

La Côte International School

Policy for Communication between School and Parents

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Introduction

At the La Côte International School, we recognise:

- the importance of the roles played by both school staff and the family in the education of each child;
- and that the relationship between school and home should be constructive in order to encourage effective teaching and learning.

Consequently, it is the school's aim to encourage positive and open two-way communication between parents and school staff.

Mechanisms facilitating communication between school and home:

Parents, the Head Teacher and staff are together responsible for good communication.

At the LCIS, a range of mechanisms are employed to provide information for parents. Each method has a specific focus, relating to different types of information and inviting different levels of participation.

- E-mail: Letters and information from the school administration and teachers are usually sent home via e-mail on a regular basis. Parents have the facility of communicating with the Director, Head Teacher or a member of staff via e-mail. In this instance, the school's own e-mail address is used.
- LCIS website: containing updated information about LCIS.
- Newsletters: twice termly.
- LCIS Parents' Handbook: contains all the necessary practical information for new parents in addition to details about the school's aims and objectives and an overview of the class curricular.
- Orientation Day: parents of all new and existing pupils are invited to meet with the school's directors, Head Teacher and staff at the beginning of the academic year. Parents have an opportunity to talk with the Class Teachers and the French teacher.

- Individual book bags, Reading Record Books and Homework Diaries allow an ongoing, daily communication between school and home.
- Communication between the French Department and home: generally the French teacher may contact parents directly by telephone, whilst parents are welcome to approach the French teacher at the end of the day.
- Reports: parents receive a written report from their child's English and French teachers, at the end of the Autumn and Summer Term.
- Parents' Meetings:
 - a) Scheduled Parent-Teacher Meetings

Meetings generally take place between the child's individual class teacher(s) and the parents. The child does not attend.

The focus of the individual interview between teachers and parents is on the school's view of the child and frequently deals with the child's work, attitudes, progress and behaviour. It is used as an opportunity for teachers to celebrate successes and to raise problematic issues relating to the child with the parents. Parents can also inform teachers about their own perceptions of their children.

The principle Parents' Evenings with the English Department are held twice a year. The first meeting takes place before the October half-term break and the second meeting is organised towards the end of the Summer Term. There is also an optional Parents' Evening, scheduled before the February half-term, which is reserved for specific communication requests, initiated by either the school or parents. There are separate Parents' Evenings run by the French teacher.

Parents receive scheduled appointment times and teachers make every endeavour to respect these time slots. On the occasion when a meeting may be in danger of overrunning considerably, a subsequent meeting may be scheduled. There is some flexibility with arranging appointment times and when an evening slot is not practical, a pre- or post-school time may be arranged.

b) Additional Teacher-Parent Meetings

Interviews between teachers and parents may be requested at any time during the term. The motive for such a meeting may vary and may be initiated by school or by home.

LCIS operates an 'open-door' policy in that teachers can be available for an informal chat during times that do not impinge on the school day and in its preparation. Teachers are generally available between 8.00 am and 8.30 a.m. and straight after school at 3.30 pm should parents wish to communicate a quick point or comment.

Potential Breakdown in Communication

Inevitably there may be situations which cause a potential breakdown in positive communications between home and school. Dealing with conflict and disagreement effectively can create positive outcomes.

Dealing with Conflicts and Disagreements

- Parents and school staff members should work closely together to address the issues.
- It is essential for both parties to realize that the goals for the child are 'shared goals'.
- Confrontation should be avoided so that solutions can be identified and discussed.
- Often disagreements occur as a direct result of misunderstanding so it is essential that the issues at hand are clarified.
- The focus should be on dealing with the issues rather than the emotions and the people involved.
- Effective resolution usually requires some form of compromise on behalf of both parties.
- Expectations should be realistic and reasonable.
- Both parties need to commit to the recommended solutions and agree jointly.

Termination of a Meeting between Parents and Teachers

If the communication between individual teachers and parents has a potential of breaking down or if conflict seems unsolvable, a meeting should be terminated and reconvened at a future date. Either or both participants may feel it necessary to involve a third party, such as the school's Head Teacher or other staff member, who can act as mediator.

Meeting Register

Each teacher should keep a record of meetings that have taken place with parents. The register should be kept up to date and, if appropriate, contain the main points of the interview. This documentation may be made available to other teachers or the Head Teacher, if necessary.

Confidentiality

Scheduled meetings between teachers and parents should take place in a location which ensures privacy and confidentiality.

Confidential information and documents containing sensitive issues concerning an individual child should be held exclusively in the School Office and may not be divulged without the permission of the family or upon specific request by legal authorities. Classified information which might affect a child's progress at school can be transmitted to individual class teachers, with the authorization of the child's parents.