



Public Domain Policy

August 2016

Aim

The aim of the public domain policy is to encourage all members of the BNWPS community to act in a way, which promotes the values of Brunswick North West Primary School. The school values are responsibility, creativity, respect, equity, achievement, resilience, integrity and connectedness.

Regardless of the issue, it is expected that community members will remember to behave in a respectful manner when communicating with one another or speaking with regards the school within the public domain.

For the purpose of this policy, the public domain is defined as a sphere where messages communicated are accessible to members beyond the school community - such as Facebook, Twitter or television (for example).

Rationale

Brunswick North West Primary School is known for its strong sense of community. Its ethos of integrity, respect and the commitment of the teachers, parents/care givers and the broader school community to support learning.

The recent growth of our school illustrates the value placed on these traits by the families who choose to become part of our school community.

The students can feel proud of their school, and parents can speak proudly of their involvement in a school, which promotes the active participation of parents in setting the values of the school and welcomes parents' contributions.

To preserve these values and the sense of community, all members of the school community are encouraged to take communal responsibility for the reputation of the school within the public domain.

Whilst the overall running of the school is governed by the laws and regulations as determined by the Education Department, the way in which community-members act towards one another is determined by the respect we show each other's views.



Process for raising concerns

Given the ability for parents in particular to be involved in the school it is expected that all concerns will first be raised with the relevant teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal as appropriate (see Communications & Complaints Policy). The Communication & Complaints Policy outlines the appropriate process to follow when raising concerns/grievances; and parents are encouraged to use this process before taking other actions such as discussing concerns in a broader public context.

However, if parents decide to publicly raise their concerns via Facebook, Twitter or other methods within the public domain, they need to be aware that the school can only officially respond within the limitations of the restrictions placed on public discussion by the Department of Education. In particular, representatives of the school cannot engage in public debate regarding policy issues or subjects of concern to the school community.

They can, however, discuss issues of concern within the confines of the school under the guidance of the Communication & Complaints Policy.

Protection of children within the public domain

At the beginning of each year parents are given the opportunity to give permission for their child's image to be used within the school community domain such as newsletters, promotional material and on the school website.

This permission slip does not cover the use of images within the classroom Twitter system. It has been agreed that teachers will avoid placing photographs on Twitter, which could lead to the identification of individual children.

The school's ICT policy outlines ways in which the school will help students be aware of protecting themselves within the public domain. All community members, including students, are asked to be cognizant of the need to protect other children when taking photos while attending school events. Please check with parents/guardians before making photos of other's children publicly accessible.

Twitter in classrooms

Twitter has provided a valuable link between the school and the broader school community. It has also proven to be of benefit in encouraging and assisting parents to be more actively aware of the work being undertaken in class. As Twitter use expands within classrooms the teachers will continue to follow the policy of ensuring no photos or information appears which allows the individual identification of students.



When parents join the Twitter feeds from classrooms it is important they do not add any information which may lead to students being identified within Twitter or further within the public domain.

Compass

Compass has many functions, one of which is to facilitate communications with parents. It complements paper notes and information from the newsletter. Compass is not designed to replace the need for personal communication when dealing with individual student's requirements. Compass access will be restricted to school community members and information supplied on Compass is not considered part of the public domain.

Protection of the school within the public domain

The school Principal, or their delegate, must approve newsletters and other forms of communication to the school community, regarding school activities.

Whilst parents are free to reference the school within their private Facebook accounts and other forms of communication within the public domain, parents should be aware of some key responsibilities:

- As outlined in the guidelines above parents should not use images that allow children to be identified without parental permission;
- Parents do not have permission to use the school logos or present information in a way that makes it appear as if it is coming from the school;
- Parents do not have permission to alter or misrepresent information which has come from the school regarding activities, events or issues;
- Parents are asked to be aware that when discussing or debating issues relating to the school, within the public domain, that they must not claim to represent the views of the school, and if they choose to correct information that they correctly cite the appropriate policies; and
- Whilst debate is healthy, parents must be aware that debating issues of interest or concern to the school community within the public domain can actually reduce the chances of those issues/concerns being comprehensively addressed.