GUIDELINES FOR THE PARENT REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

1. The Parent Rep program is coordinated by the Community Relations Sub-Committee of School Council. The program involves assigning 2-4 parents/carers for each Learning Neighbourhood to the role of parent representative. Their role is to facilitate communication amongst families and teachers in the neighbourhood.

2. OBJECTIVES
   It is well known that students benefit from the involvement of their parents in their education which may include involvement in the classroom and the wider school community. The main objectives of the Parent Rep Program are:
   (a) To encourage and coordinate parent involvement in the educational and social activities of their child’s neighbourhood in collaboration with the neighbourhood teachers;
   (b) To act as a liaison between teachers and parents and assist in obtaining parent support for particular activities, eg excursions, swimming program, special events and neighbourhood programs;
   (c) To help organise social activities for the students and/or parents of the neighbourhood outside of school hours;
   (d) To assist in the organisation of the annual Bazaar.

3. Three tasks the parent reps are expected to complete are to:
   a) Organise a neighbourhood event early in the year for families to get to know each other- for example a picnic or an event at an indoor venue
   b) Prepare and distribute a neighbourhood contact list for contacting parents when needed
   c) Arrange parent volunteers to staff the stalls assigned to the neighbourhood for the annual Bazaar held in November.

4. Selection of parent reps occurs at the start of the year. A notice can be put up outside the classroom or in Talking Point asking for parents to volunteer for the role of parent rep. If no volunteers come forward, teachers can approach parents who they believe may be interested. Up until 2010, parent reps were chosen for each class, and it was encouraged there be two for each class. Sometimes two parents did not volunteer, in which case one parent took on the role alone. With the introduction of Learning Neighbourhoods across the school it is appropriate there be two to four parent reps for each neighbourhood.

5. While the role does not involve a big time commitment, the role suits people who are organised, are experienced with using email and who are confident communicators. For example, there may be a shortage of parents volunteering for the neighbourhood stall at the Bazaar. The parent rep may need to contact parents and encourage them to volunteer.
6. Parent reps are to be approved by school council, in consultation with the Community Relations Sub-Committee. If there are more than four nominees for the role, the parent reps will be selected by school council.

7. **Organising the first neighbourhood event.**
   This can take place on a weekend or after school, but it is up to each group of parents to decide what best suits them. In the past, venues have included nearby parks such as Princes Park or North Carlton Railway Park. The parent reps should let the teacher know the date and then prepare a flyer advertising the event. Usually food to share is brought by parents, and the flyer can encourage healthy food.

   The parent reps will need to make copies of the flyer for the neighbourhood using the school photocopier and give the copies to the teachers to distribute to the neighbourhood. If the contact list is in place, the details can be emailed to parents. Some parent reps have organised other events later in the year. One option is for them to organise parent events in the evening.

   Neighbourhood picnics and other events organised by parent reps out of school hours are not official school functions. Teachers do not usually attend and the supervision of the children is the responsibility of the parents. Therefore the school is not legally liable in the event of injury. A statement to this effect will appear in Talking Point at the start of the year, when notifying parents of the parent rep program.

8. **Neighbourhood contact list**
   The purpose of a neighbourhood contact list is for parents/carers to share their contact details with other families in the neighbourhood, on a voluntary basis. Early in the year, the school distributes a notice to all parents, inviting them to be included in the neighbourhood contact list. Parents can use the list to contact other families to arrange play dates and birthday parties, and the list can be a useful way to remember the names of parents and children. Usually about half to two-thirds of families agree to go onto the list.

   The list includes the name of the student, names of the parents/carers, suburb, home telephone number and mobile number. The parents are asked in the notice to provide their email to the parent rep to enable the parent rep to communicate with them, but emails are not included in neighbourhood lists, which is consistent with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development requirements. It is important that email addresses are only to be used by parent reps for the purpose of communicating with parents about neighbourhood or school related matters. Paragraph 10 discusses this further. Parents have the option of not agreeing to go onto the neighbourhood contact list but giving permission for their contact details to be used by the Parent Rep to inform them about school activities and the Bazaar.

9. **Bazaar - annual school fundraiser in November**
   The Bazaar is the main fundraiser for the school and also an important community event. Each neighbourhood is allocated a number of stalls and the parent rep organises the roster of parent volunteers to staff the stall. This may involve preparation on the day before, setting up on the day or working
on the stall. This is a busy time for the parent reps, and usually they need to make direct contact with parents to fill the roster. The Bazaar coordinating committee manages this process and provides templates for the parent reps to use.

10. **Parent reps communicating with parents**
   All special neighbourhood or school events or excursions are notified to parents by written notices distributed by the teachers, or through the neighbourhood blog. There are times when the parent rep may need to contact parents at short notice, e.g., a neighbourhood excursion requires parent helpers and there is a shortage. The parent rep can contact parents by email or telephone using the neighbourhood contact list, asking for volunteers. When sending a group email to parents about school activities or the Bazaar, the parent rep should send the email as a “blind copy” (abbreviated to “BCC”), therefore the recipients of the emails do not know the email addresses of the other parents. This avoids the potential for inappropriate use of parent emails. The way blind copying is done varies with different email systems. If a parent rep needs assistance with sending group emails as a blind copy, they should contact a member of the Community Relations Sub-committee who can help them.

A situation may arise where a parent or teacher wants to inform the neighbourhood about an issue of relevance to parents, for example a working bee at the house of a neighbourhood parent to make items for the mother’s day stall. Such a notice could go into Talking Point to reach a wider audience. If the parent wants to limit the notice to just parents in their Learning Neighbourhood, they can ask the parent rep to send a group email to the parents on the contact list, or to prepare a flyer.

11. **Contacting families new to the school (not Preps)**
   In the past, one of the roles of the parent rep has been to contact new families in their class to welcome them and provide them with information and assistance. Parents new to the school are given the Parent Handbook when they first enrol and are asked whether they agree to have a parent contact them. If they agree, their contact details are given to the assigned member of the Community Relations Sub-Committee who contacts the parent rep, or on occasions a member of the Community Relation Sub-Committee may be the person to contact the new family.

The parent rep usually speaks to the parent over the phone or in person and finds out what their needs are and what services or organisations we can put them in touch with. They might need a GP, hairdresser, after school activities, music lessons or a sports club. We have helped connect new families with the local netball team and indoor soccer competition. Their names can be added to the neighbourhood contact list if they are interested.

12. **Ensuring we are an inclusive school**
   Sometimes parents may not wish to attend social events for personal reasons, or because they do not have the resources to do so if payment is involved. Some parents may lack confidence or do not understand this aspect of school life. It is important to establish the reason parents may not be attending, which needs to be done in a sensitive manner, as it is particularly
important that we reach parents who may benefit from making social connections. If the parent reps have any concerns regarding this, they should see the neighbourhood teachers.

Endorsed by PHPS School Council on 11 December 2012