



Changes to School Communications

Friday, February 21, 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

As a parent/carer, you are an important part of our school community. We know that you play a crucial role in helping your child become a motivated learner. Communication between our school and our community is critical for us to partner together.

To give our teachers the opportunity to deliver high quality lessons and give their students their undivided attention, as well as, recharge, spend time with their families and bring their best creative selves to work, in 2024 we set clear expectations for when and how teachers respond to communication inside and outside school operating hours. This means teachers may not immediately reply to non-emergency messages or emails throughout the day or outside of school operating hours.

Staff wellbeing is one of our highest priorities in the Department of Education's [Our Plan for NSW Public Education](#). It's important to acknowledge that recent years have been challenging for our staff in all schools, and the personal impact should not be taken for granted. One way we're working to head off burnout is by setting clear expectations for digital communication outside of school operating hours. This change has been encouraged by, and led by, the Secretary of Education since early 2024.

Supporting employees to maintain a healthy balance between professional engagement and personal renewal is essential for long-term career satisfaction, continued creativity, effectiveness, and ongoing health of individuals and the profession. It is essential to attracting and retaining teachers to the profession. Empowering and facilitating employees to disconnect from digital technologies in rest periods is important to help maintain health and wellbeing and protect against burnout and other psychosocial hazards of always being connected to work. The blurring of lines between work and home has been exacerbated by the use of email, mobile devices, social media and various computer applications (apps), which can create more convenience but can also cause significant intrusion into what was previously personal time.

Teaching is a unique profession that involves work inside and outside of school. This has always been the case. However, the digital technologies that were key to our success during lock downs, and continue to provide amazing learning opportunities, have made it harder to establish boundaries. This is why, our communication channels have now been streamlined.

This will allow our teachers to focus on their core business of teaching and supporting each of their students during class time, and planning for high impact lessons and programs outside of class time.



Further to this, much needed time will then be able to be spent on rest and family time. Please also be considerate of our staff, their wellbeing and personal time when you see them in the community. Public locations, such as shopping centres and the beach, are not suitable places to discuss school matters. Our staff need a break too, and are not equipped to take notes and complete the effective follow up we aim for, should these discussions occur outside of school hours.

Parents/caregivers are not able to directly message their child's classroom teacher at all times throughout the day and night.

We understand that the families and carers of students also face similar challenges in managing work, caring responsibilities, and engaging with their children's education. The Department recognises that communicating and engaging with parents is critical to effective partnerships and that this necessitates clear parameters in the current world we live and work in. Parents and carers often have no alternative but to contact the school outside of school operating hours. **Parents and carers wanting to contact the school outside of school hours are to do so by emailing the school email address: merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au will be responded to as soon as practicable.**

During school hours, parents/carers are welcome to call the front office or email the school's email address for non-emergencies in the first instance. Our staff will respond to your queries within two to five school days, under normal circumstances. Instant responses are not practicable and should not be expected. Please be advised that teachers only have a two-hour session of Release from Face to Face (RFF) teaching per week, which is used for planning, resource development, assessment and work marking, data collection/analysis, report writing and collaboration, as well as, replying to any messages they receive. As you can imagine, our teachers' workloads are high, so please be patient while they respond at their earliest available time. This is to be expected for communications with staff at all levels.

For longer discussions or complex matters, we ask that parents and carers email or phone the school to make an appointment to speak to teachers/staff directly, at a time that works best for everyone. Therefore, while our staff will call you within two to five days, under normal circumstances, they have limited time. Phone call durations are likely to be limited to 5 or 10 minutes maximum. Additional conversation time or follow up, or longer meetings, will need to be booked in advance, at a mutually convenient time during school hours. Teacher working hours are 8.25am to 3.25pm, weekdays; with our support and administration staff working from 8.25am to 3.15pm (these administration times are also the times our phone is operational).



Merimbula Public School



Other ways in which parents/caregivers can find key information about our school and events is by reading our school Newsletter. Our Newsletter is located on our website and will still be emailed to parents/caregivers, and be sent as an alert, via Compass. All communication flyers, event information and event permissions will continue to be sent to parents/caregivers via Compass.

Our website can also be accessed should you need information regarding our school, programs, policies and important dates. Our Compass calendar also includes information about events and the dates for special activities. Our school has reduced the amount of posts we put on Facebook, using Facebook to share pictures and success snapshots, and other Department post information, so that we can support our busy families by locating important information, school-based information and changes in our Compass Parent/Carer Portal. At times, such as during holiday periods and at the start Term 1, Facebook is used more so that new families can also access news.

For emergencies, please contact (02) 6495 1266. Emergencies include serious student health, safety and wellbeing issues. Information about changes in pick up/school travel routines should also be communicated via phone to our Administration Team. This year we have again increased the number of administrative support staff in our school to assist with such important communications.

Our staff will always stay in touch, because open communication is what's best for your child and their education. We don't want you to stop communicating with your teachers – we still want to hear from you if you have any questions or need to discuss a matter about your child. Many of your questions, however, and communicated needs about your child can be addressed by our administration team. This will support our dedicated teachers in doing what they do best – teaching and supporting your children.

We know it's often easier to send emails or messages after work. We will make sure we read your messages and respond in school operating hours, as soon as practicable.

Our dedicated teachers want to help our students, your children, achieve their best – we're on the same team.

Thank you for treating our staff with kindness and respect.

Kind regards,

Mrs Michelle Huddleston

Principal

Phone: 02 6495 1266

Email: merimbula-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au