

Holy Spirit Bray Park

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Vision Statement

Holy Spirit School, through its Christian values and Catholic tradition, provides a happy, caring, safe and supportive community in which children will grow to recognise and achieve their full potential.

Rationale

*“Catholic Schools commit to nurturing active partnerships with families and providing parents and caregivers with opportunities to participate in the life of the school community. The student’s learning journey is enriched through positive and reciprocal relationships”.
(Family/ School Partnership Policy. Catholic Education Council July 2012).*

Holy Spirit takes seriously the right and responsibility of parents to be involved in and contribute to the educational experiences of their children. The relationship between parents and school works best when characterised by mutual respect and acknowledgement of the value that each brings to the partnership. When responsibility for children’s learning is shared by the school, home and community, children have more opportunities for meaningful, engaged learning. *“Students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school and community work together and play collaborative, complementary and supportive roles to support learning and development.”* (Epstein & Sheldon 2006, Emerson et al., 2012)

Holy Spirit School aims to complement and build on the work of the family in developing confident, accomplished and intelligent students who demonstrate these characteristics:

- A positive self-esteem and world-view;
- Motivation to learn;
- A positive disposition towards school;
- High levels of achievement.

Parental Engagement

These characteristics are more evident in students when their parents are actively engaged in their learning. There are, in fact, many ways which parents can legitimately and effectively help their child become a successful learner. Parent involvement is important in that it refers to parent participation in formal and informal activities at the school, while parental engagement refers to the broader role that parents play in supporting their children’s learning. Involvement in school activities is beneficial in many ways, especially in facilitating relationships between parents and teachers. Appropriate parental engagement, with parents partnering with the school, has a significant and long-lasting impact on children’s learning outcomes.

Parental engagement is most effective when it is focused on developing positive attitudes towards learning and education for children, building their motivation and self-confidence as learners and fostering their enjoyment of learning. The partnership between family and school should encourage positive parent-teacher relationships, open communication, engagement in the school community and supporting the child's learning and well-being.

Guidelines

Agreed and Appropriate Expectations

As with any organisation, there are protocols and expectations which govern the nature of the relationships of all those involved in the school organisation. Parents can expect school staff to work in a highly professional manner demonstrating respect for the parent's right to be involved in and contribute to the educational experiences of their child. The school can expect that parents will afford staff a high level of professional respect and support as they implement individual, class and whole school processes supporting children's learning and development.

Staff Expectations

All staff members are expected to work in a highly professional manner by:

- Extending courtesy to parents at all times;
- Building a relationship of trust and respect with parents;
- Communicating with parents in a timely manner about matters of importance;
- Providing feedback in a timely manner to students about their work and learning progress;
- Providing high quality teaching to all students;
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to all students

Parent Expectations

All parents are expected to model appropriate standards of conduct in regards to the school by:

- Displaying courtesy and respect to staff, students and other parents;
- Supporting the school's attempts to improve the child's learning and development;
- Respecting the privacy of student's work in classrooms and maintaining the confidentiality of anything of a personal nature;
- Referring matters relating to the conduct of another parent, visitor, member of staff or student to the Principal for possible action;
- Following the agreed **school grievance procedures** to quickly and appropriately resolve matters of concern or dispute;
- Respecting the integrity of the community by refraining from making derogatory or offensive comments or statements about the school or any individual connected with the school in any public forum including social media.

Procedures

“At Home” Parenting

While many parents strive to be involved in *school-based activities*, the opportunities to do so do not always balance with many other demands of working parents. Parents should not underestimate the powerful influence of “at home” parenting behaviours on their child’s educational outcomes. Parents are highly influential when they:

- Have high expectations for their children’s conduct and courtesy, punctuality, sense of responsibility and involvement in family activities;
- Believe in their child’s potential;
- Show interest in their children’s learning and development by helping them relate what they are learning in school, being supportive of the work of teachers and modelling the behaviours of successful learners;
- Talk to children about things that interest them and provide opportunities for children to extend their engagement in these areas.
- Discuss their children’s educational aspirations and encourage children to set goals for their progress.

Parental Involvement

Because of the recognition of parents’ role in education and the benefit which accrues from consistency between home and school values, appropriate involvement of parents in school life is highly desirable. Numerous opportunities throughout the year will be offered, both on a formal and informal level, for parents and teachers to collaborate. The most important priority is maintaining a positive relationship with your child which encourages and provides opportunity for open and regular communication. Parents add a unique perspective to decisions affecting the current priorities and future direction of the school. The following are some occasions when such participation will be sought.

