program
- Ensuring communication with parents/guardians is sensitive to the cultural and social requirements of individual families, lifestyles and child-rearing practices
- Providing access to interpreters, translated materials and other resources as needed
- Informing and consulting with parents/guardians about how the educational program is developed and the philosophy on which it is based

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- Offering a variety of opportunities for parents/guardians to participate directly in the children's program, including spending time with children, assisting with activities, excursions and special events, and volunteering special skills to share with the children
 - Inviting parents/guardians to contribute suggestions for the children's program through discussions with the staff and/or the committee
 - Providing the parents/guardians with opportunities to share information about their child, either informally before or after the program or by appointment during the staff member's non-contact time with the children, and encouraging parents/guardians to take up these opportunities
 - Developing and implementing strategies that will create a two-way process of knowledge and information sharing and contribute to a partnership approach with parents/guardians
 - Maintaining individual developmental records of each child and providing opportunities for parents/guardians to discuss these records with them (qualified staff responsibility)
 - Providing information regarding the educational program through noticeboard displays and regular newsletters, considering relevant languages and the cultural diversity of families
 - Attending and participating in regular staff and committee meetings as required.

The parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Informing staff of the child's arrival at the centre
- Participating (if able) in the program, such as spending time at the centre and assisting with activities, excursions and special events
- Offering suggestions to the staff on areas of interest to the child
- Communicating with staff about special events in the child's life; for example, the arrival of a new baby, grandparents visiting from overseas and moving house
- Communicating to staff on the wellbeing of the child
- Collecting information from the family's pigeon hole or pocket on a regular basis and reading the information provided
- Providing feedback to the committee by completing surveys and being involved in policy reviews, quality assessment and subcommittees.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the committee will:

- Use a quality assessment tool, such as the Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents'/guardians' survey
- Consult with staff and parents/guardians regarding the policy, and invite feedback regarding current procedures and suggestions for improvement.

Attachments

Nil

Authorisation

This policy was approved by the Boroondara Preshool committee of management at a committee meeting on 25th October 2010.

Review date: 25 / 10 / 2012