ST DOMINIC'S PRIORY COLLEGE

COMMUNICATION POLICY

2024 - 2027

LAST REVIEW DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
January 2024	January 2027
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	College Principal

We acknowledge St Dominic's Priory College is situated on Kaurna Land and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

PREFACE

MISSION

A Catholic College educating girls in the Dominican tradition.

VISION

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are a girls' College committed to truth and compassion. In the spirit of St Dominic, we contemplate the possibilities and honour the sacred dignity of each person through word and action. We aspire to provide an innovative, rigorous and inclusive education that leads girls and young women to achieve excellence in their studies and confidence in their future.

VALUES

As a Dominican community we value:

- A sense of the sacred; joyful, eucharistic and reflective.

- A love of learning through creative and critical thinking.

- Modelling a eucharistic community as the basis for transformation.

- Teaching the truth, by word and example.

GOVERNANCE

Dominican Education Australia (DEA) is the governing authority of St Dominic's Priory College, an Independent Catholic School. A Board of Directors, established in 1987, governs the College which is incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cwlth). The Trustees of DEA and the College Board of Directors assures our Catholicity, fidelity to the Dominican charism, formation of Board members, excellence in teaching and learning and financial stability.

CHILD SAFE

We are a Child Safe employer and are committed to the welfare and protection of children and young people. The College is committed to upholding a diverse and inclusive learning environment, ensuring children and young people are valued and respected. In accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, all employees are required to comply with the College's relevant policies and procedures.

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COMMITMENT STATEMENT

1.1   The St Dominic's Priory College Communication Policy is designed to support positive, respectful and meaningful relationships within our community. Our College is a place of excellence, innovation and insight that seeks to promote contemporary communication practices that provide families with information that allows effective and authentic connection between our College and the wider community.

PURPOSE

2.1   The purpose of the St Dominic's Priory College Communication Policy is:

- To clarify the high expectations, we hold for all members of our community.

- To establish consistent channels of communication between the College and families, in support of student learning and wellbeing.

- To provide families with an appropriate framework to communicate with College Staff.

- To encourage all members of our community to use communication practices and language that promotes clear, accessible, inclusive and respectful interactions.

- To foster learning partnership and connections between students, staff, parents/guardians, and the wider community that support belonging, inclusivity and treating all people with their entitled dignity.

- To assist parents/guardians to positively and effectively discuss learning with their daughter/s at home and to effectively communicate with College Staff using a common language of learning.

- To further the development of our positive College Community by building and strengthening relationships between staff, students, and families, based on mutual respect and courtesy.

- To implement processes that allow for open and honest communication amongst all community members.

- To embody the St Dominic's Priory College Mission, Vision, Values, and achievements.

- To supply parents/guardians and the wider community with information in a timely manner, regarding events, achievements and activities hosted by the College.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all individuals who are directly affiliated with St Dominic's Priory College (College Community). This includes:

- All College Staff, inclusive of volunteers and contractors engaged by the College.
- Students and their families, past, current and future.

3. COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
3.1 TELEPHONE	a. For urgent matters, student absences, enrolments, changes to student records, and to arrange a time to meet with a member of Staff, please contact the College Office by telephone: 08 8331 5100. **Calls will be attended to during the College Office hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm.** b. It is not permitted to request the personal contact details of College Staff (i.e. personal mobile phone). c. Each staff member is issued with a digital telephone and voicemail box. Parents/Guardians leaving a voicemail message must ensure they clearly state their daughter's full name, class, as well as their own name and contact number for a return call. d. The College Switchboard includes a Student Absentee voicemail inbox, which can be called at any time to report a student's absence from school. When leaving an Absentee voicemail, Parents/Guardians are asked to ensure that they provide the students' full name, class, as well as a brief explanation for cause and duration of the absence. e. Students are required to secure personal digital devices in their locker, prior to the start of classes each day.
3.2 EMAIL	a. All families are requested to provide an email address on enrolment. Updates can be made via Consent2Go. b. Staff have been issued with a College email address, and access their emails during school hours (unless absent or on leave). c. The email address for general enquiries is: admin@stdominics.sa.edu.au d. Staff will respond to emails within one (1) school day, during the school week. e. Emails received outside of school hours, including at night, over a weekend, during term holidays, or whilst the Staff member is absent or on leave, will be addressed within the nearest scheduled school day that the recipient is present, during operating/school hours. f. Where a Staff member's absence has been scheduled, their email account will issue an 'Out of Office' auto-reply. g. For urgent matters, please telephone the College Reception on 08 8331 5100, rather than emailing. h. To report short-term student absences, or to communicate organisational information, Parents/Guardians may use email.

3. COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
	i. Parents/Guardians are asked to NOT use email to notify the College of their daughter needing to leave school early, as College Staff may not be able to access emails during lesson time. Please contact the College Reception directly in this instance. j. Invoices related to Class excursions and activities are distributed via email.
3.3 TEXT MESSAGING	a. St Dominic's Priory College utilises an automated text message service to notify Parents/Guardians about unexplained student absences. b. These messages are sent by approximately 9:00am to any Parents/Guardians who have not contacted the College regarding their daughter's absence. c. Parents/Guardians may respond to the issued automated text message to confirm their daughter's absence. It is requested that when doing so, they include the student's full name and class. d. St Dominic's Priory College may also utilise the text message platform to contact families regarding other matters, such as: emergency school closure, or to alert Parents/Guardians of an important email. e. In the absence of a Court Order, text messages are sent to both Parents/Guardians recorded on their daughter's enrolment documentation, unless other approved arrangements are in place.
3.4 CONSENT 2 GO	a. Consent2Go is a platform through which the College can ensure its Duty of Care to students and their families. It is the channel through which Parents/Guardians are kept informed of the class activities that require parental consent to be given. b. In addition to its application as a digital consent form, Consent2Go includes a secure payment platform, through which Parents/Guardians are invoiced, and can pay, for extra curricular events or materials that are not included in the College's Tuition Fees. c. The Consent2Go user interface integrates with the College's main Content and Learning Management Systems, Synergetic and SEQTA, and provides families with a direct means to check and update key information such as contact details, student medical information, and publication permissions.

3. COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
3.5 COLLEGE WEBSITE	a. The College website is www.stdominics.sa.edu.au b. It provides access to information about the College, including important policies and documentation. c. It includes relevant contact lists, and links to other resources and communication platforms. d. It provides a digital calendar with upcoming events and should be synced to personal calendars (where possible) or else checked regularly, in case of updates to events.

3.6 SEQTA	a. St Dominic's Priory College uses the Learning Management System 'SEQTA' for day-to-day information management, internal notices, lesson planning and class resources. There are three portals: SEQTA Engage, SEQTA Learn, and SEQTA Teach.
	
	b. SEQTA Engage is where Parents/Guardians of Years 3 – 12 students can engage in their daughter/s learning, including accessing progress grades. Parents/Guardians of Years R – 12 students can access Semester Reports via SEQTA Engage.
	
	    i. Semester Reports are distributed twice per year – at the end of Term 2 (Semester 1) and Term 4 (Semester 2).
	
	    ii. In alignment with the St Dominic's Priory College Strategic Plan, the College has reduced its carbon footprint by distributing Semester Reports and other documentation electronically.
	
	c. SEQTA Learn is the Student portal, where students can access their timetable, class resources, and Student Daily Notices.
	
	d. SEQTA Teach is the Staff platform, providing access to key student information, timetables, lesson resources and a means through which to communicate with students and families as required.

3.7 SEESAW	a. Seesaw is used for R – Year 2 classes only. b. Seesaw is a platform through which day to day news, achievements and/or updates are shared directly with applicable families. c. Parents/Guardians should not use Seesaw to communicate directly with their daughter's class teachers. Communication should occur via College-issued staff email address.

3. COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
3.8 SOCIAL MEDIA	a. St Dominic's Priory College uses social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn primarily as a marketing tool, providing news and information on College activities to the College's wider community of current, past and potential stakeholders. b. To this end, the College's social media channels are public. The College website includes a Child Safeguarding Suite of policies, that provide guidance on contributing, sharing or commenting on digital content that is in the public domain. c. Members of the College Community who engage with the College via social media are understood to be familiar with the College's Parent Code of Conduct.
3.9 FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION	a. Appointments with Staff can be made via email or through the College Reception. b. If you wish to discuss your daughter's needs with a Class Teacher, it is important to remember that teachers are occupied by lessons and student activities between 8:30am and 3:25pm. Therefore, meeting times will need to be negotiated and may fall outside of school time. c. Communication between Parents/Guardians and College Staff is always welcomed and encouraged.
3.10 LEARNING CONVERSATIONS	a. Learning Conversations (previously known as 'Parent Teacher Interviews') take place towards the end of Term 1/start of Term 2, and the start of Term 3, to discuss students' progress, concerns, goals and any other issues. b. Bookings for these interviews are made online via the School Interviews website: www.schoolinterviews.com.au c. Translation services are available, upon pre-arranged request.
3.11 INFORMATION EVENINGS	a. A Parent Information Evening of Welcome occurs annually in Term 1, to outline the year ahead. It is an opportunity for College Staff to introduce processes, procedures, expectations and curriculum information, and address topics relevant to the growth and social/emotional development of girls. b. Throughout the year, additional Information Evenings may be scheduled for specific groupings of Parents/Guardians, to provide resources relevant to the age of their daughter/s on matters such as SACE, CyberSafety or Child Protection and Wellbeing. c. It is an assumed expectation that families attend these information evenings.

3. COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
3.12 SCHOOL OPINION SURVEYS	a. School Opinion Surveys are undertaken annually and are designed to obtain the views of Parents/Guardians, Students and College Staff on what they do well and how they can improve. b. Opinions on the College, Student Learning, and Student Wellbeing are sought from Parents/Guardians of all families, and a sample of students from the College. c. Opinions on the College as a workplace are sought from all College Staff. d. Key results of the survey are shared with the College Community via the annual Compliance Report. This is available on the College website. e. At various times the College will need to collate information from Parents/Guardians or students such as for, but not limited to, event attendance. When such survey data is collected, Microsoft Forms, Survey Monkey or Trybooking will be used. Data is encrypted both at rest and in transit.
3.13 COLLEGE POLICIES	a. College Policies are published on the College's website. This link is bookmarked in the sidebar of every digital edition of the College Newsletter. b. Policies are also archived within the 'School Documentation' section of SEQTA. c. Policies of most direct relevance to students are also provided in print form, within the opening pages of the College Planner, and may also appear on the SEQTA Learn Welcome page.
3.14 COLLEGE NEWSLETTER	d. The College Newsletter is issued once per fortnight. It is distributed via email to parents/guardians nominated email addresses, all staff, and students. e. The College Newsletter is hosted on the Schoolzine platform, and is accessible on desktop and handheld digital devices. It is hosted on the College website and is supported by Google Translate. f. The College Newsletter contains a mix of scheduled reports from a rotation of College Leadership, Learning Area Leaders and Year Level Coordinators, as well as important information about upcoming events, updates to College policies/processes, Child Safeguarding resources, key dates, student achievements and sporting results. g. It is an assumed expectation that families peruse this publication to keep up to date with relevant information.

3.   COLLEGE COMMUNICATION METHODS

METHOD	DESCRIPTION OF USE
3.15 COLLEGE PLANNER	a. Students in Years 4 – 12 are issued with a College Planner, which is a formal means of communication between the College and the family. b. The College Planner is not a private document; it is a formal means of written communication between the College and the family, and must be produced at the request of any member of College Staff who may wish to examine it or write a note therein. c. The College Planner contains general operational information for both student and parent/guardian reference, and policies pertaining to Child Safeguarding, Student Wellbeing and Teaching and Learning. These policies are kept updated on the College website, and are also documented within SEQTA. d. Information specific to the use and purpose of the College Planner is communicated within the opening page of the section marked 'General Information' of the planner itself.

COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

4. PREFERRED METHOD OF DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION

4.1 The use of emails is the preferred method of distributing information within the College Community, such as notes, invoices, and information flyers. Parents/Guardians should inform the College if they need to receive information in another format.

4.2 College Staff will contact a student's Parent/Guardian in a timely manner (by phone or email) to make an appointment to meet in person to discuss concerns that arise about a student.

4.3 Teachers will contact a student's Parent/Guardian if the students' behaviour is inappropriate and/or disrupts the teaching and learning process.

4.4 A member of the College Leadership team will contact a student's parent/guardian if a student's behaviour is impeding the good management and order of the College.

4.5 A member of the College Administration (i.e. College Receptionist) will contact a parent/guardian, or a provided emergency contact, if a student is injured while at school, complains of illness, or needs to go home for any reason.

5. PARENT/GUARDIAN PROCEDURE

5.1 At times, Parents/Guardians may have concerns regarding a student's academic progress, social relationships, or a general classroom matter. **These concerns should be raised directly with the student's Class Teacher in the first instance.** That is, the student's key year level teacher in Primary or Home Class Teacher in Secondary; giving a brief outline of the issue or concern.

5.3 Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:
   a. Contact the Class Teacher in writing, via email, asking to organise a suitable time.
   b. Contact the College, either by telephone or by visiting the College Reception in person, to request that the Class Teacher in question contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time.
   c. Speak briefly with the Class Teacher either before or after school hours, and request a suitable meeting time.

5.4 Where a Class Teacher has been approached and attempted a resolution, but the issue remains unresolved, an appointment should be made with either the Student Counsellor, Director of the Junior School (Primary) or Year Level Coordinator (Secondary) for further follow up.