- When the need arises, parent groups may put inserts in the weekly Newsletter.
- Parents are asked to become involved in the various aspects of religious education (e.g. Parish sacramental preparation) and are always welcome to join the school community in liturgical celebrations.
- Parent Forums will be held each term to discuss and reflect on aspects and areas relating to the development the school. Parents will be surveyed to clarify their point of view and the issues will be prioritized for further consideration during the Forum. The relevant bodies – P&F, School Board, School Administration or Staff will be tasked with the development of the identified areas.
- The Parents’ and Friends’ Association hold their meeting on regular occasions throughout the year. All are welcome to attend.
- The School Board meets each term to support the Principal on issues such as finance, policy and school development.

- Regular surveys of parents regarding particular issues relating to the school while be sent home each term. This is an excellent way for parents to express their opinions about school matters.
- Working Bees are usually held once per term. This is an opportunity for parents to meet and help keep the school environment looking good.
- Throughout the year, we have regular assemblies and celebration days. Parents are always welcome to join us. Notice of such events is communicated through the weekly newsletter.
- The education of children is a partnership. Therefore, it is important for parents to be involved in the formal reporting on the aesthetic, spiritual, social, physical and academic attainment of students at an individual parent/teacher meeting.
- Parents are invited to assist in the classroom as a volunteer helper with areas such as reading.
- Parental assistance is highly valued in the Resource Centre, the Tuckshop and from time to time in other ways around the school.
- Learning Support programs, such as Support-A-Reader, also provide parents with opportunities to be involved in the life of the school.

Since 2007, it is a State Government requirement that all parent volunteers read and sign a series of brief documents about how volunteers are expected to conduct themselves. This Volunteer Package is available from the school office. Parents are only required to attend to this documentation once in their association with Holy Spirit School.

Communication

The school endeavours to keep parents informed with matters of importance affecting their child's learning achievement and progress as well as other matters relating to school life. The frequency and mode of the communication will vary from teacher to teacher but will comprise both formal and informal contact. Formal contact includes parent-teacher information sessions and parent-teacher interviews. On occasions, formal meetings are requested by teachers and/or parents for specific purposes. On these occasions it is expected that an appointment be made to meet at a mutually convenient time.

Occasionally, circumstances dictate an immediate meeting. However, as a general rule, meetings will not be scheduled during class time. It is expected that all meetings occur in a courteous and respectful manner. Raised voices, inappropriate language and disrespect are not tolerated and meetings will be immediately terminated and arrangements made to ensure future meetings occur within the expected standards of conduct.

- Parent Information Nights/Parent Meetings

In the early part of the year, parents are invited to meet with teachers. This meeting provides an opportunity for teachers to inform parents/guardians of the work students will cover during the year, and equally as important, it is an opportunity to share expectations, hopes and dreams for students. During the year there are opportunities for parents and teachers to meet to discuss the progress of individual children. Every parent is encouraged to participate in this important process. The school also often provides Parent Information Nights regarding issues relating to curriculum, behaviour, student development etc.

- School Newsletter - "*Spirit News*"

The school Newsletter is a vital part of our communication network. It is emailed each Wednesday and it can be sent to more than one email addresses. The newsletter is also available on the school website – www.holyspiritbraypark.qld.edu.au Current and past copies of the school Newsletter are always able to be accessed on the school website. Parents and school organisations may contribute articles if they are considered suitable and appropriate for the purposes of our school newsletter.

- Website

The School Website presents and represents our school to the world. It highlights our Mission and Vision and details how we operate as a quality Catholic school. It is meant to showcase our school and how we endeavour to meet the needs of our students in a caring school community. It will detail the major policies, structures and learning areas of our school and offer opportunities for parents to access important information such as Calendars and Upcoming Events.

- **Class Parent**

Many classes have a class parent who assists the development of a class community by supporting the communication between the class and the home. A Facebook page or email is often used to ensure good communication about class matters or activities. These parents provide a positive and supportive role in developing effective communication and good relationships.

- **Parent Portal**

The Parent Portal is the main communication tool between school and home. The Parent Portal is situated on the School Website and is intended as the main source of information and communication between the school and home. The Parent Portal contains such items as Class News, Forms, Announcements and Calendars and includes much of the information about the school required by Parents.

- **BCE Connect**

BCE Connect, is a mobile app for all our BCE Schools and is a great way to participate in our community. It works on both Apple and Android devices. The app gives parents, extended family, friends and the public easy access to school information, making it easier to keep track and stay in touch. It works with Google maps for location and directions, and gives instant access to phone numbers, emails and school calendars. The app can be used to get updates from parents, as well as many other time saving tools including submitting an absence.

