

Email Protocol Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact 8311-5200

PURPOSE

At Sunshine 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 partnership between parents and staff at the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for all students. We acknowledge the potential benefits of staff and parents communicating via email, but also understand its shortcomings. This protocol is designed to establish clear expectations for both staff and parents/caregivers in the use of email as a communication tool.

SCOPE

It is important that several things be considered before an email is sent to staff, students and parents. Clear guidelines need to be established to ensure that communication between staff, students and parents is appropriate.

Care must be taken when writing emails as they are void of important cues such as facial expression, hand gestures and vocal intonations, which all help give context and meaning to words. When words are all that can be communicated, care must be taken to ensure they are the correct ones.

GUIDELINES

Outlined below is a guideline to appropriate email etiquette, how email should be used to communicate between staff, students and parents.

General Email Etiquette

General principles that should be adhered to when composing an email include:

- 1. Emails should be polite and respectful.**
Start emails with a greeting which include the recipient's name. Refrain from using 'one liner responses such as ok, yes or thanks. At the beginning of the email, you can use 'No reply necessary'.
- 2. When writing an email, it is important to consider your audience.**
- 3. Written responses should be properly formatted.**
- 4. Keep emails short.** To the point – use of dot points can help.
- 5. The subject of the email should be short and relate directly to the content.**
For time critical emails – start the subject with URGENT.
- 6. Let people know their email has been received.**
Emails can automatically be classified as spam and get re-directed to your Junk or Bin folder.
- 7. When emailing a group e.g., parents' Blind copy (bcc) should be utilised,** so receivers do not know each other's email addresses.

8. Avoid writing in capitals in email.

Writing in caps can be perceived to be shouting, especially if it is bold and underlined.

9. Irony and sarcasm should be avoided.

Emails do not carry vocal intonations facial expressions and hand gestures which help show one is being sarcastic, and often this meaning is lost in only written format.

As a general guideline, email should be used only as a way to deliver information. It should not be used as a forum to discuss ideas or concerns. Below are some suggestions of how staff and parents should be using emails.

Staff Email

- Staff should use the standardised Sunshine College signature format for emails sent from staff accounts.
- It is expected that emails are checked within a 24-hour time frame during the school week.
- Staff may choose to send and respond to work related emails at a time of their own choosing, but there is no expectation to respond to emails outside of school hours.
- Staff should not respond to rude or abusive emails – refer to Leadership or Principal Class.

Staff to staff use

Staff can use the Staff Distribution List (DL) for the following:

- Calling for expressions of interest for a whole school activity
- Communicating whole school timelines and processes
- Communicating Daily Organisation information, general day to day communications and instructions for events
- School operations and emergency situations
- Reminder of events and meetings

Where possible we should try to limit emails. It is too easy to send an email and not follow up. Some items are better to be discussed in person than emailed. If a staff member wants to reply to a broadcast email, they should reply directly to the sender i.e., not reply all.

Staff to students use

- To send resources
- request work or remind about events or overdue work

Staff to parents use

- To deliver factual information, for example a reminder of an excursion.
- CC Year Level Coordinators when responding to parents' concerns.
- Any serious concerns about students that need to be communicated to parents should be done by phone or through a meeting and Chronicled.
- Emails should be positive.

Parents to Staff Email

- When emailing a staff member, please ensure to include the student's full name.
- Emails can be used to request information on a simple matter, or to request a time for a telephone call or meeting for more detailed or complex matters.
- Teachers are encouraged to respond to emails during work hours only.
- If you receive a communication that has a focus or issue that is concerning, always seek advice.
- Do not respond to inappropriate or threatening communications. Instead, forward copy of the email concerned to the principal class.

- Table 1, below, should be used as a guide on how to respond to certain issues that may be raised with you, that are generally outside your direct role as the classroom teacher.

Please note: DET Acceptable Use Policy will be followed to deal with the use of email for any inappropriate or illegal activities, for example, defamation, unlawful discrimination or vilification, harassment, sexual harassment, stalking or privacy violations.

