



## School Email Policy September 2016

### Introduction

Our School recognise that email is a valuable communication tool that is widely used across our society. Staff members are provided with email accounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication both within the Department of Education & Children and with the broader community.

### Guidelines for teachers

Staff using email to correspond with parents and students must use only the main school email address to receive or send email. A staff member cannot make email the only option for communicating with parents. Similarly, neither a student nor a parent can demand that a staff member correspond via email.

Staff using email to correspond with parents and students must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The staff member should clearly set out the expectations for parents with respect to response times. These response times should be set by the school.
- Staff who are corresponding with students or parents must use only the division's email system to receive or send email.
- Email must never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues should be dealt with face-to-face or by phone. Emails should be short and directional in nature and only include facts.
- As staff are responsible for all email sent from their account they should take care to protect access to the account by keeping their password secret and by logging off when they leave the workstation.
- Email messages to parents and the broader community should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence.
- As the employer, the Department of Education & Children has the right to access and disclose the contents of staff email messages as required by the division's legal, audit and legitimate operational purposes.

- Email messages may be accessible under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- All emails will be deleted after a period of one month. Anything important will be printed and filed appropriately.

## **Staff member to parent e-mail communication**

### **Acceptable**

- General information about class activities - curriculum, homework, tests, special events.
- Distribution of school announcements to a parent's email group maintained at each school.
- Arrange for meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue, e.g. "I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance."
- Follow-up on an issue that has previously been discussed.

### **Unacceptable**

- Any discussion related to other students.
- Personal information about other students.
- Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent, e.g. "I am concerned that your son failed the last three tests and was not at school again today."
- Any discussion related to other staff.
- Any discussion related to the staff member's performance.
- Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face-to-face or by phone, e.g. "I am concerned that your daughter may have a learning disability."

## **Staff member to student e-mail communication**

### **Acceptable**

- Discussions specifically related to class activities - curriculum, homework, tests, special events.

## **Unacceptable**

- Any discussion related to other students.
- Personal information about other students.
- Discussion about personal life of staff member or student (home life, vacations, relationships).
- Sensitive information regarding the student's performance.

## **Generic Email Response**

If a teacher chooses not to use email as a communication tool or feels like the topic is too sensitive for an email reply, the following generic responses could be used:

"Thank you for your email. Laxey School does not use email to discuss student information. In order to best address your concerns and quickly answer your questions, please feel free to call me at (XXX-XXXX) and I will be happy to discuss this with you further."

"Thank you for your email. I believe this concern is too sensitive for email. I would prefer to speak in person regarding this matter. I will call you on (insert date and time) to discuss this matter further."