



<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Communication Policy</b>						
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## COMMUNICATION POLICY

### 1. PURPOSE

Effective, efficient and appropriate communication is beneficial to all stakeholders associated with Stanford Lake College. The intention of this policy is not to stifle good communication, it is an attempt to deal with some of the problems and pitfalls that could arise.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a two-way process involving the sending and receiving of information. However, its value lies in informing, educating, motivating and engaging others, as well as building our brand and reputation. To this end, communication is everyone's job and all employees of Stanford Lake College are accountable for doing so in accordance with this policy.

Communication should be clear, concise and unambiguous. Honest and open communication is encouraged. All communication should enhance the Stanford Lake College brand. Employees particularly need to be aware that while communicating in their personal capacity, they could be affecting the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE image. They also need to be mindful of the potential legal implications their professional and personal communication may bring.

All communication should be respectful; non offensive and age appropriate. The subtle subtext of specific body language, innuendo and sarcasm can do as much damage as the spoken word.

The default language of communication at STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE is English.

Non-negotiables for all communication at Stanford Lake College:

- Communication must be accurate
- Communication must be prompt
- Communication must be professional
- Communication must enhance the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE image
- Communication must not bring the school into a position of legal liability

Where communication is deemed to be unacceptable, the Grievance Policy may be used.





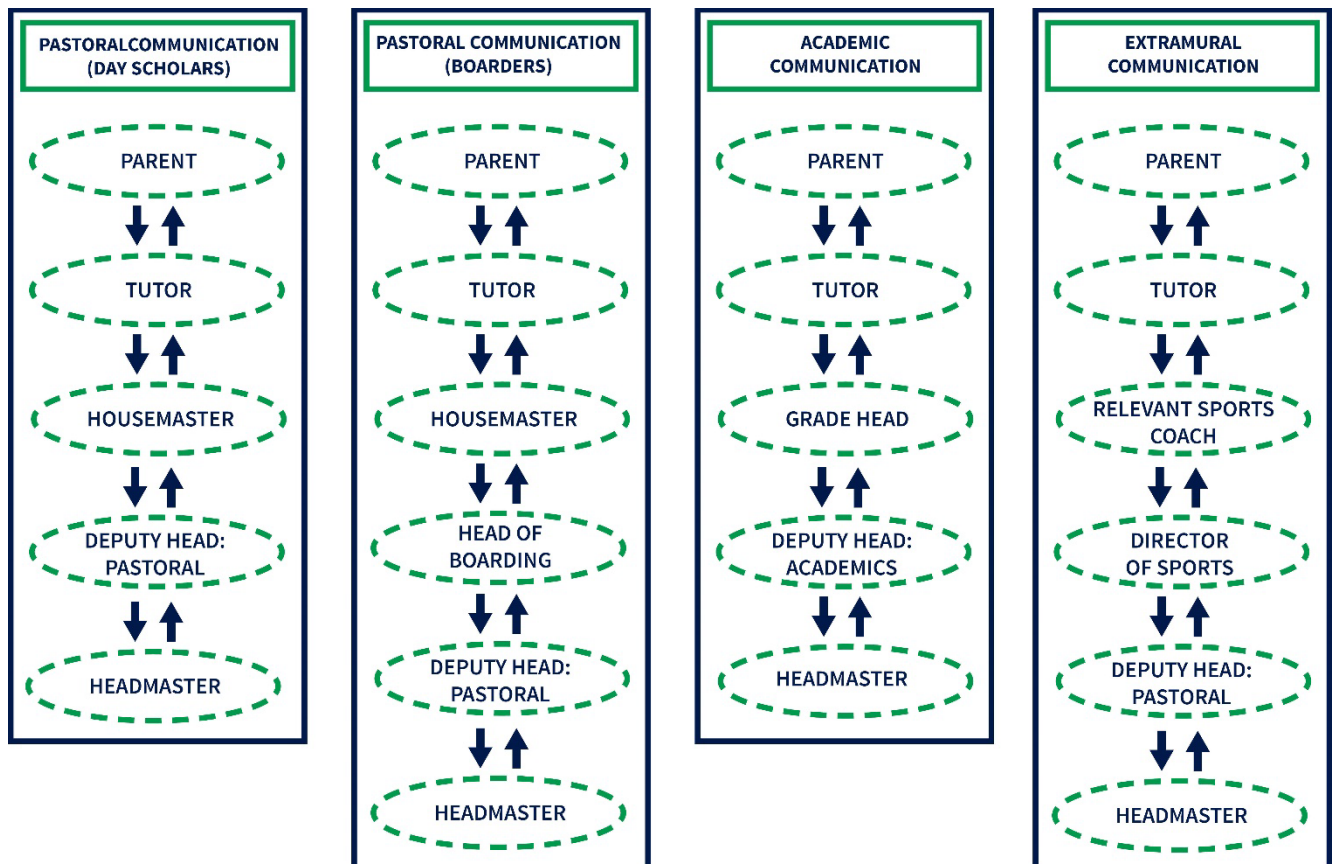
All communications are expected to be made in line with the school's Privacy Policy and in line with The Protection of Personal Information Act No 4 of 2013 (POPIA), which promotes the protection of personal information and the retention of documents by public and private entities. The school's policy guides the way in which all employees of Stanford Lake College are required to use, disclose and destroy personal information appropriately, transparently, securely and in accordance with applicable laws. It also stipulates for what purpose this information will be used.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all employees, parents, pupils and service providers of Stanford Lake College. Communication covered in this policy includes the following: Verbal; Telephonic; SMS; E-mail; Letters; Newsletters/ magazines/ pamphlets/ brochures; Photographic Images; Social Media; Reports; Web Page; Press / Media; Access to Information; Contracts and Code of Conduct; Legal; d6; ADAM and Alumni.

