

## PROTOCOLS FOR THE USE OF EMAIL AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL

Last reviewed

Oct 2013

### RATIONALE

At Buninyong Primary School 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 the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students.

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.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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.

#### Expectations of Both Staff and Parents

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

- 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 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). Likewise, emails containing personal or sensitive information should not be passed on 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.

- 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 the email addresses of others without permission to do so.

### **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.
- 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 school principal.

### **Expectations of Parents**

- 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 school's email address, that being: [buninyong.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:buninyong.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

**Informing parents of Teacher Email Addresses** - The first class newsletter of each year will include the department email addresses of the classroom teacher and specialist teachers.

**Informing Teachers of Parent Email Addresses** - Office staff will compile lists of parent email addresses to be provided to teachers at the beginning of the year.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All staff and parents are responsible for using email in accordance with this policy.

It is the responsibility of school leadership to ensure the policy is brought to the attention of:

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

**Policy Review** – This policy is to be reviewed annually.