

## EVALUATION OF THE PARENT AND STAFF COMMUNICATION PLANS

1 DECEMBER 2019

### BACKGROUND

In February 2019, Vicki Caldwell, Acting Principal, Wellers Hill State School, commissioned PotentialPlus Solutions to provide services to develop a whole-school communication strategy. The first key improvement strategy from the 2018 school review reads:

*Develop and implement a whole-school communication strategy that uses a broad range of contemporary channels and includes collaborative process, clear expectations for relational and timely responses to actively engage internal and external stakeholders.*

The school review, conducted during November 2018, was undertaken at the direction of the Director-General. The Acting Principal was appointed in December 2018 and immediately commenced the work of leading the implementation of the key improvement strategies in the review report, including broad consultation and collaboration with staff, parent organisations, and the broader parent community, supported by relevant services and personnel from the Metro Region.

In consultation with the Principal and Leadership Team, communication plans for parents and staff were designed and fully implemented during Semester 1, 2019. The design phase included a parent survey completed during March 2019; parent focus groups held on 13 March 2019; consultation with teaching staff held during the January 2019 student free days; and consultation with the Leadership Team in Term 2, 2019.

As part of the implementation of the first key improvement strategy, and the broader school improvement process, the Acting Principal commissioned PotentialPlus Solutions to evaluate the success of, and areas for improvement with, both the parent and staff communication plans.

### PROCESS OUTLINE

A parent survey of 18 multiple choice questions and a staff survey of 13 multiple choice questions were developed by PotentialPlus Solutions and distributed to parents by the school on 1 November 2019, closing on 11 November 2019. The survey questions and responses are attached with this report.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

Responses were received from 111 of 1127 parents; and 25 of 57 staff members.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The results of the parent survey indicate a significant improvement in satisfaction with communication, responsiveness to emails and phone calls, timely provision of relevant information to parents, positive and respectful conversations and communication, opportunities to provide feedback and share opinions, and confidence to engage with the education of their children.

More than 90% of all respondents indicated that the Communication Plan gives a clear outline of communication pathways and expectations for relational and timely responses for school staff and for parents. There is a lower level of satisfaction from parent respondents regarding the clarity and consistency of information provided across all communication channels.

Both groups of respondents indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the positive and respectful nature of individual communications between parents and members of the school staff and Leadership Team.

The school newsletter has higher readership and satisfaction levels than the P&C newsletter for both parent and staff respondents. The school newsletter is the most preferred channel of communication for 79.5% of parent respondents, with the P&C newsletter the most preferred channel for 19.6% of parent respondents.

88% of parent respondents agree that, during 2019, they have been offered opportunities to share opinions and provide feedback to the school; feel engaged with the school, and confident to participate in their child's education. This indicates a significant improvement in parent engagement and involvement with the education process, and more broadly with the school.

Overall a higher percentage of staff respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the questions regarding a range of aspects of general communication and responsiveness than the percentage of parent respondents. This may indicate there is some misalignment between the perceptions of parents and staff on these matters.

There is yet to be a high level of utilisation of the QParents app with half of the parent respondents indicating they have downloaded the app, and 40.5% indicating it is an effective method to access information relating to their child's progress in the classroom. 41.4% are unable to comment, while 18.8% indicate they do not intend to download this app.

## FINDINGS

**The Communication Plan gives a clear outline of communication pathways and expectations for relational and timely responses for school staff and for parents**

90.9% of parent respondents and 92.4% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree with this statement, indicating an alignment of opinion.

***The communication of information from the school, through the range of channels is clear, easily understood and consistent***

76.8% of parent respondents and 92.3% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree indicating a significant difference of opinion about the clarity and consistency of information communicated by the school, through the range of channels. There is scope for improvement in this area.

***My individual communications with members of the school staff and Leadership Team are positive and respectful***

94.7% of parent respondents and 96.2% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree that individual communication is positive and respectful. 92.4% of staff respondents report that parents are respectful of the expectations of contact and response times outlined in the Communication Plan. These results indicate significant improvement in relationships between staff and parents.