- **Social Media**

The School appreciates the valuable role that social media can have in supporting communication in our school community. With appropriate, agreed guidelines and clear expectations, parents may communicate with each other using established social media. The "Holy Spirit School Community Facebook Page" is a Facebook page whose purpose is to provide communication and information to other Holy Spirit parents. Similarly, our Class Parent Facebook pages, for those classes who operate them, are used to communicate class information to the other parents in the class. Parents who join these pages are required to use them in a positive and supportive way while always being aware of confidentiality and defamation issues.

Staff are required to be cautious in their use of Social Media with parents as appropriate communication expectations may be compromised. Staff are not to engage with students on Social Media unless it is a school-approved platform.

- **SMS**

SMS is used in particular circumstances to communicate with parents. We use SMS to contact homes regarding absences, to contact parents regarding issues such as storms, late buses or emergencies. It is sometimes used to remind parents regarding meetings and appointments.

- **Email**

Email is often used for communication between school and home and it can be a positive and efficient medium. Messages are often communicated from school via email. It is important that the school has all current email addresses to ensure this process operates effectively. Teachers often give their email addresses to parents to support effective communication. The school, either Staff or School Leadership, will attempt to reply to emails from parents in a prompt and efficient manner.

When this is the case, it is important that proper protocols and appropriate manners and language are used. Sending or expecting return emails late at night is not considered appropriate. Sending multiple emails in a day and expecting replies during the school day, when the teacher and students are working, is also not acceptable. Courteous and appropriate communication between all parties is expected at all times.

Organisations

- Parents and Friends Association

The Parents and Friends Association and the School Board are the two most prominent formal groups for parental involvement in decision-making processes. The primary purpose of the Parents and Friends Association is to support the Principal and staff in the provision of high quality educational programs, resources and facilities as well as promoting a positive school community. It is a forum for parents to meet to discuss appropriate matters of school business which may include:

- The sharing of information concerning certain events/initiatives/projects happening in the school including fundraising;
- Education regarding matters of interest and concern to parents;
- Promoting a positive school community through gatherings and celebrations

- School Board

The School Board comprises members of the parent community who serve for three years. The primary purpose of the Board is to develop Policy and provide advice to the Principal in the areas of:

- Buildings and facilities
- Finance
- Policy
- Staffing (advisory role only).

The School Board operates on a shared wisdom model. Members of the Board, while drawing on their roles, interest, expertise and experience, do not act as nominees of representatives of any other group or association. They commit to working for the common good of Catholic Education within the Board's areas of responsibility. The Board members seek to exercise a discernment model of decision making and achieve consensus where possible.

- Parent Forums

Parent Forums will be held each term throughout the school year. These forums will be opportunities for the school to update parents on matters of importance including School Goals, initiatives and educational programs. Parents will be able to offer suggestions for discussion through surveys, identified issues and provide feedback as part of the ongoing development of the school. Parents will also be able to provide suggestions for improvement through Parent feedback pages distributed at the Parent/Teacher Meetings early in the year. These help inform the development of School Goals for the year. Parental input to surveys and forums is a key component of parental engagement in our school.

Procedure for Expressing a Concern or Grievance

Step 1:

All issues of concern are to be addressed firstly with the relevant teacher. Contact can be made with the teacher via the school office or through a written note outlining the concern. The parents/guardians make a mutually agreeable time to meet with the teacher. Issues are raised and discussed with the facts and context of the issue established. The aim of the process is to begin with clarification and resolution for all parties in mind.

Step 2:

At the meeting (Step 1), a follow-up appointment may be considered necessary and this date/time is set at the first meeting. At the second meeting, the issues raised are discussed in more detail with the teacher and parent/guardians.

Step 3:

If, at the meeting (Step 2), the issue was not resolved to the satisfaction of either party, then the Principal or member of the Leadership Team or other relevant personnel (e.g. Guidance Counsellor) will be invited to attend the follow-up meeting and the agreed action will be kept on file. The Principal or member of the Leadership Team may also be contacted to arrange a meeting if the issue has not been able to be appropriately resolved.

Step 4:

It is the strong preference of the school for issue resolution to be effected at school level. However, in the event that an issue remains unresolved after consultation with the school Principal/Leadership Team, at the request of either party, the matter can be referred in writing to the Brisbane Catholic Education Area Supervisor for assistance.

It is important that confidentiality is maintained at all times to ensure the dignity of each person is preserved.