



# **COMMUNICATION & PROTOCOL POLICY 2023-2024**

**Effective Date: 2014**

**Last Reviewed: June 2023**

**Reviewed by: Miss K Hayward, Executive Principal**

**Next Review Date: June 2024**

## Rationale

A successful organisation relies on outstanding communication. By setting high standards of written and verbal communication and by ensuring that our contact with our stakeholders is timely and consistent, we will be reflecting the high standards of our school.

## Newsletters

*Our newsletters have* become our most visible marketing tool within school and in the local community. We currently produce *Sandy Spotlight* and *Moggie Messenger* on a fortnightly basis and it generally runs to at least 4 pages. There are a number of key purposes for this publication:

1. Regular communication of our achievement agenda (Executive Principal's column and achievement section)
2. Reminders about our standards and routines
3. Celebration of achievements
4. Information about upcoming events (Calendar and all sections)

Staff should use *the newsletters* to support their achievement agenda and publicise their areas of responsibility. Forward planning is essential, particularly for events involving students and parents, and it is suggested that: -

1. A first mention of the event in broad terms should appear 3-4 weeks in advance.
2. A detailed article should appear a fortnight before the event
3. A final, short reminder should appear the Friday before an event

The *newsletters* require sign-off from the Executive Principal on Friday in order to be finalised for circulation on Friday. The deadline for contributions, therefore, is Wednesday 9.00 am.

*The newsletters* are emailed on Friday evening to current families, staff, community partners and prospective parents (after Open Evening and through the transition process). From September 2018, students whose families do not receive email will receive a paper copy through their register on a Monday morning.

## Staff Bulletin

Features school targets, reminders for key areas, general and House news. It regularly runs to six pages and is a key communication tool and all members of staff should be considering how they can best use it to make everyone is fully informed about the work of the school. Successful use of the Staff Bulletin will result in reduced "all staff" emails and last-minute communication.

## Letters

There is some excellent practice in written communication within the school. In order to ensure that this is consistent, the following guidelines must be followed for all letters: -

1. All letters are seen by the Executive Principal. The process of letter writing should build in sufficient time to allow for letters to be reviewed before sending.
2. In order to be effective, **letters must be sent two full weeks** before any event requiring parental attendance and **one full week** before internal events. It is the responsibility of the person organising the event to meet these deadlines.
3. All letters are to be produced using Calibri 11pt and on appropriate letterhead paper.

4. All letters should be a single page (although attachments may be used)
5. The salutation should always be Dear Parent/Guardian.
6. There should be a subject line indicating the content of the letter
7. The opening paragraph gives the purpose for writing linked to our values/aims.
8. The second paragraph sets out the details of the communication.
9. The closing paragraph indicates the action required and the closing date for responses.
10. A contact name with job title, email address and the school phone number (no extension) should be provided in the event that further assistance is required.
11. A reply slip, with a closing date, should be included if necessary.
12. The conclusion should be “Yours faithfully” or “Yours sincerely” as appropriate.
13. All letters should be signed, or an electronic signature inserted.

Letters which are going to the whole school or whole year groups will be emailed using Keep Kids Safe with paper copies being made available through registers to those families who prefer hard copy communication. Letters which have consent forms attached, or include reply slips should always be produced in hard copy.

### **Email**

Email can be a prompt and effective communication tool but can be a difficult medium to perfect. It is best used for short factual messages and staff feedback suggests that, internally, we should rely less on email and more on face-to-face conversations. Our emails are most effective when they are literate, formal, professional, and brief. The school’s email address must not be used for personal communication and professional communication should always be conducted through the school’s address and not a personal account. Effective emails should:

1. Open with a greeting
2. Be no more than 7 or 8 lines long
3. Specify the action required
4. Close with a suitable greeting

### **Good Internet Etiquette (or Netiquette) within the Federation is that: -**

1. Line managers should be copied into the majority of emails.
2. Global emails are to be avoided – consider the “to” and “cc” lines carefully.
3. Emails should be checked at least once each day and answered within 24 hours.
4. There should be discrimination in the use of “reply all” when acknowledging an email.
5. **In the interests of promoting a good work/life balance, we ask that emails are not sent to colleagues on Saturdays and are kept to an absolute minimum during school holidays.**

### **Student Emails**

Every student has a school email address at Sandy Secondary School, which can be accessed via Outlook in school and via the website out of school. Communication between students and staff **must only** take place using school email accounts. Where a student contacts a member of staff via an alternative email account, the response must be sent to the school account.

