



Southern Cross SCHOOLS

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective communication goes beyond simply exchanging information; it is the foundation for building trust, ensuring confidentiality, fostering understanding, and coordinating action. How a message is communicated is just as important as the message itself. Strong communication practices help create meaningful partnerships within the school community.

This document outlines Southern Cross Schools' best practices for communication between the board, staff, parents, learners, and the broader community.

Please note that we are transitioning towards a paper-free environment.

A Guide for Southern Cross Schools Parents

In the context of the school as a whole:

- Whether wearing the school uniform or not, during or outside of school hours, on or off the property, the Executive Head, Head of Schools, staff members, learners, parents, extramural teachers, and independent service providers understand that they are representatives of Southern Cross Schools. As such, they are expected to ensure that all communication is kind, caring, compassionate, respectful, confidential, and marked by impeccable manners.
- Parents need to embrace and uphold the Southern Cross Schools ethos and mission.

Southern Cross Schools Mission

We strive to cultivate confident, kind, and caring individuals who are future-ready.

Southern Cross Schools Teachers:

Teachers at Southern Cross Schools accept their primary professional responsibility to guide learners in the pursuit of knowledge, skills, and the development of their full potential, helping them become socially responsible and self-supporting citizens.

- They are loyal to the school, follow all lawful instructions and regulations, and conduct professional matters through appropriate channels.
- Teachers foster positive cooperation with parents, maintain learners' confidence in their home environment, and ensure parents are well informed about their children's well-being and progress.
- As members of the teaching profession, they demonstrate leadership within the community by promoting the value of education.
- Through their conduct, both professionally and personally, they contribute to the dignity and public image of the teaching profession.
- Teachers value and respect the opinions and feelings of learners, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment.
- They uphold the importance of education, speaking well of the profession and Southern Cross Schools as a whole, understanding that education is an ongoing partnership between the school and its families.

Southern Cross Schools Parents are Encouraged to:

- Stay involved in your child's academic, cultural, and sporting life.
- Attend parent evenings, teacher information evenings, parent interviews, assemblies and school talks.
- Regularly review your child's reports, school newsletters, homework diaries, WhatsApp messages, and emails.
- Show interest in your child's academic progress, offer encouragement and have realistic expectations.
- Speak positively about Southern Cross Schools teachers, even if you may not agree with all their methods or decisions.

- If any issues arise with teachers, whether personal or academic, please follow these steps to address them:
 - First, contact the relevant grade teacher or, in the case of the College, your child's grade mentor.
 - If the issue remains unresolved, escalate it to the relevant Head of Department (HOD).

Head of Pre-school	Heather Rogers
Head of Prep School	Colleen Taylor
HOD Junior Prep School	Taryn Malan
Head of College/Pastoral Care	Tracey Larmont
HOD College Academics	Chizelda Potgieter
Head of Boarding	Steven Turner

- If further resolution is needed, escalate the matter to the Head of Schools.
- If after following all of the above steps the issue is still unresolved, the Executive Head will consult with the Board of Governors.
- Understand that a school's academic programme is complemented by extracurricular activities such as camps, outings, sports, and cultural events. Encourage your child to participate in as many of these as possible to foster a well-rounded experience.
- Equally important, allow time for your child to play, imagine, create, and occasionally experience a little boredom. These moments fuel creativity and balance. Be mindful not to oversubscribe your child.

Being a Southern Cross Schools Parent:

- Ensure that all communication aligns with the Southern Cross Schools' core values of Spirit, Tenacity Acceptance, Respect and Sustainability.
- Reach out to the relevant grade teacher, HOD, Head of Schools, or Executive Head if you have any questions or concerns regarding school matters.
- Demonstrate moral courage - your children are observing how you handle situations.
- Respect the role of Southern Cross Schools. Instead of reacting immediately to your child's concerns, take the time to speak with their teacher, HOD, the Head of Schools, or the Executive Head to understand both sides of the story.
- Return any documents promptly as it sets a positive example for your child.
- Regularly consult the school calendar, The Week Ahead, Grade News, Mentor Letter to stay informed.
- For urgent matters during the school day, contact the administration office directly. Teachers are unavailable during lesson time, as their primary focus is on teaching, and they will not have access to their phones during this time.
- Encourage children to take responsibility, should they forget items at home allow them to experience the consequences.

WhatsApp Groups at Southern Cross Schools:

Southern Cross Schools utilises WhatsApp for digital communication between the school and parents.

