Communication Policy and Protocols
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PREAMBLE

All policy, protocols and procedures flow from the St Andrews Christian College Mission Statement:

“To educate our students so that they are well skilled, understand life on the basis of biblical truth, and are motivated to walk with God and serve Him in their lives, so that they will be a positive Christian influence in the world.”

Policy Document Information

TITLE: Communication Policy and Protocols
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: To provide policy and direction for all the College Community.
PURPOSE: Educational Reporting Protocols
RELATED DOCUMENTS: Enrolment Policy & Procedures
                                   Grievance Policy
                                   Privacy Policy
                                   Staff Code of Practice
                                   Student Diaries
                                   Student Nurture and Discipline Policy
                                   Social Media Policy

Key Dates

ISSUE DATE: September 2016
REVIEW DATE: 2018
1. **RATIONALE**

Communication within the College context is multi-faceted and all aspects are essential to the correct and proper operation of the College. It is imperative that all communication within and beyond the College is carried out in a professional manner. Good communication is the key to good relationships. St Andrews seeks to establish excellent relationships and to promote good communication with all of its stakeholders. Effective communication facilitates the smooth functioning of the College and assists parents, students and staff to work together effectively.

2. **AIM**

The aim of this policy is to outline the various types of communication that are relevant to the St Andrews College environment. It provides guidelines for the appropriate flow of that communication, or to direct readers to the relevant protocols and procedures. The correct conduct and management of effective communications is essential to the operation of the College, which always seeks to honour God. This policy complements, but does not relate directly to the normal curriculum based communication to be found within a classroom environment that is centred on teaching and learning.

3. **TYPES OF COMMUNICATION**

Our College is committed to open and cooperative communication. Communication within and beyond the College community can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- The dissemination of information to the College community and beyond via
  - The College app, website, newsletter and magazine.
  - Letters, notes and emails home to parents / guardians about excursions, incursions, sports days, camps, competitions, class or subject activities etc.
  - Information evenings and events.
  - Parents and Friends Association meetings.

- Educational Reporting (refer to the Educational Reporting Protocols)
  - Semester Reports
  - Results of national competitions and NAPLAN testing.

- The College Annual Report.

- Parent—Teacher communication via
  - Student Diaries.
  - Formal Parent—Teacher discussions.
  - Informal telephone, email or written communication.

- Communication required for administrative, legal or government purposes
  - Medical and family information.
  - Notification regarding absences, late arrival/early departure and uniform.
  - Advice to the Principal via the Registrar of the intention to discontinue the enrolment of a student.

- Complaints or grievances (refer to the **Grievance Policy**).

- Communication relating to and with the College Board.

- Communication relating to and with the Principal.
• Communication with external organisations and bodies including:
  - The media.
  - Government bodies, for example the police or other departments.
  - The general public.

4. PROTOCOLS

4.1 Dissemination of Information

It is crucial that information is provided to the College community in a timely and punctual manner, and that it is accurate and exhibits a high level of professionalism.

College app
St Andrews Christian College uses a profile on the Tiqbiz app to communicate with parents. Parents are informed of this, and it is their responsibility to sign up for each area of the school they require notifications from. Parents should turn on ‘allow’ notifications so they can be alerted to posts. The app allows for future as well as last minute communication.

College website
The St Andrews College website (www.standrews.vic.edu.au) is a very public source of information about the College. It is updated on a regular basis to ensure that all information is current and correct. The website contains a lot of relevant information for the College community and the general public.

College newsletters
These are produced regularly during term times. These are emailed to parents and also available from the College website.

College magazine
This is produced annually and is circulated at the end of each calendar year.

Information days / evenings
A variety of Information Sessions are held throughout the year. These include, but are not limited to: Junior / Middle / Senior School Information Nights, VCE Information Night, Open Day and New Parents Information Sessions.

Correspondence
Letters and notices going home to parents / guardians to advise them about excursions, incursions, visiting speakers, sports days, camps, competitions, class or subject activities are to be in the approved format on College letterhead. These are to be approved and signed by Section Heads before they can be reproduced and dispatched to parents in hard copy and / or electronic version. Soft copies of all notes that are sent home are kept in Reception. It is the responsibility of the teacher organising the event to email a copy of each note to Reception Staff.

4.2 Parent—Teacher Communication

It is imperative that teachers seek to maintain open lines of honest and timely communication with parents, and vice-versa. This is achieved through diligence and effort on the part of the teacher and is a reflection of the pastoral heart of the teacher concerned.

Student Diaries
The Student Diaries are not just a vehicle for students to use to record homework and assessments that need to be done. The diary should be a means of communication between the parent and the teacher. It is the intention that communication be as encouraging as possible. Notes of affirmation are especially valued.
Formal Parent—Teacher discussions
Parent Teacher Interviews are held twice each year. Refer to the Educational Reporting Protocols for more detail.

