

Lalor Secondary College
118 David Street Lalor 3075
PO Box 1015 Lalor 3075
Telephone 9463 7300
Facsimile 9465 3865
Email: lalor.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au



LALOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

Communication Policy

2024-2026

AIM

Provide a framework for effective communication.

Date ratified by School Council: 27th June, 2024
Review date: June 2026



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the general office on 9463 7300

PURPOSE

This policy explains how Lalor Secondary College proposes to manage common enquiries from parents and carers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to school staff, and all parents and carers in our community.

POLICY

Lalor Secondary College understands the importance of providing helpful and timely responses to common enquiries from parents and carers. To ensure that members of our school community are directed to the most appropriate person to assist them, the information below outlines key contacts for common queries:

- to report a student absence, please contact the student absence line on 9463 7349 or log the absence directly onto the Compass portal.
- to report any urgent issues relating to a student on a particular day, please contact the General Office on 9463 7300
- to discuss a student's academic progress, health or wellbeing, please contact the general office and seek advice on who is the best contact.
- for enquiries regarding camps and excursions, please contact the general office for advice
- to make a complaint, please refer to the LSC Complaints policy for the best course of action
- Complaints policy, available:
<https://www.lalorsc.vic.edu.au/wpcontent/uploads/2022/06/ComplaintsPolicy.2022-2024.pdf>
- to report a potential hazard or incident on the school site, please contact the general office on 9463 7300
- for parent payments, please contact our Business Manager – Debbie Boyce on 9463 7300
- for all other enquiries, please contact our Office on 9463 7300

School staff will do our best to respond to general queries as soon as possible and ask that you allow us 48 hours to provide you with a detailed response. We will endeavour to respond to urgent matters within 24 hours where possible.

Interpreting Services

We can arrange for interpreting support if you are from a language background other than English and need help with understanding important educational information about your child. Contact the general office for more information.

Requests for information

Parents and carers are generally entitled to information ordinarily provided to parents, including school reports and newsletters.

Parents and carers seeking information that is not ordinarily provided to parents are encouraged to apply for access through the Freedom of Information process, or, if the information is sought for use in court proceedings, by issuing a subpoena.

Freedom of Information requests should be directed to:

Manager – Freedom of Information Unit
Department of Education and Training
2 Treasury Place
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002
03 9637 3134
foi@education.vic.gov.au

SCHOOL APPROACH

Parent / Staff Communication through Email/Parent Portal:

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

If a parent/carer requests a school email address, staff should provide them with the staff members own @education address or be directed to Compass.

Should staff choose to communicate via email with parent/carers, they will need to record this in the Chronicle section of Compass for the specific student.

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

1.0 Parents/Carers writing email to Staff:

1.1 General:

Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members via email through the Compass portal that has the specific subject teachers listed for each student taught.

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

1.2

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 investigated or information gathered is sent within the two working days.

All email communications between parents/carers and staff are to be made between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Staff are entitled to remove themselves from all communications outside of the hours listed above.

1.3 Subject Teacher:

If a parent/carer sends an email requesting information about their child's progress, teachers are obliged to respond. Discussion about student progress is not exclusive to the Parent Teacher Conferences. It is the right of parents/carers to ask about how their child is progressing at school. It is the school's obligation to provide this information when requested and the teacher's responsibility as the school's employee.

If a parent/carer requests an update on all their child's studies, it is advised that they be directed to a relevant Student Manager or Sub School Leader.

1.4 Difficult email: (refer also to the school's 'Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy')

1.5

If the tone of email from the parent/carer is perceived as aggressive, it is recommended the staff member seek advice from the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader, 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 the response and if possible, address each of the issues separately.
- d. Student Managers or Subs School Leader should be asked to proofread the email.
- e. 'Cc' the response to the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader, and Assistant Principal.
- f. If unsure how to proceed, advice must be sought from the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader, and Assistant Principal.

1.6 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 concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, staff members are to provide advice to the parent/carer of the person who will be able to assist them.
- c. In communication with parents/carers, staff members should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/carer level it is usually a priority.
- d. If unsure of the tone, the staff member should have a colleague read the email or pass it by a Student Manager, Sub School Leader, or Assistant Principal.

2. Staff writing emails to Parents / Carers:

2.1 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.

All email communications between parents/carers and staff are to be made between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

2.2 Difficult Email:

If the tone of email from the staff member is aggressive, it is recommended the parent/carer inform the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader, 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 issue they have raised in their response and if possible, address each of the issues separately.
- d. 'Cc' the response to the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader, and Assistant Principal.

2.3 In all cases:

- a. It expected that parent/carers are 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, parent/carers should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone.
- d. If unsure of the tone, the parent/carers are encouraged to have a colleague read the email.

3. Student emails to Staff

Students are encouraged to communicate with individual staff members via email (located on the school website) Link – Contact Us, or via Compass through their student dashboard.

If the student chooses to communicate via email with a staff member, they will need to outline the nature of the communication and include the student name and Home Group and Subject heading in the email.

All communication via email from student to a staff member must be consistent with the aim, rationale and guiding principles outlined in the 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 students are encouraged to have a colleague read the email.
 - c. If the email by the student or teacher/staff member is aggressive in nature 'Cc' the email to the parent/carer and the relevant Student Manager, Sub School Leader and/or Assistant Principal.
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Diary Communication

1. Staff Diary Communication

Diary communication needs to be:

- Written on the left-hand side of the college diary for a hard copy 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 Student Manager to follow-up.

Note: Students are expected to have a diary (Hard Copy) which is taken to all classes and home each night.

2. Parent / Carer Diary Communication

Teachers may communicate with parents via the student diary or via Compass. Parents may also use the diary or Compass 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: Students are expected to have a diary (Hard Copy) which is taken to all classes and home each night.

Telephone Communication

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 family telephone details from Compass. (such communication must be recorded on Compass in the Chronicle Section).

If telephone communication attempts have failed, this must be recorded on Compass in the Chronicle section.

Other important information may include any special communication restrictions between primary and secondary carers. This information will be listed on Compass and must be checked at the general office for more details.

Calls from parents to staff:

Parents contacting the staff by telephone will be transferred to the staff member in question when available. If the staff member is unavailable the call will be directed to the staff member's answering service which is connected to each staff member's internet account. A message will then be left on the @education account in the form of a voice file.

Staff are expected to check their @education account on a daily basis and respond to telephone messages.

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

On receiving a phone message from a Parent/Carer:

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 investigated and that a time for meeting or another phone call will be made by a specified date.

2. 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.

3. Difficult Phone calls:

Should the tone of phone message the parent/carer has left be aggressive, it is recommended you seek advice from the relevant Student Manager, Sub-School leader 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.
- d. If the tone of the phone call continues to be aggressive staff have the right to end the phone call at any time

4. In all cases:

- a. Be respectful in the tone and language used.
- b. Ensure concerns raised have been addressed – where this is not possible, provide advice to the parent/carer of the person who will be able to assist them.
- c. In communication with parents/carers do not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone – while the issue raised might appear minor at the school level, at the parent/carer 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, Sub-School leader or Assistant Principal

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums
- Contained annually as a Principal Newsletter Item and the beginning of the year letter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	27 th June, 2024
Consultation	School Council
Approved by	Principal / School Council
Next scheduled review date	June, 2026