***The new format of the 2019 fortnightly school newsletter is more user friendly and more effective in keeping me up to date with important and relevant information.***

81.3% of parent respondents either strongly agree or agree and 3.6% indicated they do not read the newsletter. 88.4% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree while 3.8% indicated they do not read the school newsletter. This indicates a reasonably high level of satisfaction from both groups, with some scope for further improvement.

***I find the changes in format of the 2019 fortnightly P&C newsletter more user friendly and easier to access important and relevant information.***

75% of parent respondents either strongly agree or agree and 12.5% indicated they do not read the P&C newsletter. 73% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree and 19.2% do not read the P&C newsletter. These results indicate there is scope for improvement with the format and readership of the P&C newsletter.

***Parent respondents indicated their preferred way of accessing information is as follows:***

79.5% - school newsletter  
23.2% - school Facebook page  
19.6% - P&C newsletter  
18.8% - Schools app  
11.6% - school website

This indicates the school newsletter is by far the preferred channel for receiving information.

***During 2019 I have been offered opportunities to share my opinions and provide feedback to the school***

88.3% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree with the opportunities available to share opinions and feedback.

***I feel that I am engaged with the school, and confident to participate in my child's education***

88.4% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree that they are engaged with the school and confident to participate. 88.5% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree that they have offered opportunities in the classroom for parents to engage in the education of their child. These results indicate an alignment in opinion of both parents and staff, and show a significant improvement.

***My child's class teacher provides me with information on emerging matters directly relating to my child within two days***

80.4% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree while 96.2% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree. This result indicates quite a difference of opinion regarding the provision of information on emerging matters by class teachers to parents.

***My child's class teacher responds to my emails or phone calls within two days***

89.3% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree while 96.2% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree, showing that there is some difference of opinion regarding the responsiveness of teachers to parent emails and phone calls.

***I am informed of changes within the school that may affect my child within two days***

86.5% of parent respondents and 84.6% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree, indicating alignment between the opinions of both parents and staff regarding the provision of information.

***I am informed of unexpected changes to scheduled school or class events within two days***

83.5% of parent respondents and 88.5% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree, indicating a slightly lower level of satisfaction for parents when compared with staff opinion of providing information within two days.

***Members of the school Leadership Team provide me with information on emerging matters relating to my child within two days***

85.4% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree with the timely provision of information from the Leadership Team.

***Members of the Leadership Team respond to my emails or phone calls within two days***

87.8% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree with the level of responsiveness to emails or phone calls by the Leadership Team.

***Communication from the school regarding key school events during the year provides me with sufficient notice to include in my planning***

81.3% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree that communication from the school about key events gives sufficient notice. This result indicates there is scope for improvement.

***I am fully informed about classroom requirements, events and whole school activities with appropriate notice***

83.1% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree that they are fully informed about classroom requirements, events and whole school activities with appropriate notice. 96.2% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree that they provide this information with appropriate notice. There is a difference of opinion in this area, indicating some scope for improvement.

***Do you intend to download the QParents app?***

50.9% of parent respondents have already downloaded the app; 30.4% intend to download the app; and 18.8% do not intend to download the app.

***The QParents app is an effective method to access information relating to my child's progress in the classroom***

40.5% of parent respondents strongly agree or agree; 18% disagree or strongly disagree; and 41.4% are unable to comment

***I use OneSchool to record all contacts with parents***

88.5% of staff respondents strongly agree or agree that they are using OneSchool to record all contacts with parents.

***RECOMMENDATIONS TO INFORM IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY***

Review the clarity and consistency of information provided across all communication channels and implement required changes.

Continue to promote the content of the Communication Plans across relevant parent and staff communication channels.

Review the current format and content of both the school and P&C newsletters, and implement required changes, seeking continuous improvement.

Investigate the apparent misalignment between parent and staff opinion regarding timely responses to emails and phone calls, and provision of general information to parents involving children, class or whole school events, seeking areas for improvement.

Continue to promote the utilisation and potential effectiveness of the QParents app.

Continue to promote the utilisation of OneSchool by staff to record all contacts with parents.