Email Guidance and Etiquette

In the interests of promoting an appropriate work-life balance, as well as ensuring that all colleagues use email in a suitable manner, colleagues are encouraged to consider the following guidance.

It is important to remember that

- Email messages can be disclosed (except for certain exemptions) and presented as evidence in court or disciplinary procedures and can be forwarded unwittingly;
- Anyone can request to see any information that the School has stored electronically;
- Colleagues should always work within the terms of the school's Data Protection Policy and ICT Acceptable Use Policy

In terms of Data Protection:

- Double-check the recipients of an email before sending; don't assume Outlook has found the right recipient.
- If you suspect a personal data breach has occurred, please contact the Operations and Compliance Manager as soon as it is discovered, copying The IT Manager who may be able to intercept certain unread emails if alerted quickly enough. Further information is available in the Data Breach Policy.
- Be mindful when sending emails containing personal data. Information should only be given on a need to know basis (identifiable data includes: names, telephone numbers, email addresses etc.).
- Where possible, avoid sending special category information (data revealing physical or mental health, racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs)

Colleagues should not use their School email for non-School business.

Remember:
- For group/bulk mailings, use the **Bcc** field to help reduce unnecessary emails being sent when a person uses 'Reply All. To identify to the recipient who the email is intended for use the name of the distribution list e.g. Dear SPS Teaching Staff; Dear Support Staff.
- **Bcc must be used when emailing a group of parents.**
- To keep messages succinct, one screen depth should be the maximum as a general rule;
- Take care over wording to avoid offence – be over polite/reserved if anything;
- Be cautious when forwarding emails to others. Check earlier correspondence is suitable and delete unless it is needed. It may be preferable to reword and anonymise queries.
- Target your audience/recipients properly to avoid unnecessary/unwanted information.
- Do not include your personal phone numbers in Out of Office notices.
- If you are sending an important email to a large distribution group, consider asking a colleague to proofread it in advance.

Try not to email:
- As a substitute for face to face communication with colleagues. A face to face conversation can often ensure a swifter or more efficient resolution and prevent any misconceptions from arising, in particular for complicated queries/ongoing dialogues/explanations. In essence, therefore, e-mail is primarily to exchange information: emotive issues or discussions are better dealt with by direct contact, for example at morning break.

- When you are angry or upset with a situation or person to express your anger or upset. In particular, remember that all communication between colleagues should remain professional at all times.

Timing of Sending of Emails
- Staff will have a need to work at varying times of the week to maintain a suitable work-life balance. This may mean choosing to compose emails at times that are convenient for some but not others.
- As a rule of thumb, please try to avoid sending emails on weekends or before 7:00am and after 6:30pm on weekdays unless it is your team's agreed way of working or in exceptional circumstances.
- If it is convenient for you to compose emails at other times, it would be helpful if you could either use the **delay send option** or save it as a **draft**. This is especially important for line managers to consider, as individuals may feel they need to respond to emails from their line managers.
- Exceptional circumstances might include medical emergencies/ cover - such emails should be flagged as High Importance or replaced, if appropriate, by phone calls - or, for example, arrangements for co-curricular events that need to be made at this stage.
- In terms of replies, clearly the exceptional circumstances as outlined in the previous paragraph do warrant urgent replies. However, the general expectation should be that replies should, in general, arrive during the hours suggested above.

Please avoid the following:
- Using mass email lists as a shortcut for direct communication with a tailored recipient list (for example when sending a task reminder to a group where many of the group have already completed the task);
- 'Reply All' where this is unnecessary;
- Sending large attachments (no more than 1MB);
- Embedding large images in the email;
- Sending attachments to unnecessarily large numbers of people;
- Circulating "funny" forwards using school email lists.

Be kind to your colleagues
- Compose your message sensitively, clearly and concisely.
- Use AI tools considerately when drafting emails. They can help with phrasing, but make sure your final message is accurate, professional, and appropriate in tone and length.
- Do politely draw attention to actions and/or deadlines e.g. in the subject header state whether the email requires **action** or whether it is for **information.**
- You might want to consider the selective use of **bold** and/or blue highlighter if you think it is helpful.
- Review before sending to ensure the message makes sense.
- Enter a brief but meaningful subject when you send an email.
- Consider using the High/Low Importance and Follow Up flags to make it easier for colleagues to prioritise when responding to their inbox.
- Please use the "To" line for colleagues from whom you expect an answer.
- **Think carefully when using the cc button** – does that person really need that information? If not, don't copy them in on the email. Colleagues who have been cc'd into an email can be expected to read it but not reply. If you are cc'd into an email, you may reply if you feel it is appropriate to do so.
- Make it clear if you want a message forwarded and to whom, BUT don't dump information on others when you should be taking responsibility for circulating it yourself.
- Colleagues should not be expected to regularly check emails outside of normal working hours. If a matter requires urgent attention during an evening, weekend, or holiday, a phone call or text may be more appropriate.

Be kind to yourself
- Make appropriate time to switch off email outside working hours and during school holidays, particularly when there are more important things to attend to: family, friends, exercise, sleep, etc.

Be professional during lessons/meetings

- There is no expectation that you should need to read your emails during lessons: if you are needed urgently, you will be contacted in person.
- Do use a 'Do not disturb' or equivalent function to silence your mobile device during meetings, lessons, and while in the dining hall or Staff Room.

Out of Office:
- During any extended period where you anticipate checking emails less frequently during normal working hours (for example, during school holidays, absence through illness etc.) please ensure you set an appropriate 'Out of Office' auto-reply. Your message should include alternative contact details for urgent matters.

Parental Communication
- Parents are informed that during term time, staff are busy during the day. Parents can expect replies by the end of the next working day. Sending brief "holding replies" to acknowledge receipt and setting a time frame within which a complete reply will be sent can be helpful.

Staff Distribution Lists

Distribution List Name	Who is in this?	Example Use
All Staff	SPJ teaching staff SPS teaching staff All support staff	● Changes to a school policy, system ● Information affecting all staff
SPS Academic Staff	SPS teaching staff Some SPS support staff i.e. Technicians, Development, Admin Support	● Duty Rota ● Open Morning Briefing - FAQ ● Finding SEND information
SPJ Teachers & Admin Staff	SPJ teaching staff SPJ support staff	
SPS Teachers (Only)	SPS teaching staff	● Homework Timetable ● Internal Exam Timetable ● CPD opportunities relating to teaching staff ● Information on T&L workshops
SPJ Teachers (Only)	SPJ teaching staff	
Support Staff	All support staff	● Maintenance schedule for the holiday period
School Administrator SchoolAdmin @stpaulsschool.org.uk (SPS only)	SPS school administrators	● For administrative support from the team in the SPS Staff Room