Staff Email Policy

Rationale

Email is an extremely effective communication tool, and invaluable in the modern world. We know that this is often the preferred format of communication, particularly when access to a telephone (or phone signal) is limited. The purpose of this policy is to clarify how and when email should be used appropriately in a professional context. It is not to discourage the use of email as a form of communication, but rather to set out what should be expected of those sending and receiving emails.

The use of email should be viewed in the same way as writing a letter. It enables effective communication whilst maintaining a record. Increasingly, email can be viewed as 'instant messaging' and it is important to draw a distinction because there should be no expectation that emails receive an instantaneous response.

This policy aims to recognise the impact that emails have upon the working life of school staff. It is important to carefully consider the effect of the timing and content of emails upon the recipient. Access to emails outside normal working hours can increase work-related stress and inhibits essential relaxation time. This policy aims to clarify expectations in order to preserve work-life balance and reduce the workload of staff.

Aims

1) To recognise the importance of emails as a form of communication and describe good practice in using this in a professional context.
2) To clarify the expectations of access to emails, both for sending and receiving.
3) To establish ground rules for the use of emails both within the staff team and with external parties, acknowledging the impact that these can have upon both the sender and recipient.

Access to emails

Although staff have access to ICT devices throughout the school day, they are expected to prioritise teaching the allocated timetable. Therefore, during the school day, classroom staff should only check (or send) email when they are not teaching. Outside of the school day staff are, obviously, free to check and read their email at any time, to suit their preferred working pattern.

Sending/ Replying to emails

- No email should be sent by staff between the hours of 7:00pm and 7:00am. This curfew is applied to encourage a better work-life balance and to make staff think more carefully about the emails they are sending. During the curfew, staff can draft emails and replies, but these must not be sent until 7.00am the following day. The email system provides a 'schedule send' option for this purpose.
- Staff should not email at weekends. The weekend curfew is in effect between 7.00pm Friday and 7.00am Monday. Where possible, staff should limit the use of email after 1pm on Friday to reduce the expectation to respond before the weekend.
- In terms of replies to both staff and parents, we expect that any emails are responded to within a two working day time period. It is highly inappropriate to chase someone up for a response to an email before two working days have

elapsed. If a response is required urgently, it may be best to consider another form of contact rather than an email.
- Individual staff email addresses are published on the school website. Parents are strongly encouraged to use these to contact individuals rather than directing an email through the school office. This ensures that the chain of email is preserved and reduces unnecessary processing by office staff.
- During the holiday period when school is closed, staff are encouraged to set an automatic 'out of office' response to emails. They may monitor their accounts periodically during school closure but there is no expectation that a response will be sent until school re-opens. In this case, 'working days' refers to school term time.
- The school policy is to avoid using personal devices at home for emails. It may be unavoidable in some circumstances, when staff may have to login on a personal computer. In line with our Acceptable Use agreement, we advise all staff to refrain from having work emails on their mobile phones/tablets or signed in on their personal computers. This is to ease the pressure on staff to constantly be replying to emails.

Staff mailing lists
Whilst there is the facility to use mailing lists to send emails to the entire staff team, we strongly encourage personal discretion in the use of this facility. This is in order to cut down on the amount of unnecessary email being sent to staff inboxes.

We also seek to encourage greater 'intention' when it comes to email. We only send emails to the relevant people. Use the 'CC' tool correctly, which is to keep other people 'looped in' with no expectation of a reply from them.

Email etiquette
Forwarding emails:
- Care should be taken to avoid forwarding emails without the permission of the original sender, unless they are addressed to the wrong person or should have been sent to somebody else – e.g. a question that somebody else is far more qualified to answer. Staff and parents should have the expectation that their emails are private and will only be read by their intended recipient.
- Emails sent to the School Office must, of course, be forwarded to specific people, as this is the first point of contact for many parents and outside agencies/individuals.
- In order to comply with GDPR legislation, care should be taken to avoid disclosing personal information (including email addresses) to other people. Staff are encouraged to use the email communication tool to send to multiple recipients wherever possible. When using an individual account to email outside the STAR MAT to multiple recipients, the 'BCC' function should be used.
- Emails sent outside the STAR MAT must not contain any sensitive or confidential information unless the email is encrypted.

Language in emails:
- School is a professional environment, and as such, we expect all emails to be written in a professional manner and using correct language.
- With email often being our first point of contact with outside agencies, it is vital we present ourselves as well as we can. As staff at a school, we are expected to have a good knowledge of the English language and spelling. Therefore, we expect some effort to be made to email using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling, especially when interacting with parents or outside individuals.
- The use of language and content of emails should always comply with the school's Acceptable Use agreement.

R Weights   April 2022