### 4. GENERAL ORDER OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND STAFF

The following chains of communication should be used between parents and staff:



### 5. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

#### 5.1. VERBAL





## Staff

Professional norms of communication should apply. Communication with pupils should be age appropriate, non-threatening and respectful. Shouting and intimidating body language or behaviour should not be part of the way we communicate with each other and particularly not so with children.

When communicating with parents, staff should be professional, prompt and clear.

## Colleagues

A friendly yet professional communication style is expected from all employees.

A staff meeting for academic and administrative staff is held every morning, the details of which are minuted.

## Parents

Parent communication with staff and other parents should be respectful and non-threatening.

## Pupils

Communication between pupils should be non-offensive and language that is deemed inappropriate by the wider STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE community such as swearing and discriminatory language is unacceptable.

Communication with all staff, including service staff, should be polite and respectful. Traditional norms of addressing adults within a school context should apply: Sir, Ma'am, Mr [Name], Mrs [Name], Ms [Name] should be used.

## **5.2. TELEPHONE**

Contact tree: The reception desks are the front line of telephonic communication. All front of house calls should enhance the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE brand. Contact lists are included in the staff contact details and information booklet. School contact numbers are on the webpage.

School phones: These are to be used for business purposes. Private calls may be made within reason. Overseas or expensive calls should be cleared with your line manager.

Personal cell phones: Staff are advised to use the school number and not to give out personal cell phone numbers. It is not an expectation that personal cell phone numbers should be divulged to the wider school community. If calls or SMS messages are received after business hours, unless genuinely urgent in nature, these will be answered at the start of the next business day. Personal calls for own account.

## **5.3. SMS / WhatsApp Group Messaging**

Staff may want to make use of group WhatsApp for tutor groups or to provide feedback to parents on sports teams or other instances where we want information passed to parents. Please take the following guidelines into account:

- If you are inviting pupils to join a WhatsApp group, make sure to add your immediate supervisor/line manager;
- Always ask permission before you add a person to a WhatsApp group. Send the link to the





WhatsApp group. (POPI Act)

