



**Silver Tree**  
STEINER SCHOOL

# Email Guidelines

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2018

This procedure is applicable to: All Staff and Parents

AUTHORISED BY: Head of School

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## **EMAIL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER AND PARENT COMMUNICATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Silver Tree Steiner School recognises that electronic mail (email) is a valuable communication tool that is widely used across our society. Staff members are provided with Silver Tree Steiner School email accounts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of parent/teacher communication and internal staff communication.

The school reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to the school's educational mission.

### **EMAIL PROTOCOLS FOR TEACHER AND PARENT COMMUNICATION**

#### **FOR PARENTS**

When using email to correspond with staff, parents are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for communications with staff.
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only. When any doubt exists, or contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is good practice to have a trusted relative/ friend preview the wording prior to sending the email.
- Email messages to staff should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Keep emails succinct and avoid assumptions.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR EMAILS INITIATED BY PARENTS**

Please be mindful of the following:

- Most teachers prefer to speak directly to individual parents in person or via telephone and use email mainly for setting up meetings or for issuing reminders.  
Please note that some teachers read their email messages in the morning before school, some read them at the end of the day, and some read them during the school day.
- Teachers have many children in their care. Please be aware of the potential for a very large number of emails that your child's teacher may receive in any one week.
- For these reasons, please remember that if you choose to send an email message to a staff member, you will receive a timely response, however it may not be immediate, and it may not be via return email.

**When using email:**

Please remember that your child’s teacher holds your child’s well-being and your concerns with the utmost care and respect. Please ensure all correspondence with your child’s teacher reflects your own care and respect so that healthy outcomes for all can be achieved.

- Please use email for non-vital or non-urgent messages only. The staff member may not receive an email message by the end of the school day.
- For vital or urgent messages please use the telephone to contact the office.
- Your child’s academic/learning progress is best addressed by scheduling a personal conference with your child's teacher. Use email to set up the meeting.
- When agreed between the teacher and the parent (following a face to face meeting) email may be used in place of a communication book as a form of regular communication about a student’s day at school.
- To fulfil the school’s legal obligations, all correspondence regarding absences must continue to be sent to [welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au](mailto:welcome@silvertree.wa.edu.au)
- Please remember that email is not necessarily confidential and can be subject to Freedom of Information regulations. Confidential information is best conveyed by personal contact.
- The school maintains email accounts for teachers to facilitate parent/teacher communication and internal as well as system-wide staff communication. The School reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to the school’s educational mission.
- Please be mindful of the appropriateness of your email content. Amusing or special stories not directly related to your child, jokes, chain letters, or commercial solicitations are not helpful and reduce valuable teaching and preparation time.

**Always include:**

- Something positive
- Kind thoughts as you formulate the email. This will ensure a respectful tone.

**Always avoid:**

- Initiating an email or responding to one if you are feeling emotional or “triggered”
- Any discussion or personal information related to other students, parents or staff members.

**GUIDELINES FOR EMAILS INITIATED BY STAFF**

When using email to correspond with **parents**, staff are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for parent communications
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only. When any doubt exists, or the contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is important that staff seek the approval of the contents from the Head of School or Education Coordinator prior to sending the email.

- Whole class emails need to be passed via the Education Coordinator before being sent out. Simple reminders for parents may bypass the Education Coordinator.
- Use the **BCC** field when emailing more than one person.
- Email messages to parents need to be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Keep emails succinct and avoid assumptions.
- Use the most current class list to ensure up-to-date email addresses are used.
- Care should be given when using student names. Refer to students by first name, initials or your son/daughter depending on the content. Do not discuss non-related students.
- Please be reminded that some parents may not check emails daily, thus your message may not be received in a timely manner.
- Please be aware of the potential for a very large number of emails that families may receive from the school in any one week and keep your correspondence to a minimum.

**The school email can be used for:**

- General information such as; class activities, curriculum, projects, tests, deadlines and special events.
- To arrange a meeting/telephone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue e.g. I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance.
- To follow-up on an issue that has previously been discussed
- On-going communication about a student instead of a Communication Book
- General or specific school related queries of fellow staff members

**Always include:**

- Something positive.
- Kind thoughts as you formulate the email. This will ensure a respectful tone.

**Always avoid:**

- Initiating an email or responding to one if you are feeling emotional or “triggered”
- Any discussion or personal information related to other students, parents or staff members
- Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent. (e.g. 'I am concerned that your child's work has deteriorated recently and was not at school again today.')
- Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face-to-face. (e.g. I am concerned that your child may have a learning disability)
- If you have any doubts about sending an email, forward the email to the Education Coordinator or Head of School before sending.

- If you have received an email that triggers strong emotions, DO NOT RESPOND IMMEDIATELY. Wait until at least the following day and speak with the Education Coordinator or Head of School for support before sending a response.

### **Generic Email Response**

If a staff member believes that a topic is too sensitive for an email reply, here are some examples of generic responses:

*Thank you for your email. I feel this concern is too sensitive to discuss in this way. I would prefer to speak in person regarding this matter. I will call you on (state the date and time) to discuss this matter further. Thank you.*

*Thank you for your email. Silver Tree Steiner School does not use email to discuss sensitive and/or confidential student information. To best address your concerns and quickly answer your questions, please feel free to call me at 92954787 and I will be happy to discuss this with you further. Thank you.*

### **Staff to Staff emails**

When using email to correspond with **other members of staff**, all staff are asked to be mindful of the following:

- Only use the school system provided email account for school related communications.
- Contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues are always best discussed face to face. Use email to set up the meeting only.
- When any doubt exists, or the contents of an email may be deemed to be sensitive, it is important that staff seek the approval of the contents from the Head of School or Education Coordinator prior to sending the email.
- Email messages to fellow staff members need to be consistently respectful.
- All emails that reside on the school server may not be confidential. This means that email messages may be requested by the public under the Freedom of Information laws and may, unless they are exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.
- Use the CC field when emailing more than one person, so that all recipients are aware who has received the correspondence. This will ensure clarity when staff members are required to discuss issues.
- Be mindful of whether you are replying to sender or replying to all recipients and of the impact your return comments may have upon others in the conversation.