

# MOUNT WAVERLEY SECONDARY COLLEGE



## Communication Policy 2016-2018

Provide a framework for effective communication.

Date ratified by College Council: June 2016  
Review date: 2018

Endorsed by College Council President: John Kouvelas

## **RATIONALE**

The Communication Policy focuses on the following:

- Building positive relationships between home and school and the community based on mutual respect and trust that results in success for all students
- Ensuring the wellbeing of students and improvement of their learning outcomes.

## **Guiding Principles**

The Communication Policy aims to:

- provide a framework for effective communication
- create co-operative teamwork and partnership between school, parents/carers and students and the community
- assist the best learning outcomes for students
- ensure that the college values are reflected through effective communication

Effective communication encompasses the exchange of ideas, where people feel they have been heard and their opinions valued, and where information is clear and accurate. Communication needs to be related to student performance, wellbeing and behaviour, as well as school related issues. Communication should be respectful, timely and relevant, allowing for open and honest interaction. See Appendix A. Appendix B sets out 'Who to contact'.

## **Definition**

This policy refers to the following forms of communication:

- voicemail/ telephone conversations
- emails
- official letters
- student planner
- college website
- newsletter
- Compass

## **Guidelines for communication (email, student planner and parent portal)**

### **Guidelines for student planner communication and emails**

Communication needs to be:

- Written clearly in the student planner
- Brief and factual, for example, History homework not completed
- Staff members are expected to sign as acknowledgement of receipt any note in the student's planner. Parents/carers should also sign and include their name on any correspondence with staff via student planners or emails.

Note:

1. Students are expected to take their planner to every class and take home each night.
2. Provision is made for the Home Group teacher and parents to sign the college diary weekly.
3. Positive comments are also encouraged.

## **School Approach**

### **Parent/Carer-Teacher communication through email/parent portal**

As the purpose of email communication will differ in each case, it is expected that the guidelines will be adapted to individual need and circumstances.

If a parent/carers wishes to email a teacher, then teachers should provide their own Mount Waverley SC email address or direct them to the college email (on the website). Any communications via email should be recorded on Compass. See Appendix B for the 'Who to contact' information.

## **Email Guidelines**

### **1. Teachers writing emails to parent/carers**

#### **1.1 General**

It is expected that staff respond to an email from a parent within two working days. If a staff member is unable to respond in full to the query made then it is expected that a short email explaining that the matter is being looked into or information required is gathered and sent within the two working days. Parents/carers should contact the appropriate SubschooL team if they have not heard back from a staff member.

Teachers should avoid sending emails after 8.00pm and on weekends.

#### **1.2 Home Group teacher**

A Home Group teacher may be emailed by a parent/carers to discuss their child's wellbeing. It is the responsibility of the Home Group teacher to provide a response if applicable or to pass the information on the relevant Year Level Coordinator who will work in consultation with the SubschooL team and student services to follow up the email or concern.

#### **1.3 Subject teacher**

If a parent/carers sends an email requesting information about their child's progress, then a teacher is obliged to respond as it is the college's obligation to provide information when requested. If there are any concerns or uncertainty the teacher should seek advice from the relevant Year Level Coordinator. Any concerns or where a parent/carers wants information on their child's progress in all studies should be addressed to the relevant SubschooL who will respond.

#### **1.4 Difficult email**

If the tone of the email from the parent/carers is perceived as aggressive or offensive, it is recommended that the staff member seek advice from the relevant SubschooL Leader or Head of School.

- a) Do not respond in kind
- b) Be respectful in the tone and language used
- c) Acknowledge the concern raised in the response and if possible address each issue or concern

- d) Ask the relevant Subschool Leader or Head of School to proof read the email - do not respond straight away
- e) 'CC' the response to the Subschool Leader and Head of School
- f) If unsure how to proceed seek advice from the relevant Head of School or Campus Principal.

### **1.5 In all cases**

Where possible use the college templates, for example, Work Practice letter.

Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out aloud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.

Ensure all concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, staff members are to provide advice to the parent/carer of the process and that the issue may be dealt with by the relevant Subschool.

In communication with parents/carers, staff members should not dismiss concerns – while an issue may appear minor at the college level – for the parent/carer it is usually important.

If unsure of the tone of the email, the staff member should have a critical friend read the email or pass it on to a Year Level Coordinator, Subschool Leader or Head of School.

## **2. Guidelines for parent/carer writing emails to teachers**

Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members or use the Contact tab on the college website.

