



# **MARCELLIN COLLEGE RANDWICK**

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## **Communication Protocol Policy**

At Marcellin College we are 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 relationships between staff, students, parents and the wider Marcellin community.

We acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via email, but also understand its shortcomings. This policy is designed to establish clear expectations for both staff and parents in the use of email as a communication tool.

### **Communication protocol procedures with parents**

- The College has a policy of open and cooperative communication.
- This practice however recognises that staff members have legal, local, professional and social obligations with regards the communication of information.
- Action may be taken by individuals, SCS or organisations against staff members who choose to communicate information improperly.
- The College will provide two written reports for students each year, one parent-teacher interviews per year, additional interviews upon agreement, and an annual College report to the community.
- College employees are free to make public comment on issues relating to education, but in doing so, must be wary not to make comments that can be construed as negative criticism of the College, the College Executive, SCS, the Catholic community, staff or community members.
- As a matter of professional courtesy staff will communicate with the Headmaster before making public comment or formal statement on educational issues or that bears on the organisation or program of the College or place of work.
- The Privacy Act 1988 requires that schools protect the interests of individuals with regard to their personal information and respect the individual's right to control how their personal information is used, and for what purpose.
- The College will only collect consensual information that it requires about individuals, and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.
- Any person seeking information from the College that falls outside the College's previous practices must be directed to the Headmaster who may require that a formal written Freedom of Information request be made. The Headmaster will inform SCS of any such requests.
- All such Freedom of Information requests will be referred to SCS.
- Information sought by police, including interviews of students must be directed to the Headmaster.
- All staff will comply with court subpoenas to provide information at all times.

- Where it is necessary to communicate with external departments such as Family and Community Services to uphold our duty of care to students, the Headmaster or College Counsellor will follow departmental policies and procedures.

## **Email**

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 working 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 phone conversations and understands that these forms of communication are preferred in many situations.

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

- All emails should, in the first instance, begin with a greeting/salutation.
- 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/or finding a solution.
- Avoid sending negative or confrontational emails. Email is not to be used to vent. We never say in an email what we wouldn't say to the recipient's face.
- Never write about or seek personal information regarding third parties (staff, students or parents). Personal or sensitive information is best dealt with over the phone or face to face. Where this is not possible in the first instance, ensure any email communication does not pass on any personal or sensitive information to a third party without permission of the sender.
- 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.
- Avoid using CAPITALS: this can be interpreted as shouting.
- Staff and parents are not expected to respond to emails that are contentious. A face to face meeting should be arranged in this circumstance.
- Group emails have the potential to waste the time of many, so avoid sending emails to anyone for whom it is not relevant. It is also courteous to avoid time wasting emails, including jokes, chain letters and commercial solicitations.
- Make sure the purpose of your email is clear ... do you require specific action or is the email for information only.
- Staff and parents must be careful not to disclose email addresses of others without permission to do so.
- People cc'd are not expected to respond. It should be clear who the email is intended for.
- Parent email addresses are available to staff through *Sentral*.

## **Expectations of Staff**

- Email should not be used to discuss a sensitive issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not been previously discussed with the parent.
- When an email is received from a parent that requires some time to gather information and reply properly, the staff member should respond acknowledging that the email has been received and indicate when an informed response will be sent.
- Staff will aim to reply to parent emails within 2 working days, which includes emails that have been forwarded from the front office.
- When on leave, staff will activate an auto-reply message detailing relevant leave dates.
- Staff are not to respond to abusive emails and should forward them to the Deputy Head.
- Staff are not expected to respond to any emails outside of work hours.
- All staff are responsible for using email in accordance with this policy.

## **Expectations of Parents**

- Parents are to provide an up to date email address and ensure any changes are updated.
- Remember to respect staff personal time. Parents shouldn't send emails outside of work hours and expect an immediate response.
- Please only send non-vital messages by this medium. For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is not to go home on the bus that afternoon, as the teacher may not see the message in time. Remember that given work demands teachers may not get to read emails until late in the day.
- Please don't 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.
- Emails that are intended for the office staff should be sent directly to the College's email address, that being: [mcr-secretary@syd.catholic.edu.au](mailto:mcr-secretary@syd.catholic.edu.au)
- All other emails should be sent directly to the staff member you are addressing in your email. Address for all staff are available on the College website: <http://www.marcellin.nsw.edu.au/contact-us>
- All parents are responsible for using email in accordance with this policy.