- Always keep to the intended purpose of the group.
- Do not spam the group.
- Do not be offended if members leave. Not everyone requires the same information.
- Do not create groups with minors who do not know each other.
- Do not have one-on-one conversations in the group.
- Limit communication on groups between 6PM and 6AM. Understandably if it relates to boarding operations communication it may be necessary.
- Groups involved with boarding operations may need to post on groups between
- If someone asks a question of a personal nature (for advice) do not respond if someone else has already answered, or else respond directly in a private message,
- The group is not a political platform. No arguing, no heated opinions, no fear mongering, no fake news. Always check your sources before you share.
- Never use the group to berate someone or air grievances. This must be done face to face in a professional manner.
- If offensive material is posted on a group and you are the Administrator, please make the person aware the material is inappropriate and delete it. If you are not the Administrator post a comment to say that this is inappropriate and that you disagree or exit the group to avoid being complicit.
- When the group has served its purpose, exit and delete the group.
- Never post information on behalf of the School unless you are authorized to do so.

Anyone with access to SMS message sending technology needs to be mindful that over usage of this means of communication will lessen its effectiveness as a means of communicating urgent information. No SPAM messages may be sent through any of the school networks.

## 5.4. E-MAIL

Response time: All e-mails should be responded to within one working day and at the least an acknowledgement of receipt should be sent the same working day.

Out of office: If you cannot reply within one working day an out of office message should be posted. If appropriate, alternative emergency contact details should be supplied.

Register / style: All e-mails should be professional, concise and fit the brand image of the school. Language use must be appropriate.

Signature: The corporate digital signature must be used for all 'first send' school e-mails. Internal e-mails do not require a digital school signature. This e-mail signature may not be customised. A personal e-mail signature can be used for private e-mails.

Corporate image: When sending school e-mails from the school domain and when using the school e-mail signature, the sender should be aware that he/she is representing the school and that various employment rules and regulations apply. When sending personal e-mails from personal e-mail addresses, care needs to be taken not to bring the school into disrepute.

Disclaimer: The school has a legal disclaimer and an environmental awareness tag to attach to official e-mails. (See bottom of last page)





## **To; CC; BC protocols:**

To: addresses the mail to an individual or group of individuals. This implies that all those who have been addressed should reply to the sender to acknowledge receipt.

CC: Copies the mail to people who need to know. Replies to CC'ed mails are not expected as a matter of course. It is optional as to whether one wants to reply or not.

BC: Sends as a blind copy and is hidden from other addressees. Replies are not required.

Reply and Reply to all: Great care needs to be taken when 'replying' or 'replying to all' to ensure that your reply goes to the correct people.

Forwarding mails: Check to see if an attachment has in fact been included on the forwarded mail before sending. Mails marked 'Confidential' should not be forwarded unless first cleared with the sender.

General: Do not send junk or spam mail through the school network. When forwarding mail from home computers, please ensure that the machine is virus free. Adequate security software should be installed and it should be updated on a regular basis.

## Group email messages:

The sender should think who the message is intended for and ensure that the appropriate list of addresses has been selected. The sender should establish why the person or group needs to know the information and then establish what information needs to be sent. Care needs to be taken to ensure the message adequately addresses the desired transfer of information and the sender must try to read the message as if they were the receiver of the message. Before sending the message it should be approved by the respective line manager. Across all channels, professional norms of communication should apply. Communication should be age appropriate, non-threatening and respectful.

## **5.5 LETTERS**

Checking: All official letters must be checked by the line manager responsible for the section.

Language register: A formal business style should be used for official communication. Accuracy is important and the checker should check for spelling and grammatical errors as well as content.

Official branding: Only the official STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE letterhead may be used. No customising of this letterhead is allowed. The crest, colour and font have been trademarked. Please use formal typeset, Calibri for official documents.

Copies: Please ensure that copies are sent to all colleagues who may be affected by the content in the letter. One copy must go to your designated head / line manager and one copy to reception.

## **5.6 NEWSLETTERS / MAGAZINE / PAMPHLETS / BROCHURES**

Purpose: These can serve an archival, promotional and communication function.





Style: The tone should be age appropriate and should enhance the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE image.