If the parent wishes to initiate communication via email with a staff member they will need to outline the nature of the communication and include the student's name, Home Group and subject heading in the email.

### **2.1 On receiving emails from teachers/staff**

#### **2.1.2 General**

It is expected that the parent/carer will respond to emails within two working days. If a parent/carer is unable to respond in full to the email, it is expected that a short email be sent explaining that the matter is being looked at and/or that further correspondence or contact will be made either by appointment or by telephone within two working days.

Parents/carers should note that staff are unlikely to respond to emails after 8pm or weekends or during term breaks (as per the policy outlined above).

#### **2.1.3 Emails to Home Group Teachers**

When Home Group teachers are emailed by a parent/carer to discuss their child's welfare, parent/carers are expected to allow two working days for the relevant information to be collected, in consultation with the Year Level Coordinators, Subschool Leaders and Head of School.

#### **2.1.4 Difficult Email**

If the tone of email from the teacher/staff member is deemed to be aggressive, it is recommended the parent inform the relevant Subschool Leader or Head of School.

- a) Do not respond in kind (i.e. aggressive)

- b) Be respectful in the tone and language used
- c) Acknowledge the concern they have raised in the response and if possible address each of the issues separately
- d) 'CC' the response to the Subschool Leader or Head of School
- e) If unsure how to proceed seek advice from the relevant Head of School or campus principal.

#### **2.1.5. In all cases**

- a) Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.
- b) Ensure all concerns raised have been addressed.
- c) In communication with staff members, parents/carers you should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone.
- d) If unsure of the tone, the parents/carers are encouraged to have a critical friend read the email.

### **3. Guidelines for students writing emails to teachers**

Students are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members via the staff members Mount Waverley SC email.

If the student wishes to initiate communication via email with a staff member they will need to outline the nature of the communication and include the student's name, home group and subject heading in the email.

All communication via email from student to teacher/staff member must be consistent with the aim, rationale and guiding principles outlined in this Communication Policy.

#### **In all cases**

- a) Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read the email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.
- b) If unsure of the tone, the student is encouraged to have a parent/carer read the email.

Please note that staff will not respond to emails after 8pm and on week-ends.

### **4. Guidelines for parent /teacher communication via the phone**

Parents contacting a teacher by phone will be directed to the teacher's voicemail if they are not available. Parents are welcome to leave a message for the staff member.

Staff are expected to check their voicemail on a regular basis and respond to telephone messages.

In the interest of protecting privacy, no teacher can provide private or home telephone numbers to parents/carers.

The guidelines have been developed to encompass most communication situations.

A parent/carer can expect to receive a response from staff within 48 hours. If it is not possible to address the concern or question then staff will let the parent/carer know and pass the information on to the relevant Year Level Coordinator, Subschool Leader or Head of School.

If a Home Group teacher is contacted to discuss any welfare or progress concerns this will be forwarded to the relevant Year Level Coordinator who will contact the parent/carer as soon as is practicable.

A subject teacher may be contacted to discuss concerns. It is often easier if contact is made via email to ensure the staff member can respond. Many staff are teaching all day and may not have the opportunity to call back.

There is a clear expectation that all members of the college community act in a respectful and calm manner. At all times the language and tone used should be respectful. While a parent/carer may be upset or angry about an issue, communication still needs to be carried out in a calm and courteous manner.

## **5. Student Management/Student Services communications**

There are many occasions where a Year Level Coordinator or Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC) or a SubschooL Leader will need to communicate with parents/carers for a range of reasons. Wherever possible, parents/carers will be contacted in a timely manner particularly if there has been a major breach of the Student Code of Behaviour.

### **Other communication methods**

- Compass was introduced into the college in 2016 and included a parent portal. It is vital that parents/carers continually check this.
- The college uses Compass as a means to communicate information and events. It is important that all parents/carers check their Compass to ensure that they remain informed about college programs and activities.
- The college website also has information for parents/carers

### **Note**

It is important that the college has current and correct details, phone numbers and email addresses to ensure there is timely communication. Parents/carers should contact the college if there are any changes to ensure communication can occur in a timely manner or use the form on the college website 'Change of student's Personal Details'.