## **Responsibilities of College Executive**

It is the responsibility of College Executive to ensure the policy is brought to the attention of:

- Parents on enrolment of their child
- The whole school community annually

## **Letters**

It is sometimes necessary to write to the parents of a particular student concerning his progress or conduct. All such letters need to be approved by the Headmaster and printed on College letterhead. Such letters should be countersigned by either the KLA or Year Coordinator, Deputy or Headmaster. A copy of all such letters should be given to the Homeroom Teacher, the relevant Year Coordinator and a copy placed in the student's file. A record of the letter issue addressed in the letter should be recorded on the student's database on Sentral.

## **References**

Teachers, as private citizens, may write references for students, but not on College letterhead. The only reference given to students should be the official College Reference.

## **Telephone calls**

Staff are encouraged to phone parents if a student's attendance, conduct or progress gives cause for concern. The relevant KLA or Year Coordinator should be consulted before the phone call. A record of a phone call and its outcome should be recorded on the student's database on Sentral.

## **Facsimiles**

The Headmaster must approve all faxes on College letterhead.

All faxes are to be left at the front office for the Receptionists to process. When sent, faxes will be returned via pigeon holes. Incoming faxes will be left in pigeon holes.

Length of faxes should be no greater than six pages – less urgent and lengthier documents should be preferably go by mail.

## **Informal Parent and Teacher Interviews**

When a staff member wishes to invite a parent to the College for an interview, he/she should consult with the KLA and Year Coordinator, ensure that he/she has all necessary information concerning the issues to be discussed and arrange a suitable time and place for the interview.

## **Formal Parent and Teacher Interviews**

Formal interviews between parents and teachers are organised each year. Boys are expected to attend. If there is need for discussion without the student present for part of the interview they can be asked to leave.

The interviews provide the opportunity to commend the boys for their efforts, to challenge them in the areas that need it and to encourage parents in their efforts to have the boys meet their challenges. Parents are often looking for this encouragement and for assistance in techniques and strategies to help them and their sons.

If parents are unhappy or dissatisfied with our efforts in the College scene, (or possibly their own in the parenting area), staff are encouraged to maintain their professional approach to prevent the interview becoming a confrontational situation, especially in what is a semi-public area. There is always the option to ask that the interview be continued at another time.

As in all areas of our contact with boys and parents, the phraseology should be carefully chosen if the boy has been at fault. Certainly, the parents have the right to know the exact situation but it should be done in a manner with our philosophy and ethos. Hopefully, parents should always be left with the feeling that we are all working together in partnership for the good of the boys.

It is not desirable that serious issues that have been ongoing are raised for the first time at the formal teacher parent interviews. Teachers are encouraged to contact parents if there are matters

of concern when they arise. The DIARY is an effective method for such communication, along with the other usual methods.

Formal interviews are generally timed to be subsequent to the issuing of the College Reports. These interviews are only of five-minute duration. During the year parents are also welcome and encouraged to contact teachers if they have concerns about their sons' progress.

## **Reports**

Full College Reports on the progress of each student are forwarded to parents twice yearly. These reports provide an examination mark, assessment mark and grade in each subject and the position in class that each student has attained.

## **Communication protocol procedures with staff**

Staff are advised of coming events within the College by means of:

- Staff Briefings each Monday morning commencing at 8.20 am in the Vaughan Centre.
- Each staff member is allocated a pigeon-hole and should clear it regularly.
- Meetings on Monday afternoons from 3.30 - 4.30pm. These meetings vary from whole staff meetings, subject or Year group meetings.
- KLA Coordinator and Year Coordinator meetings are programmed on Wednesday mornings. The object of these meetings is to assist communication within the staff, to promote the smooth organisation of the College and to ensure consultation in the development of College policy.
- Emails are used to communicate information with staff between meeting times.
- Notice board with daily information regarding replacements, detention lists, and daily important messages. Staff are requested to post notices on the relevant section of the staff notice board. Each member should also regularly check noticeboard in the staff room, as messages are cleared at appropriate periods.
- College Calendar which gives staff a summary of the main events proposed for each term. Information of events need to be checked and verified by the Deputy Head and/or Director of Learning and then details of the event are emailed to the Administration Staff to be entered into College Calendar.
- Timetables for assessment dates and exam schedules. These timetables are coordinated by the Director of Learning and distributed to staff and students via M-Learning or the staff notice board.
- The use of Sentral in order for teachers and Year Coordinators to communicate daily notices as well as student's negative and positive performance or issues associated with a particular student.

**Updated November 2017**