Archive value: Please ensure that content and names are correct as these will be referred to as reference sources in years to come. The Head's PA will serve as the archivist and make sure that these resources need to be available. People referred to need to be correctly named for any future reference.

Official / pupil / unofficial: Every effort must be made to inform the reader as to which constituency produced the communication and what the intended market is. Unofficial communication can represent the school in a positive or in a negative light. No school newsletters or magazines should bring the school into disrepute. Pupil generated material must be vetted by an adult staff member.

Branding: The school marketer / marketing department should be consulted when these publications are going out into the public domain.

## 5.7. PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

Appropriateness: Care must be taken not to allow any photographs that would generally be regarded as inappropriate by our school community to be taken or to reach the public domain. Particular care needs to be taken when these images could offend the subject or could be used by potential predators. All parents of new pupils will sign off on acceptance of the School's Privacy Policy as well as the school's right to use photographic images of children in the Declaration of Understanding and Acceptance form, during the registration process.

Editorial control / register/ style: The editors of various school publications must ensure that photographic images that are used in school material enhance the brand value of the school. The school marketer / marketing department should be consulted when unsure about the register or style to be followed.

If in any doubt, don't use the image.

## 5.8. SOCIAL MEDIA

All communication that is generated while in the employ of the school should enhance the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE brand. Disciplinary action as detailed in the Code of Conduct, the Social Media Use Policy and the IT Acceptable Use Policy may be taken if the employee or pupil is in breach of contract and of the specific rules contained in these documents.

The social media includes Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and others yet to be developed. If these are generated as communication tools for school purposes, management must be informed before they are launched in the public domain. This would include teaching Blogs, Websites etc. Similarly, communication between individuals or groups who represent the school should declare these to management before launching in the public domain.

Should members of the STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE community become aware of unofficial editing of digital sources that represent the school, or posting of any kind that purports to represent the school but doesn't, they are expected to notify management immediately.





Personal / Private vs Professional / Public: All employees need to be aware of the legal implications of the inappropriate dissemination of proprietary information, harassment and unequal online relationships particularly with students. Employees must use sound judgement. When using the school's network or e-mail address or name he/she must act within the norms of this school's professional standards. STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE and its employees need to be mindful of the legalities concerning checking digital communication by using a fake identity to gain access to these sources. Employees are reminded not to reveal confidential information online. The school will continually educate pupils and staff about the changing online rules and technologies. If in any doubt, don't use it or ask your line manager for approval.

## **5.9. D6 COMMUNICATOR / d6 CONNECT**

The d6 platform is a comprehensive communication tool between STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE and parents. The calendar, news items and resources sections are updated regularly by the school. The school may also use this platform to put out important or emergency alerts to the parent body.

## **5.10. PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress reports for pupils will be uploaded on the ADAM system

Legal document: Staff must be mindful that the school report is a legal document that should accurately record the pupil's attainment during the course of a term. The pupil's name, as shown on ADAM, must be recorded as shown on the admission form. Abbreviated forms or 'call names' can be used within the document, where appropriate.

Accuracy: Every effort must be made to have statistical accuracy in this document. The spelling grammar and general language usage and layout must also be correct. This is an important marketing and accountability tool for the school. Reports to be in full colour and professional looking. A report writing guideline is sent out regularly by the Deputy Head of Academics.

Archiving: A copy of every report must be archived either in a digital or paper-based form.

Testimonials: Written in the capacity of an employee of the school should also be archived.

Distribution: Reports are distributed via ADAM.

Certificates: All certificates handed out during prize-giving ceremonies to be in full colour.

## **5.11. WEB PAGE**

Web Manager: STANFORD LAKE COLLEGE has designated this task to the Marketing Manager. This person must update information on the webpage and check that the information is correct. It is the responsibility of every employee to feed updated information for the website to the Marketing Manager.

Editorial licence – branding. The web manager's job may also entail regular scanning of information sources such as Wikipedia, Facebook, Google links, Twitter accounts etc.





Contact details: Staff names, teaching and responsibility areas and school contact details will be posted on the webpage. Personal contact information will not be shown.