### **Social Media/Newsletters**

The majority of staff, students and parents engage with social media. Please be aware of the power of your comments on Facebook and on Twitter and remember our safeguarding policy – students

should not be accepted as friends on any social media and staff should not engage in activity which brings the school into disrepute. Sandy Upper School does not currently operate a Facebook page.

### **Text Messaging Service**

We use the *Keep Kids Safe* system which provides free emails to parents/guardians of our students and we utilise this for the majority of our communication with home about absence. We use the text messaging service for other messages but are reducing its use in order to minimise costs. Wherever possible, texts should only be sent to targeted groups rather than whole cohorts. There is **no** situation where it is acceptable for a member of staff to text a student, or group of students, unless it through the official school system, Keep Kids Safe.

### **Phone Calls to Parents/Guardians**

There are times when we need to make contact with parents by telephone and this can be daunting, particularly if the conversation is likely to be difficult. Our feedback tells us that:-

1. Prompt telephone conversations often avert escalation of issues – if you are unable to call in person, then a member of the support team can place a holding call on your behalf.
2. The tone should be friendly, honest and accurate – it is better to seek further information than to bluff.
3. The content of the conversation needs to be noted, communicated and acted upon.

It is important to keep a note of calls made, the issues, the actions agreed and then follow up to relevant staff with an email and note on SIMS log/School pod. If you are unhappy with the telephone conversation, bring it to a polite close and seek further support from a line manager.

### **Phone Calls from Parents/Guardians**

Our phone welcome message directs callers to either the attendance office or to the switchboard. Calls from parents/guardians for either curriculum or pastoral matters will be processed by the main office, who will maintain a log of calls. Senior staff, Curriculum Leaders and House Achievement Leaders should maintain a log of the parental calls they respond to with a note of the outcome. The SIMS log/School pod should be updated as a result of parental phone calls. In order to maintain an overview of parental calls, direct extension numbers will no longer be included in communications to parents/guardians.

### **Twitter Protocol**

The Twitter account is an outward reflection of the school and must, therefore, present the high standards of professionalism that we expect in all communications. Only the Executive Principal, and one other designated person, may tweet on the main Twitter account.

1. The school twitter account will not follow any student account
2. All “tweets” should have content which is:
  - a. School-related
  - b. Generic so that it can be followed by all parents and students
  - c. Reflective of the school’s policies and beliefs
  - d. Positive and celebratory – nothing of a negative nature should be tweeted
3. The twitter account will not be used to post any information which might be controversial, nor will it respond to insults or criticism.
4. If anything incorrect is tweeted accidentally, an immediate apology will be made to avoid the incident being blown out of proportion.

5. Tweets will retain a formal style of staff/student address as appropriate to any school communication.
6. Tweets must be less than 140 characters and must be literate with correct spelling and grammar. Text speak and slang should not be used.
7. Pictures of students may only be used if parental consent is held and if the students have given their consent for images to be used.
8. Copyright applies as it does in all other situations.

### **Value for Money**

Communication **can** be an expensive business, but we can minimise costs by relying on free and effective methods wherever possible and by reducing our use of more expensive options.

1. Wherever possible, timely messages should be sent to students and to parents by email rather than by text.
2. The staff bulletin will be sent electronically on Friday afternoon, saving printing costs each week. The majority of staff have fed back that they prefer receiving the electronic copy.
3. Students who require a paper copy of the Sandy Spotlight will receive this in their register each Monday morning. Tutors will be provided with a distribution list for their form. The majority of letters are sent home by email. Paper copies are provided in the register the day after a letter is sent. Tutors will be provided with a distribution list for their form.