

EMAIL PROTOCOLS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS



EXPECTATIONS OF BOTH STAFF AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

When communicating via email, staff and parents/caregivers are expected to adhere to email etiquette, including:

- Emails are at their best when they are brief and informative. Issues that require a level of detailed discussion should be dealt with in person or over the phone.
- Emails should always be respectful and constructive. If the email relates to a concern or problem, it ought to be focussed on understanding the problem and finding a solution.
- 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.
- Avoid sending negative, emotional or confrontational emails. Email is not to be used to vent. An email shouldn't include text that we wouldn't say to the recipient themselves.
- Privacy is an essential element of all email communication. Staff and parents/caregivers should never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents). Likewise, emails containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on to a third party without permission of the sender. The Carbon Copy (Cc) or Blind Carbon Copy (Bcc) features of email communication are not to be used without the written permission of the intended recipient (To) of an email.
- Email is not necessarily confidential. Confidential information should be conveyed by phone or ideally by personal contact.
- The tone or intent of emails can easily be misunderstood, especially where humour or sarcasm is involved. Be conscious of this and pick up the phone rather than send an email in this instance.

EXPECTATIONS OF STAFF

- Email should not be used to discuss any matter which was not initiated by a parent/caregiver or had not been previously discussed with the parent or caregiver.
- When an email is received that requires some time to gather information and reply properly, the staff member should acknowledge that the email has been received and indicate when an informed response will be sent.
- Staff are not expected to send or respond to emails outside of reasonable College hours (8am to 5pm, during the school week).
- Staff will aim to reply to parent/caregiver emails within two working (school) days. As some teachers are Part Time, a response is expected only on the days when they teach at the College.
- Staff are not expected to respond to threatening or abusive emails and are required to forward them to their Head of School for follow-up.



EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Only authorised email addresses (i.e. those provided to the College on enrolment or by formal notification) will be used by staff to communicate with parents or caregivers. Please send email messages from an authorised email account and communicate any changes to College administration. The administration email address is admin@stcolumba.sa.edu.au
- Email should be used to:
 - discuss general information such as class activities, curriculum, assignments, tests, deadlines and special events;
 - to arrange for a meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue.
- Email should not be used to send non-vital messages. For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is to wait for you at the office after school or meet you somewhere when the day ends. A teacher may not have time to read your message in a timely fashion. Instead, use the telephone to contact the office to be sure your message is received and clearly understood.
- All medical or health concerns, should be communicated to the College office by phone.
- Remember to respect staff personal time. Emails sent outside of work hours will not receive an immediate response.
- Please don't seek to discuss in detail your child's academic progress, learning expectations or behavioural issues via email. These are best addressed through a telephone conversation or by scheduling a personal meeting with your child's teacher(s). Teachers and parents/caregivers may agree to continue communication on these matters by email only after personal contact has been made in the first instance.
- When agreed between the teacher and the parent/caregiver, (following a face to face meeting or phone conversation), email may be used as a form of regular communication about a student's day at school (in place of a communication book or student diary).
- Please identify yourself in the subject line of your email message and, if appropriate, the name of your child.
- Emails that are intended for the office staff should be sent directly to each individual school's email address, as given below:

Primary School: ps_office@stcolumba.sa.edu.au

Middle School: ms_office@stcolumba.sa.edu.au

Senior School: ss_office@stcolumba.sa.edu.au

- If a teacher believes that a topic is too sensitive for an email reply, a generic response such as those given below will be sent to establish an alternative means of supporting you with the matter:

"Dear

Thank you for your email. St Columba College does not use email to discuss sensitive and/or confidential student information. In order to best address your concerns and quickly answer your questions, please feel free to call me at the (Primary, Middle or Senior School) on (Phone No) and I will be happy to discuss this with you further.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,"

Teacher Name



OR

“Dear

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

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,”

Teacher Name

- After repeated unsuccessful attempts to make contact by telephone, email may be used by staff as a first means of contact, following consultation with the Head of School. In this instance a generic email similar to the example given below, will be sent to the parent or caregiver who is identified as ‘Contact 1’ requesting opportunity to meet or discuss the matter over the phone.

“Dear

I write this email as (student’s name Class or Year X Subject/Mentor/Coordinator) teacher after making a number of unsuccessful attempts to contact you by phone. I have a concern regarding (student’s name) learning/wellbeing in class and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my concerns with you either by phone or at a meeting at the College.

Please feel free to call me at the (insert Primary, Middle or Senior School) on (PS: 8254 0650, MS: 8254 0600, SS: 8254 0660) or send a reply email with times that are convenient for you to take my call.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours faithfully,”

Teacher Name

- In this instance the parent or caregiver is requested to acknowledge receipt of the email within two working days and wherever possible support the request to discuss the issue by providing an opportunity to meet or a time and accessible phone number for an initial conversation for the concerns to be raised by the teacher.