5.5 Parents/Guardians should not expect a response from College Staff after hours or on the weekend.

6. STUDENT PROCEDURE FOR CONTACTING A CLASS TEACHER BY EMAIL

6.1 Students are encouraged to communicate face-to-face with their Class Teachers but may use College emails available to them when face-to-face contact is not possible.

6.2 Students in Years R – 12 are issued with a school email address. Students in Years 3 – 12 can use it as a means to communicate with their Class Teachers via the College emails available to them in the College network's global address book.

6.3 Students are encouraged to request a time to meet in person, in instances where their query cannot be addressed in a simple, quick email exchange.

6.4   Whilst some College Staff may choose to do so at their own discretion, students should not expect, nor rely upon, a response from their Class Teacher after work hours or on the weekend.

7.   EXPECTATION OF COLLEGE STAFF

7.1   College Staff will contact a student's parent/guardian in a timely manner by telephone or by email, to make an appointment to meet in person to discuss concerns that arise about a student.

7.2   Email should *not* be used in the first instance to initiate discussion of a sensitive issue, which had not been previously raised by or discussed with the parent/guardian. For sensitive issues and concerns, communication should be preferably via an in-person meeting, specifically organised to address those concerns.   Once agreed between the teacher and the parent/guardian (following a meeting or telephone conversation), email may be used for follow up communication.

7.3   When initiating, or responding to, communication with an individual student via email, College Staff are required to carbon copy 'cc' a colleague such as the Learning Area Leader, Class Teacher, or Year Level Coordinator relevant to the exchange.

7.4   College Staff will aim to respond to emails within one (1) school day, during the school week.

7.5   When an email is received from a parent/guardian that requires some time to gather information and respond with an informed reply, then the College Staff member should acknowledge receipt of the initial email and indicate when a fuller response will be sent.

7.6   Staff will use language that is clear and accessible to the parent/guardian, and the Community. i.e. Avoid or else explain the definition of confusing educational terms.

7.7   When on scheduled leave, College Staff will activate an auto reply message, informing that they are unavailable.

7.8   College Staff should not respond to offensive or abusive emails, and should seek advice from the Deputy Principal in those instances.

7.9   Access to a College Email account is provided to College Staff for sending and receiving emails related to the business of the College.

7.10   Users of a College Email account are required to respect confidentiality, privacy, legal and professional privilege, and the rights of others, and to ensure that the content and dissemination of emails does not jeopardise those protections.

7.11   Email resources should not be used in a way that causes excessive strain on the College's Information Systems; including use that consumes a large amount of bandwidth, such as sending emails with unnecessarily large attachments to several recipients.

7.12   College Staff must be aware that email messages which they send may be construed as representing the College's position. Where a staff member does not have authority, is not aware of the College's position, or where their personal view may differ from that of the College, the opinion should not be expressed.

7.13   We request that College email addresses are not used for personal purpose.

8. EXPECTATION OF PARENT/GUARDIANS

8.1 It is the responsibility of Parents/Guardians to provide the College with up-to-date contact information, including at least one mobile telephone number and one email address.

8.2 Please note that College email addresses are not used for personal purposes.

8.3 To contact a member of College Staff, please:

a. Contact the staff member via email in the first instance, requesting a suitable time to meet or call.

b. Contact the College, either by phone or by visiting the College Reception in person, to request that the staff member in question contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time.

c. Speak briefly with the staff member either before or after school, and request a suitable meeting time.

8.4 Please do not request to contact College Staff on their personal mobile phones.

8.5 Please send only non-vital messages via email. For example, do not use email to inform the College of time-sensitive matters, such as changes to school pick-up arrangements, as College Staff may not see the email in time. In these instances, please telephone the College directly.

8.6 Please note that Class Teachers are not usually available to respond to emails during teaching time, or whilst on duty. Teaching Staff will typically access their emails daily, and will respond as soon as practicable; usually within one (1) school day.

8.7 For medical and health concerns, please contact the College Reception directly, via telephone.

8.8 Contact by email may be used to advise the College of short-term student absences through illness, or to submit organisational information.

8.9 Please do not seek to discuss, in detail, a student's academic progress, learning expectations or behavioural issues by email. These are best addressed in person, or over the telephone. Use email to arrange a suitable time with an appropriate member of College Staff, to discuss these matters. When agreed between College Staff and the parent/guardian (following an initial meeting or telephone conversation) email may be used as a form of ongoing communication, in follow up.

8.10 Parents/Guardians should refer all school-related matters to the College, and should not approach other students, or contact other Parents/Guardians directly about any issues or concerns.

9. REVISION RECORD

Document Title	Communication Policy				
Document Type	Policy				
Document Date	January 2024				
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