### **Related Documents**

*The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct*

*Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Guidelines*

*Mount Waverley Secondary College Student Code of Behaviour 2016*

## APPENDIX A – RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Staff

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To be treated with respect and courtesy by students and parents/carers at all times	To follow communication guidelines when communicating with staff, parents/carers and students
To feel safe and free from harassment or intimidation at all times	To treat students in a way that develops self-esteem and to communicate in a respectful manner with parents/carers and colleagues
To be able to teach and perform duties without interruptions	To inform parents/carers of their child's academic progress
To have instructions listened to and followed by students	To provide parents/carers with updates on student progress if requested
To implement the 'Student Code of Behaviour'	To inform parents/carers of late or non-submission of work
To be informed of relevant legislation and policies which they need to comply	To inform parents of activities such as excursions
	To provide students with feedback on their progress

### Parents/carers

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To expect their child to be educated in a secure, safe and supportive environment and receive a quality education	To ensure their child attends school regularly in correct uniform and with the correct equipment
To be contacted where there is a major concern for their child's safety, health and/or wellbeing	To be respectful to staff in all forms of communication
To be informed in a timely manner of any behavioural or academic concern	To never threaten or intimidate staff under any circumstances
To be given regular updates on their child's progress	To follow the communication guidelines when communicating with the college
To be kept informed of college events via Compass, the college website or email	To keep the college informed of any changes in contact details, emergency contacts and changes in medical conditions

To be able to initiate contact with the college if they have a concern regarding their child's progress, safety or wellbeing	To read the 'College News', check student planners and read any correspondence sent home
To receive adequate notices (at least one to two weeks prior) of any upcoming excursions or information evenings	To contact the college if there are significant circumstances that might be impacting on their child's behaviour, progress or wellbeing
To raise concerns about college policies through School Council	To be available and willing to work in collaboration with the college to support their child

## Students

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
To be treated fairly and equally	To be respectful and courteous in all communication with staff and other students
To seek information from teachers to assist in achieving their learning goals	To follow communication guidelines when communicating with college staff
To inform staff of concerns they have regarding their performance	To check emails on a regular basis
To advise staff if they are feeling unwell or injured during the school day	To take student planners to class and record homework and assessments
To alert staff if they are being bullied or witness incidents of bullying	To never threaten or intimidate staff or other students
To raise any concerns or ideas through the relevant student leadership team	To be respectful of staff and other students when using social media and follow the college policies and guidelines in this area
To receive feedback about their academic performance and advice on how to improve	To report bullying incidents to staff
	To comply with all instructions given by staff and follow the Student Code of Behaviour



## APPENDIX B 'WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT'

College Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about college policies, student/teacher conduct.</li> </ul>
Senior Campus Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns from parents, college policies, student/teacher conduct</li> <li>▪ Concerns related to college curriculum</li> </ul>
Junior Campus Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns from parents, college policies, student/teacher conduct</li> <li>▪ Concerns related to college facilities</li> </ul>
Head of Senior School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about student/teacher conduct</li> <li>▪ Concerns relating to the wellbeing of Year 11 and 12 students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters regarding the VCE</li> <li>▪ High level concerns regarding student discipline and exclusions/suspensions</li> </ul>
Head of Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about student/teacher conduct</li> <li>▪ Concerns relating to the wellbeing of Year 9 and 10 students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters regarding the Middle School programs</li> <li>▪ High level concerns regarding student discipline and exclusions/suspensions</li> </ul>
Head of Junior School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about student/teacher conduct</li> <li>▪ Concerns relating to the wellbeing of Year 7 and 8 students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters regarding the Junior School programs</li> <li>▪ Questions regarding the Grade 6 to Year 7 Transition program</li> <li>▪ High level concerns regarding student discipline and exclusions/suspensions</li> </ul>
Senior Subschool Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters regarding internal and VCAA exams</li> </ul>
Middle Subschool Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters such as programs and internal exams</li> </ul>
Junior Subschool Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High level concerns about students</li> <li>▪ Administrative matters such as programs and camps</li> </ul>
Year 12 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>

Year 11 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>
Year 10 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>
Year 9 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>
Year 8 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>
Year 7 Year Level Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to students e.g. progress and wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Matters such as subjects, time management, uniform</li> <li>▪ Year level activities and programs</li> </ul>
Student Services Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns of a welfare nature you wish the college to be aware of and investigation of provision support.</li> </ul>
Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussions regarding student progress in a particular subject</li> <li>▪ Discussions about strategies that can be implemented at home to support learning</li> </ul>
Business Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questions about payment of fees, subject contributions, incursions and other events</li> </ul>
Careers Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advice and support on career paths, course advice, subject counselling and VTAC advice</li> </ul>
Student Welfare Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concerns relating to student wellbeing and support available</li> </ul>
School Nurse – both campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide immediate medical assistance when required</li> <li>▪ Contact parents/carers and support students with medical needs</li> </ul>