

EMAIL POLICY

Revision	Authorised by	Date	Adopted by	Date
Draft 1	Headteacher	November 2019	Governors Committee	Agreed 18/11/19
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Signed.....S Foote Date.....18/11/19.....

Chair of Governors

Introduction

The School operates in a fast paced and, at times, highly pressured environment, in which email is accepted as one of the primary methods of communication used on a daily basis. Email may even be the best way to communicate a particular message, but in an age of digital information 'overload', all staff should be mindful of the impact of an excessively email driven culture and make smart choices about what, when and how to communicate with others.

With many individuals now accessing emails across multiple personal and work devices, it is increasingly important to use email appropriately in a way that fosters productivity and efficiency whilst enabling staff to manage a reasonable work life balance.

It is also important that staff are aware of how best to use emails to enhance instead of hinder working practices and relationships with others, to be sure our communication choices are improving the quality of the working environment at Glossopdale School.

Policy aims

This policy covers all staff at the School and sets out what is considered acceptable behaviour in relation to the use of emails between staff and others. This includes internal correspondents, i.e. colleagues, team members, students or volunteers, and those external to the School, such as parents and carers.

Policy principles

Email communication is highly beneficial for speed, minimal cost and convenience. They are a formal written form of communication which is covered by a number of laws in the UK, meaning they can be used for legal purposes (e.g. an employment tribunal or court of law as evidence where it is deemed necessary).

Although it is often regarded as such, email should *not* be considered an informal method of speaking with others when dealing with School business, despite it being a fast and easy way of communicating. It is also important that it is recognised by all staff that intensive or overuse of email can result in negatively impacting recipients in a number of ways.

Sending Emails

In terms of what is currently considered good practice:

- Consider whether an email is the most effective method of communicating your message. A conversation, meeting or phone call is often more effective. This can be followed up with one summary email to confirm discussions (if necessary).
- Avoid using 'Urgent' in the subject. If the matter is urgent, a conversation is likely to be more appropriate.
- An email should have a clear purpose. Email works well for the purposes of information-giving or to request an action. Email is not a suitable medium for discussion.
- Be careful with any other purpose, particularly any that involve emotion! Remain respectful, treating others with dignity at all times. Avoid using email for complaining or venting - that is not an appropriate use of the medium. Don't use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact. A simple 'rule of thumb' is to ask yourself if you would say what you have written to the person's face
- Write all email messages in a professional register. Whilst the written style may sometimes differ, the general content of a work email should be consistent to other forms of written communication. Remain objective and professional, not using derogatory comments or anything that could be perceived as offensive.

- Avoid using uppercase text unless completely appropriate and necessary for particular emphasis (e.g. acronyms or initials of names), also **enlarged** font size or **red text**, as this is often interpreted as electronic “shouting”.
- Be careful when using humour or sarcasm within an email as this can be easily misinterpreted.
- Keep emails short and to the point. This will be beneficial for all dealing with large numbers of emails and assist with recipients working remotely on tablets or mobiles. As a rule of thumb, if you have to scroll down, it’s almost certainly too long.
- Do not leave the subject line blank. The subject line should begin: INFO or ACTION depending on the purpose.
- If you are requesting action, be specific about who you are requesting this from. Eg. if emailing re: a behaviour incident, avoid emailing a number of members of staff, all of whom may assume the email is addressed to another member of staff and therefore not take action.
- Re-read emails before sending from the perspective of the recipient(s). Ensure your communication is clear, in particular in relation to the positioning of instructions within the body of the message, clearly highlighting required actions.
- Ensure appropriate use of cc. by checking that all participants of an email need to be included.
- Be extremely cautious in the use of bcc. Emails created or received will be subject to disclosure in response to a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act or a Subject Access request
- Avoid forwarding long email threads. Do not expect others to wade through extensively long email trails to pick up important information you wish them to be aware of. Instead summarise the information or action required applying the guidance given in the bullet points above.
- If you are part time, include a digital signature that informs recipients of your working days.
- The school requires a standard disclaimer to be attached to all email correspondence, clarifying that any views expressed are not necessarily those of the school. Please note that this disclaimer is automatically added to emails sent externally.
- Be conscious of email use out of hours. The normal School working day for teachers is 8.15am to 3.15pm and, for the purposes of this guidance, “out of hours” emails are those sent before 8.15am and after 4.00pm.
- An auto-reply for external emails will be added to all staff mailboxes for out of hours. The message will read

Thank you for your email. It has been received and will be responded to in due course. At Glossopdale School we wish to encourage staff to have a healthy work life balance and therefore we discourage the sending of emails outside of the traditional working day. Where emails are received in the evening, over the weekend or during a holiday period, it is likely that a response will be given during the school’s normal working hours, which are from 8.15am to 4.00pm. Thank you in advance for your understanding in helping us to promote amongst ourselves a happy, healthy and productive workforce.

- It is accepted that emails may be prepared and sent out of hours, however, it should be fully expected that email will not be read before the next working day commences, and response times begin at this point. Where a more urgent response is needed, a follow up conversation in person or by phone may be more appropriate than a “chaser” email.
- Be mindful of the impact on others when sending lots of emails out of hours, even if you do not expect a swift response. Arriving to work to a full “inbox” unexpectedly can generate stress to recipients who may be deluged by emails both inside and outside of working hours.
- Create folders or add flags to emails to avoid requesting an email to be re-sent.

- All staff emails should not be sent and only a few members of staff will have access to sending these. A staff and student bulletin will be used daily via email first thing in the morning to send information to all staff.

Emailing personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information

Assess whether the information can be transmitted by other secure means before using email. Emailing confidential data without the use of encryption is strictly prohibited. Staff should ensure that they have read and are aware of the data protection policy. If your school email must be used to transmit such data, then exercise caution when sending the email. Follow the guidance above and *always* follow these checks *before* releasing the email:

- Verify the details, including accurate email address, of any intended recipient of the information
- Do not copy or forward the email to any more recipients than is absolutely necessary
- Send the information as an encrypted document *attached* to an email
- Provide the encryption key or password by a *separate* contact with the recipient(s) – preferably by telephone.
- Do not identify personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information in the subject line of any email.
- Request confirmation of safe receipt.
- Do not include the name of the individual in the subject line.
- Put 'CONFIDENTIAL' in the subject line and as a header in the email and any attachments to the email.

Receiving Emails

- School email should be checked at least once per day.
- Emails should be responded to within 72 hours (three working days). For emails sent out of school hours, this begins at 8:15am on the next working day.
- When responding to parents – any requests for information should be dealt with within 5 working days. However, a 'holding' email should be sent within 24 hours acknowledging receipt of the email.

Tackling problems

Where staff feel that colleagues are not making efforts to abide by the contents of this guidance it is reasonable to:

- Speak with the person who sent the email - ideally in person or by phone - reminding them about the principles within this guidance and encouraging them to follow its advice. All staff should aim to support and remind each other of the importance of respecting boundaries and working in a professional and efficient manner. However, entering into email discussion about appropriateness of emails is rarely to be encouraged.
- Speak to your line manager in the first instance for a second opinion on email content and further advice if necessary, if you feel it to be inappropriate.
- Try applying a degree of professional empathy to the message sent and consider whether you could be 'reading too much into it'. Feedback to the sender may still be necessary, but taking a step back and considering whether the issue is typical in your experience of an individual may separate a 'one-off' from a more serious issue.

This policy should be read with reference to the following policies:

- E-safety
- Staff acceptable internet use agreement

- Code of conduct for staff
- Data protection
- Disciplinary Procedure