Table 1.

| Communication focus / Issue raised | Unpack | Follow Up Action |
|---|--|---|
| A complaint against another staff member | Analyse/ seek advice. Refer to Principal Class. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to a member of the principal class |
| Child safety concern-neglect, regarding another student | Analyse/ seek advice report to campus Wellbeing Team & Principal class. Refer to page 4 of this document. Chronicle entry or write a Wellbeing Referral Chronicle entry. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to a member of the school welfare team and principal class |
| *Child safety concern-abuse physical or sexual, regarding another student | Analyse/ seek advice report to campus Wellbeing Team & Principal class. Refer to page 4 of this document. Chronicle entry or write a Wellbeing Referral Chronicle entry. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to a member of the school welfare team and principal class |
| Possible fight | Pass on information to Year Level Coordinator, Student Engagement Leaders/ Principal Class. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to the year level coordinator and the principal class |
| Bullying | Pass on information to Year Level Coordinator, Student Engagement Leaders. Write a chronicle. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to the year level coordinator and Student Manager |
| Suicidal ideation | Refer the information to Wellbeing Team & Principal class. Write a Wellbeing Referral Chronicle entry. | ...thank you...I will be passing on your concern to a member of the school welfare team and principal class |

*See Appendices for Responding to Incidents of Incidents, Disclosures, and Suspicions of Child Abuse.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Policy created | November 2023 |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | June 2026 |

FOUR CRITICAL ACTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU MUST TAKE ACTION

As a school staff member, you play a critical role in protecting children in your care.

- You **must** act, by following the Four Critical Actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief* that a child has, or is at risk of being abused.
- You **must** act if you form a suspicion/ reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).
- It is strongly recommended that you use the **Responding to Suspected Child Abuse template** to keep clear and comprehensive notes, even if you make a decision not to report.

* A reasonable belief is a deliberately low threshold. This enables authorities to investigate and take action.

1 RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to **Action 2**.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you **must** ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid
- calling **000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance** to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police.

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

2 REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES / REFERRING TO SERVICES

As soon as immediate health and safety concerns are addressed you **must** report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

Q: Where does the source of suspected abuse come from?

WITHIN THE SCHOOL

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must** report all instances of suspected child abuse involving a school staff member, contractor, volunteer or visitor to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Employee Conduct Branch
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or school chairperson
- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

All allegations of 'reportable conduct' **must** be reported as soon as possible to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- Employee Conduct Branch

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Diocesan education office

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- Commission for Children and Young People on **1300 782 978**.

WITHIN THE FAMILY OR COMMUNITY

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION

You **must** report to DHHS Child Protection if a child is considered to be:

- in need of protection from child abuse
- at risk of being harmed (or has been harmed) and the harm has had, or is likely to have, a serious impact on the child's safety, stability or development.

VICTORIA POLICE

You **must also** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

You **must also** report **internally** to:

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- DET Incident Support and Operations Centre.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or leadership team
- Diocesan education office.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- School principal and/or chairperson.

For suspected student sexual assault, please follow the Four Critical Actions: **Student Sexual Offending**.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you **must** still act. This may include making a referral or seeking advice from:

- Child FIRST/The Orange Door (in circumstances where the family are open to receiving support)
- DHHS Child Protection
- Victoria Police.

3 CONTACTING PARENTS/CARERS

Your principal **must** consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents/carers. They may advise:

- not to contact** the parents/carer (e.g. in circumstances where the parents are alleged to have engaged in the abuse, or the child is a mature minor and does not wish for their parent/carer to be contacted)
- to contact** the parents/carers and provide agreed information (this must be done as soon as possible, preferably on the same day of the incident, disclosure or suspicion)
- how to communicate** with all relevant parties with consideration for their safety.

4 PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Your school **must** provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a **Student Support Plan** in consultation with wellbeing professionals. This is an essential part of your duty of care requirements.

Strategies may include development of a safety plan, direct support and referral to wellbeing professionals and support.

You **must** follow the Four Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

CONTACT

DHHS CHILD PROTECTION AREA

North Division **1300 664 977**
South Division **1300 655 795**
East Division **1300 360 391**
West Division (Rural) **1800 075 599**
West Division (Metro) **1300 664 977**

AFTER HOURS

After hours, weekends, public holidays **13 12 78**.

CHILD FIRST

<https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/referral-and-support-team>

ORANGE DOOR

<https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/the-orange-door.html>

VICTORIA POLICE

000 or your local police station

DET INCIDENT SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS CENTRE

1800 126 126

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT UNIT

1800 126 126

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT BRANCH

(03) 9637 2595

DIOCESAN OFFICE

Melbourne (03) 9267 0228
Ballarat (03) 5337 7135
Sale (03) 5622 6600
Sandhurst (03) 5443 2377

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS VICTORIA

(03) 9825 7200

THE LOOKOUT

The LOOKOUT has a service directory, information, and evidence based guidance to help you respond to family violence: <http://www.lookout.org.au>

Family violence victims/survivors can be referred to **1800 Respect** for counselling, information and a referral service: **1800 737 732**.

