



## **RATIONALE**

It is essential that staff members of the school communicate information in agreement with established protocols so as to preserve the professionalism of the school, to protect the rights of individuals, to uphold our duty of care to students, and to comply with departmental and legal requirements.

Hamilton Special Developmental School is cognisant of its obligations under the **Child Safe Standards** (Ministerial Order 870 – effective August 1, 2016) to protect students from all forms of child abuse. To this end, all necessary precautions will be taken to ensure that school communication poses no risk to child safety.

## **AIMS**

At all times Hamilton Special Developmental School (HSDS) will adhere to the DET guidelines for staff and student communications. This policy should be implemented in alignment with:

1. DET PROTECT Guidelines;  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>
2. VRQA Child Safe Standards;  
<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>
3. Any other current or future policy related to the communication protocols of staff and students of our school

Hamilton Special Developmental School staff will ensure that the communication of information is carried out correctly and in a manner that complies with school, departmental and legal requirements.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Our school has a policy of open and cooperative communication.
2. This practice however recognises that staff members have legal, departmental, local, professional and social obligations with regards the communication of information.
3. Department of Education employees are free to make public comment on issues relating to education, but in doing so, must be wary not to make comments that can be construed as negative criticism of our school, School Council, our community, staff or community members.
4. As a matter of professional courtesy, and as a requirement of Section 3.6 of the Teaching Services (Conduct of Duties) Order 1998 staff will communicate with the principal before making public comment or formal statement on educational issues or that bears on the organisation or program of the school or place of work. The principal and School Council president will ensure that each other are informed.
5. The Information Privacy Act and the Health Records Act require that schools protect the interests of individuals with regard to their personal information and respect the individual's right to control how their personal information is used, and for what purpose.
6. The school will only collect consensual information that it requires about individuals, and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.

# COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL



7. Any person seeking information from the school that falls outside the school's previous practices must be directed to the principal who may require that a formal written Freedom of Information request be made.
8. All such Freedom of Information requests will be referred to the Department of Education's Freedom of Information Unit.
9. Information sought by police, including interviews of students must be directed to the principal.
10. Requests from Department of Human Services child protection unit personnel regarding students or families will be complied with at all times.
11. The school will comply with court subpoenas to provide information at all times, but will not respond to requests from lawyers seeking information without Education Department approval.
12. Action may be taken by individuals, the department or organisations against staff members who choose to communicate information improperly.
13. We will provide a minimum of two written reports, two parent-teacher interviews for students, additional interviews upon agreement, and a multimedia digital portfolio (when required).

## **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed as a part of the school's three year policy review cycle.