The following guidelines help ensure polite, effective, and kind communication, and we appreciate the support of the entire Southern Cross Schools community in adhering to these:

- All Southern Cross Schools WhatsApp groups are named as follows: **SCS – Grade I Parents 2025**
- In the Pre-school and Prep School, each class has two WhatsApp groups:
 - A Class Notice Group where only the teacher and/or class parent can send school-related notices.
 - A Class Social Chat Group may be set up for parents to communicate among themselves. This group is not administered by the school, and the class teacher is not part of it. Parents are encouraged to keep communication positive and constructive.
 - The Class Social Chat Group may be used for Pre-school birthday invites, but only if the whole class is invited. RSVP replies should be via direct messages.
- Separate communication groups exist for the Pre-school, the Prep School and the College. These are used for messages that apply to the entire phase.
- In the Prep School there are groups for sport and excursions.
- The College has a mentor, parent and learner group for each grade, along with various grade and subject groups, house groups, crux committee groups, cultural groups, sports groups, and outing groups.
- The boarding establishment has a boarding group.

- Groups should be used for school-related matters only, not for community posts, advertising or other unrelated information.
- Avoid sending messages between 18h00 and 06h00. Be respectful of teachers' personal time; contact them after hours only in urgent or exceptional circumstances. On weekends, you are also requested to abstain from contacting teachers. Teachers will also adhere to these times, recognising the importance of family time.
- For the boarding establishment, parents will communicate, with the Head of Boarding, Senior House Parents, and Duty Parents using the official channels of communication. Kindly refer to Annexure A for further details.
- Questions or concerns about individual children should be sent via direct message to the relevant teacher or parent.
- WhatsApp polls may occasionally be shared for feedback.
- Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's WhatsApp usage, as these groups can expose them to risks such as cyberbullying. If you are paying for their cell phone bill, you have every right to monitor their online activities.

Social Media:

We encourage parents to share their and their children's experiences at Southern Cross Schools in a positive and uplifting way on social media. By doing so, you help 'market' Southern Cross Schools and attract new families.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Think carefully before posting online. Both positive and negative posts remain cached indefinitely, even if deleted.
- Pay attention to spelling and language when posting comments.
- Avoid tagging other children or their parents in your posts.
- Southern Cross Schools reserves the right to use images of learners for marketing purposes; however, names and addresses will never be tagged. (If you do not want your child's image to be used, please email the school with a formal request.)
- We ask that any grievances be addressed directly with the appropriate school staff member rather than aired on social media.
- It is the parent's responsibility to manage their child's social media presence.
- In line with the Southern Cross Schools Code of Conduct, any inappropriate content, including but not limited to racism or hate speech, will not be tolerated.
- All SCS related social media groups, e.g. Instagram, will be managed by the school. Parents and learners may not create any groups using the SCS name.
- Staff, parents, and learners should be mindful that any personal status posted may be viewed as a reflection of their affiliation with SCS and are encouraged to consider the potential impact it may have on the school.

Class Parent Representatives:

We extend our gratitude to parents who volunteer as Class Parent Representatives. These volunteers are mostly prevalent in the Pre and Prep Schools. The Class Parent Representative role is crucial. They play a supportive role in fostering a sense of community and assisting with class-related social and organisational activities. Specific issues concerning individual learners or staff members should be addressed through the appropriate channels, as outlined earlier, and not handled by the class parent representative.

Class Parent Representative Key Responsibilities:

- Act as a social communication link between the school/teacher and parents.
- Coordination of a collective birthday gift from the class for a child's birthday, liaison with parents to ensure a meaningful gift is arranged.
- Offer of support with general non-academic questions, especially for new parents.
- Assisting new parents integrate into the school community by facilitating social opportunities.
- Support teachers in planning and organising class year-end celebrations.
- Assist in organising class functions and outings upon request.
- Send reminders for PTA meetings and other school-related events via the class WhatsApp group.

Teachers will oversee the selection of class parent representatives. If multiple parents are interested, responsibilities may be shared throughout the year. This role aims to enhance parental engagement and support classroom activities in an informal and collaborative manner.

Management, Teachers and Administrators:

- All communication, whether from a teacher, staff member, learner, or parent, must adhere to the Southern Cross Schools Code of Conduct.
- Written and email communication must be standardised across all platforms, ensuring the correct use of logos, fonts, colours, and a unified email signature.
- All communication must maintain proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation, reflecting the high standards expected from an educational institution.