## 5.12. PRESS/MEDIA

Contact Tree: The default first point of contact is through the reception desks. The receptionist will then route calls through to the relevant section heads. Any press statements may only be made by the Head of School or a specifically designated spokesperson. Information such as advertisements, brochures etc. must be cleared with the Headmaster and the Marketing Manager.

### Information levels

General information: All general information fed to the press must go through the Head and the Marketing Manager. This would include advertisements, sports reports and results etc.

Crisis Management: Crisis management will be dealt with as per the Crisis Management Communication Plan and the Crisis Management Policy:

Minor issues will be handled by the Marketing Manager and Headmaster.

Major issues to be handled by the Headmaster and the Crisis Management Team (CMT) as stated in the Crisis Management Communication Plan and the Crisis Management Policy. The various security and evacuation procedures tend to run through the Deputy Heads. Communication between the school and the wider community must go through the Headmaster. The Chairman of the Board may well become the avenue for press liaison and communication. No staff member may make comments to the press on behalf of the school without first getting the approval of the Headmaster.

## 5.13. ALUMNI

Members of the Old Stanfordian Association will be kept up to date by means of quarterly newsletters that are sent out via email to members on the database. Regular updates are also made on the dedicated Alumni social media pages. Matriculating pupils sign a consent form to be added to the database. Alumni can opt in and out of being on the database at any time by emailing [alumni@slc.co.za](mailto:alumni@slc.co.za)

## 5.14. MEETINGS

A staff meeting for academic and administrative staff is held every morning and the details of which are minuted.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) conduct weekly meetings that are also minuted. Letaba Educational Trust (LET) sub-committee meetings are held on a quarterly basis and then a full LET meeting is also conducted on a quarterly basis. Each meeting is minuted.

## 6. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

**Full details of access to information can be found in the School's Privacy Policy - This document is the undertaking of Stanford Lake College to conform to the POPI Act.**







Upon signing employment contracts, all employees of Stanford Lake College agree to abide by the points stated under the section “CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE”, which outlines the employee’s legal obligations around the protection of personal information and to the non-disclosure or improper use of any confidential information relating to the business and/or clients (learners and parents) of the School. Further to this, all employees of Stanford Lake College sign a separate Confidentiality and Non-disclosure agreement.

Databases: These are for school use and must not be given out for commercial purposes. If in particular circumstances database information needs to be distributed it can only be done with the approval of the Headmaster.

Personal contact details: No personal contact details or personal information may be distributed by school employees. Individual employees may choose to have their contact information in the public domain (cell phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses etc.) but this may only be done if specific instructions in this regard have been given by the person concerned.

## 7. LEGAL

Responsibilities: All employees are expected to act within the laws of the country and the Constitution of South Africa. They are also bound by the contractual relationship between the employer and employee. Any attempt to damage the reputation of the school either willfully or through negligence is unacceptable. The reciprocal rights apply to the employee. It is obviously potentially damaging to all parties if the school is brought into disrepute through careless or damaging communication.

Disclaimers: These need to be attached to official communication such as e-mails, newsletters, school social network sites and any official webpages.

Waivers of rights: These are spelt out in the various school contracts and policies. They may be amended from time to time with due notification to the affected constituencies. Employees are reminded that they cannot waive any rights with regard to criminal liability.

### **Example of E-mail Disclaimer:**

#### DISCLAIMER AND CONFIDENTIALITY NOTE:

The information contained in this e-mail and its attachments is confidential. It is intended solely for use by the recipient and others authorised to receive it. If you are not the intended recipient, kindly inform the sender immediately on 015 276 6103 and take note that any disclosure, copying, distribution or taking action in relation to the contents of this information is strictly prohibited and may be unlawful. Stanford Lake College respects your privacy and acknowledges that insofar as this e-mail may contain personal information related to you, others and/or your company, such personal information will be processed in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 / 2013) and the school’s Privacy Policy. No warranty is given that this e-mail is free of viruses, errors, interception or interference. No liability or responsibility is accepted if information or data is for whatever reason corrupted or does not reach its intended recipient.

