Focus
The Communication Policy focuses on the following:

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

Policy
The Communication Policy aims to:

- Provide a framework for effective communication
- Create co-operative teamwork between school, parents/carers and students
- Assists the best learning outcomes for students
- Ensures that the College Values are reflected through effective communication

Related Documents
- College Values
- Guidelines for Communication through Email
- Guidelines for Communication through School Diary
- Guidelines for Communication through Telephone
- LSC School Strategic Plan, 2011 – 2014
- LSC Student Code of Behaviour, 2011

Other Supporting Documents
- The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Guidelines
- ‘Addressing Parents’ Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides (DEECD)

Key Understanding about 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
- All communication needs to be related to student performance, welfare and behaviour.
- Communication should be respectful, timely, relevant, accurate, well targeted, well delivered, clear and concise, open, honest and frank, reciprocal and interactive

Forms of Communication
- Voicemail
- Diary
- Website
- Email
- Letters
- Wiki Spaces
Guidelines for Parent / Teacher Communication through Email:

PREAMBLE:
As the purpose of email communication will differ with each case, it is expected that the guidelines will be adapted to the individual need.

Should a parent ask for your school email address, you may provide them with the teacher’s own lalorsc email address.

Should staff wish to initiate communication via email with a parent, you will need to inform the Student Manager that you are doing so and briefly outline the nature of the communication if necessary. The Student Manager or the CASES Officer (ROS) will be able to provide the email if it has been provided to the school.

The guidelines have been developed to encompass most email communication situations.

On receiving an email from a Parent/Guardian:

1. **General:**
   It is expected that staff respond to the email 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 gathered is sent within the 48 hours.

2. **Home Group Teacher:**
   A Home Group teacher may be emailed to discuss their child’s welfare while at school. It is the Home Group teacher’s responsibility to provide the parent with the relevant information, in consultation with the Student Manager, other subject teachers (if relevant) and the Student Wellbeing Leader (if relevant).

3. **Subject Teacher:**
   If a parent sends an email requesting information about their child’s progress in your study, teachers are obliged to respond. Discussion about student progress is not exclusive to the occasion of Parent Teacher Conferences. It is the right of parents to ask about how their child is going at school. It is the school’s obligation to provide this information when requested.

   If a parent emails one teacher requesting an update on all their child’s studies, it is advised that the Student Manager respond.

4. **Difficult Email:**
   Should the tone of email the parent/guardian has sent be aggressive, it is recommended you seek advice from the relevant Student Manager or the Assistant Principal.
   
   a. Do not respond in kind (ie aggressive)
   b. Be respectful in the tone and language used
   c. Acknowledge the concern they have raised in your response and if possible address each of the issues separately.
   d. ‘Cc’ your response to the relevant Student Manager or Assistant Principal

5. **In all cases:**
   a. Be respectful in the tone and language used. Re-read your email out loud to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted
   b. Ensure all concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, provide advice to the parent/guardian of the person who will be able to assist them.
   c. In communication with parents/guardians do not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/guardian level it is usually a priority
   d. If you are unsure of the tone, have a critical friend read your email or pass it by a Student Manager or Assistant Principal.
Guidelines for Diary Communication for Staff

Diary communication needs to be:

- Written on the left hand side of the college diary (the lined side is for homework)
- Preferably written in the space allocated to the date of communication
- Brief and factual. E.g. Ancient Egypt assignment due 22/8 not received.

Staff members are expected to sign as acknowledgement of receipt any note in the student’s diary.

Staff members are expected to follow up parent signatures on notes written by them in student diaries. If the note does not have a parent signature, the member of staff may:

- Call the parent, or
- Ask the relevant level manager to follow-up.

Note:

1. Students are expected to have a diary which is taken to all classes and home each night.

Guidelines for Diary Communication for Parents

Teachers may communicate with parents via the student diary. Parents may also use the diary to communicate with a teacher. Parents are able to make brief comments to teachers using the left hand side of the diary. Notes should be counter signed by the receiver to acknowledge receipt.

Note:

1. Students are expected to have a diary which is taken to all classes and home each night.

2. The college diary has provision for parents to sign on a weekly basis
Guidelines for Parent / Teacher Communication through Telephone:

**Calls from teachers to parents:**

As part of the VIT Teachers professional standards it is imperative that teachers communicate regularly with parents. One method which will assist in this ongoing and regular communication is the use of telephone calls and messages.

Teachers may communicate to parents by telephone by obtaining telephone details such as names of parents (primary and secondary caregivers), home numbers, business numbers and mobile numbers from the Level Managers.

Other important information may include any special communication restrictions between primary and secondary carers.

**Calls from parents to teachers:**

Parents contacting the teacher by telephone, will be directed to the teacher’s answering service which is connected to each staff member’s internet account. A message will then be left on the edumail account in the form of a voice file.

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

In the interest of protecting privacy, no teacher is to provide private or home telephone numbers to parents/guardians. All telephone communication is to be made to and from the school number.

Should staff wish to initiate communication via telephone with a parent, you will need to inform the Student Manager that you are doing so and briefly outline the nature of the communication if necessary. The Student Manager or the CASES Officer (ROS) will be able to provide telephone information provided to the school.

The guidelines have been developed to encompass most telecommunication communication situations.

On receiving an email from a Parent/Guardian:

1. **General:**
   - It is expected that staff respond to the phone messages within 48 hours. If a staff member is unable to respond in full to the query made, then it is expected that a short courtesy call explaining that the matter is being looked into and that a time for meeting or another phone call will be made by a specified date.

2. **Home Group Teacher:**
   - Parents may try to communicate with Home Group teachers to discuss their child’s welfare whilst at school. It is the Home Group teacher’s responsibility to provide the parent with the relevant information, in consultation with the Student Manager, other subject teachers (if relevant) and the Student Wellbeing Leader (if relevant).

3. **Subject Teacher:**
   - If a parent leaves a telephone message requesting information about their child’s progress in your study, teachers are obliged to respond. Discussion about student progress is not exclusive to the occasion of Parent Teacher Conferences. It is the right of parents to ask about how their child is going at school. It is the school’s obligation to provide this information when requested.
   - If a parent leaves a message to one teacher requesting an update on all their child’s studies, it is advised that the Student Manager respond. The teacher in question needs to inform the parent that the request will be forwarded to the Student Manager.

4. **Difficult Phone calls:**
   - Should the tone of phone message the parent/guardian has sent be aggressive, it is recommended you seek advice from the relevant Student Manager or the Assistant Principal.
     - 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 your response and if possible address each of the issues separately.

5. In all cases:
   a. Be respectful in the tone and language used.
   b. Ensure all concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, provide advice to the parent/guardian of the person who will be able to assist them.
   c. In communication with parents/guardians do not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/guardian level it is usually a priority.
   d. If you are unsure of the tone, have a critical friend listen to the message or pass it by a Student Manager or Assistant Principal.