



# Williamstown Primary School

## Communication With School Staff Policy

### 1. BACKGROUND

Williamstown Primary School is committed to open, honest and timely communication. We are also committed to communication being respectful, measured, sensitive and constructive. In adhering to these principles, we aim to strengthen the goodwill and the positive partnership between parents and the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students.

### 2. PURPOSE

- To clearly articulate the School's commitment to positive use of the email system for communication.
- To acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via email, but also understand its shortcomings.
- To establish clear expectations for both staff and parents in the use of email as a communication tool-

### 3. DEFINITIONS

**Parent** includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

**School** means Williamstown Primary School.

**Staff** means teachers and all other Williamstown Primary School employees.

### 4. PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Email is an environmentally friendly way of communicating that can save time when used effectively. We acknowledge that email is very convenient for parents who are work outside the home and find it difficult to catch up with school staff during regular work hours. Having said that, our school community values face-to-face and telephone conversations, and understands that these forms of communication are preferred in many situations.

#### Expectations of staff and parents around email use

- Emails are best when they are brief, respectful and informative. The protocol, including etiquette and tips, on the following table should be followed when staff and parents are communicating via email.
- School staff will do their best to respond to general queries as soon as possible and ask that you allow 48 hours to provide a detailed response. Staff will endeavour to respond to urgent matters within 24 hours, where possible.

The following etiquette and tips should be followed when staff and parents are communicating via email:

All emails should be...	
...brief and informative	● Keep emails brief and informative. Issues that require any level of detail require a meeting in person or over the phone. An email is useful to request a meeting and give a brief outline of the issue. However, they are not an appropriate avenue to discuss the issue(s) in detail.
...respectful and constructive	● Keep emails courteous, constructive and respectful. Do not write what you would not say to the recipient in person.
...focused on core issues	● Make sure the purpose of the email is clear. If communicating a problem or concern, focus on it and on finding its solution.
...about issues related to sender and recipient	● Do not write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents).
...relevant to the recipient	● Avoid sending emails to anyone for whom it is not relevant. This includes not copying in recipients who do not need to know.
General email etiquette and tips	
Class email distribution lists	● Refer to the DET <i>Privacy policy</i> and the <i>Email - Use of Class Email Distribution Lists Policy</i> ( <a href="http://www.williamstownps.vic.edu.au">www.williamstownps.vic.edu.au</a> ).
Permission to disclose email addresses	● Staff and parents must not disclose the email addresses of others without permission to do so. Blind CC should be used for group emails when permission has not been received.

Forwarding sensitive emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emails containing personal or sensitive information are not be passed on to a third party without the sender's permission.</li> </ul>
Avoid sarcasm and humour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tone and intent of emails can be easily misunderstood, so pick up the phone rather than send an email in this instance.</li> </ul>
Avoid all capital letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Capitalisation can be read as aggressive 'shouting' and should be avoided.</li> </ul>
Avoid "time wasting" emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is courteous to avoid sending jokes emails, chain letters and commercial solicitations.</li> </ul>
When action/response IS required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make sure your expectation for a response is communicated.</li> </ul>
When NO action/response is required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "No reply necessary" can be included at the start of the email to convey information sharing only.</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations on <u>parents</u> when emailing teachers or any staff member</b>	
Non-urgent messages only to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not use email to inform a member of staff of something that is time critical. Given work demands, staff may not read emails until late in the day.</li> </ul>
Discussions about your child's progress or behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Please do not seek to discuss in detail your child's academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioural issues via email. These are best addressed over the phone or in person.</li> </ul>
Response time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff will aim to reply to parent emails within 2 working days. If parents send emails outside of work hours, they cannot expect a response during teachers or other staffs' personal time.</li> </ul>
Use of the school email address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emails intended for the office staff should be sent directly to the school's email address: <a href="mailto:williamstown.ps@education.vic.gov.au">williamstown.ps@education.vic.gov.au</a>.</li> </ul>
Parents' email addresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is the responsibility of every parent to keep the school administration up-to-date with current email addresses.</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations on <u>staff</u> when emailing parents</b>	
Sensitive issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Email will not be used to discuss a sensitive issue that was not initiated by, or had not been previously discussed with, the parent.</li> </ul>
Response time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff will aim to reply to parent emails within 2 working days</li> <li>● Staff can send or respond to work related emails at a time of their choosing. There is no expectation to respond to parent emails outside of school hours (8:30am-4:30pm).</li> </ul>
Acknowledgment of emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If a parent email requires time to gather information for an informed reply, within 2 working days the staff member should respond to acknowledge the email and indicate when the full response will be sent.</li> </ul>
Offensive emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff will not respond to offensive or abusive emails. Such emails will be forwarded to the school principal for any further action.</li> </ul>
Out of office / On leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When on leave, staff will activate an auto-reply message detailing relevant leave dates and the interim point of contact.</li> </ul>
Email signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All staff should use the Williamstown Primary School standardised signature for emails sent from staff accounts.</li> </ul>

### Implementation

- Email addresses will be accessed by the Compass portal.
- This policy will be sent to all parents every year.
- A disclaimer will be attached to the bottom of the email signature reminding parents of this policy.
- Customised email responses will be developed for staff use such as:
  - Thank you for your email. Please direct this enquiry to the school administration team.
  - Your email has been received. I will endeavour to contact you within 48 hours.

### References:

- [www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx)

## 5. REVIEW AND POLICY HISTORY

- This policy is due for formal review in January 2021 although it may be changed at any time as required after discussion with School Council and the Principal or if guidelines change.

**Policy History**

<b>Version Approval Date</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>VRQA Requirement</b>	<b>DET Mandated Policy</b>	<b>School Council Input</b>
April 2017	New Policy (Email Protocols)	No	No	Not required
January 2019	Review and rename	No	No	Not required