Written and Email Communication should consider the following Key Points:

- Who: Who is the communication directed to?
- How: What platform is being used? Is it appropriate? Refer to the levels of communication.
- Why: What is the purpose of the communication?
- What: What is the message, and how can it reinforce the Southern Cross Schools ethos? For example, if we teach manners, we should also reflect them by saying "please" and "thank you."
- When: Are we providing adequate notice, and are we communicating consistently?

Levels of Communication:

- Official class WhatsApp groups are used for quick reminders, sports notices, weekly plans, and official letters.
- Important notices from the school management team are emailed on official letterheads from branded school email addresses.
- Printed letters are used for events, camps, surveys, or schoolwork that require a signature or response. These letters must receive formal approval prior to being distributed.
- We should not assume that parents or learners automatically understand the internal workings of the school. New parents and learners, especially in Pre-school, Grade 1, and Grade 8, may require more detailed information and guidance.

We appreciate your attention to this Communication Policy and hope it helps define clear boundaries while encouraging kindness and respect in all aspects of school life.

ANNEXTURE A

SOUTHERN CROSS SCHOOLS BOARDING ESTABLISHMENT

Boarding establishment parents will communicate with the Head of Boarding, Senior House Parents, and Duty Parents using the official channels of communication. These channels are established to ensure clarity, accountability, and a consistent flow of information between boarding staff and parents/guardians, reflecting Southern Cross Schools' core values of Spirit, Tenacity, Acceptance, Respect, and Sustainability. The following guidelines outline the communication process:

Official Channels of Communication:

- **Email:**
 - The preferred method for formal communication, such as weekend sign-out permissions, policy inquiries, or updates requiring documentation.
 - Emails should be sent to the Head of Boarding or Senior House Parents via their official school email addresses e.g. boardinghod@scsschools.co.za.
 - Responses will be provided within 48 hours during the school week, barring exceptional circumstances.
- **Telephone:**
 - For urgent matters e.g., emergencies or immediate concerns, parents may contact the school office or the Head of Boarding on the designated boarding phone number which is shared with parents at the start of each term.
- **WhatsApp:**
 - The official SCS Boarding Group is used for routine updates, reminders, and non-urgent announcements.
 - Only the Head of Boarding, Senior House Parents, or Duty Parents may post on this broadcast group.
 - Parents should direct questions to staff via email or direct message.
 - To respect family and staff personal time, except in cases of an emergency, parents should not send messages between 18:00 and 06:00.
 - Please submit weekend sign-out permissions to the Senior House Parents via this communication channel no later than 10:30 on Thursday.
- **School Communication Platform:**

General boarding notices and termly updates will be shared via the school's parent portal or app. Parents are encouraged to check this regularly.

Key Contacts and Responsibilities:

- **Head of Boarding:**

Oversees all boarding operations and is the primary contact for policy-related matters, significant concerns, or escalations.
- **Senior House Parents:**

Manage daily welfare, discipline, and weekend arrangements. Parents should direct inquiries about their child's well-being or specific permissions e.g., sign-outs to the relevant Senior House Parent.
- **Duty Parents:**

Available outside regular hours, including evenings and weekends, to address immediate needs. Contact details for the Duty Parent on shift will be provided termly via the SCS Boarding Group or email.

Communication Protocols:

- All communication must be kind, respectful, and professional, aligning with the school's ethos of fostering confident, caring individuals.
- For weekend sign-outs by adults other than parents/guardians, an email granting permission must be sent to the Senior House Parent no later than 10:30 on the Thursday prior to the weekend, as per the sign-out policy. This ensures clarity and accountability.
- Parents are requested to use official channels only and avoid contacting staff via personal phone numbers, social media, or informal messaging apps unless explicitly authorized in an emergency.

- In emergencies outside regular hours, the boarding emergency contact number should be used, followed by an email for record-keeping when possible.
- Questions or concerns about individual boarders should be addressed privately via email or direct message to the relevant staff member, maintaining confidentiality and trust.

Feedback and Concerns:

- Parents are encouraged to raise boarding-related feedback or concerns with the Head of Boarding. If unresolved, issues may be escalated to the Head of Schools or, if necessary, the Executive Head, following the school's grievance procedure.
- In line with the Southern Cross Schools Code of Conduct, all communication should uphold dignity and respect, avoiding public forums like social media for grievances.

Boarding Establishment Specific WhatsApp Usage:

- The SCS Boarding Group is for school-related updates only e.g., weekend schedules, health notices. It is not a platform for social chat or unrelated posts.
- A separate, optional parent-managed boarding social group may be established for informal communication, but it will not include staff or be administered by the school.
- Parents are encouraged to model responsible digital behaviour for their children, especially as boarders may have access to WhatsApp via personal devices.