Informal telephone, email or written communication
Advice to parents / guardians regarding educational and disciplinary matters
Refer to the Student Discipline Protocols for details about the ways in which parents are advised of matters regarding student discipline.

4.3 Administrative, Legal & Government Communication
A number of items of written communication are required for the wellbeing of our students and / or to meet College administrative, legal or government regulations. For all of those situations that follow, verbal advice is insufficient. In the event that parents/guardians provide verbal advice, they are required to follow this up with written evidence to the College.

Uniform
When a student is unable to wear the full correct uniform, for whatever reason, the parent / guardian is required to send an email / app message / write a note in the Student Diary explaining the deficit in the uniform.

Absences
When a student is absent from school for all or part of a day, a parent / guardian is required to send notification (as outlined above). For absences of more than two days, VCE students are required to provide a medical certificate to the VCE Coordinator.

Advanced notification of planned student absences for periods in excess of three days—is required. Planned absences for periods longer than two weeks must be approved in writing by the Section Head / Principal. This can help students, families and staff effectively plan and cater for extended absences.

Absence notification should include details such as student/s full name, class, dates of leave, and reason.

Late arrival / early departure
Students who arrive late to school or who are departing early from school must be signed in or out at Reception by a parent / guardian / responsible adult. Students departing early should provide a note from a parent / guardian to the classroom teacher explaining the reason for the early departure. The teacher must sign and date the note and / or inform the office that they have sighted the note prior to the student leaving. This is particularly imperative for students who need to make their own way home.

Advice to the Principal via the Registrar of the intention to discontinue the enrolment of a student
Refer to the Enrollment Policy and Procedures for specific requirements.

Family and medical information
It is compulsory that families provide current and up to date family and medical information. This is vital for the wellbeing of every student and to provide appropriate duty of care. Students who do not update their medical information by the required date will not be allowed to attend excursions and camps.

4.4 College Board
Board members are vitally concerned with the wellbeing of staff and parents and will often make themselves available to listen. However, staff and parents must note that taking a Board member into confidence does not short circuit the normal procedures for addressing issues. Informal submissions to the Board either on personal or organisational matters will be referred to the appropriate person without comment.
4.5 Principal

It is expected that all parties, whether staff, parents or Board members, will follow the correct procedures as outlined in the *Grievance Policy* if airing concerns or grievances. At all times we are to aim at honouring Christ and to mirror His way in our lives. All ‘official’ correspondence to and from the College is to be made via the Principal or the Principal’s delegate. Executive staff exercise delegated responsibilities in their area/s.

4.6 College Staff

Generally, staff members are requested to observe a hierarchical procedure in addressing their requests for information or to seek a solution to a problem. The College recognises that suggestions, compliments and complaints are part of daily life. To this end, staff members should not be deterred from making constructive suggestions to Executive staff in an appropriate manner. Refer to the *Grievance Policy* for serious complaints.

4.7 Students

All staff members are required to ensure that all students in their care are able to address requests for information or concerns to the appropriate person or authority.

- In the case of relational difficulties, either with other students or with staff members, the student should speak with their homeroom and/or relevant classroom teacher who will provide assistance in this area. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may elect to seek assistance from the College Chaplain/Counsellor or another staff member.

- There may be issues which need to be brought formally to the attention of the Executive Leadership Team for resolution or decision if the student is not satisfied with previous attempts. Parental involvement is encouraged at this level.

- Students are not entitled to address correspondence to the College Board. Should a student wish to communicate a matter to the Board, this must be done through their parent/guardian.

4.8 Media

All communication with the Media will be through the Principal (or as required, the Chairman of the Board). Staff members are not permitted to make any comment whatsoever regarding the affairs of any student, employee or College related activity on social media or to a television, radio, print or other media journalist without prior approval from the Principal. Any public comment that is made on issues relating to education should be such that it cannot be construed as a negative criticism of the College or its students, staff and Board.

4.9 Other External Organisations

There will be many occasions during the execution of staff duties that staff members will have to make contact with external organisations. At all times staff members need to speak and act in a professional and appropriate manner. Examples include:

- Speaking to suppliers in order to garner relevant information for ordering educational teaching materials or supplies.

- Making bookings for visiting speakers, excursions and camps. It is imperative that the appropriate Section Head approval is sought before committing to any of these external providers.

The College will only collect consensual personal information that is required and will only communicate and disclose information for the purposes for which it was collected.
Any person seeking detailed information from the College must direct their intent to the Business Manager, Principal or relevant authority, who may require that a formal written *Freedom of Information* request be made.

Requests by police and / or other external government agencies for information and interviews must be directed to the Principal or his / her delegate.

All staff, in consultation with the Principal, will comply with court subpoenas to provide information.