

## Parents and School in Sync.

A strong trusting relationship between home and school is so important for a child. The two major learning environments for a child need to be in harmony.

- Children need consistency between parents, and between home and school. Consistency of expectations between home and school provides a child with a clear understanding of what is required. Good habits are learned through reinforcement.
- Trust between home and school increases the child's respect for both parents and teachers. By their positive talk, parents reinforce the appreciation of a child for teachers. Teachers also must be careful not to criticise parents... even in the staffroom. A negative culture towards parents or school develops when gratuitous criticism is offered.
- It is very much in the parents' interest to know their child's teachers and to work together to help the child reach his or her full potential. Parents have the duty to ensure that the other inputs in the lives of their children are consistent with their own messages. If they fail to do so there is the danger that, no matter how dedicated they are, their own efforts will be undercut by the competition. Children are wired to imitate those who take an interest in them... for better or for worse. Children imitate whoever they spend time with, not only in classrooms, but in Facebook, on DVDs, and on mobile phones.

Such a relationship requires a high level of communication between home and school, between teachers and parents. There need to be effective structures for regular communication in place, as well as a desire to be proactive, foresee each other's need for information, and back each other up.



**The mouse is mightier than the sword.  
Wield it with caution**

## Emails between home and school

Emails are like people. They have good and bad points. At their best they are great communicators. At their worst they cause misunderstanding, fail to communicate emotional nuances, and by their broadcast qualities can irreparably harm a reputation.

Communication is a good thing. The more communication the better, provided the communication is positive or constructive and appreciated by the other party. When staff and parents use emails to communicate we all need to observe some common sense protocols that allow us to maximise benefits and avoid the collateral! The advantage of email's speed is also its shortcoming. Friendships can be lost by too much haste and too little thought before pressing 'send'.

# Common sense guidelines for emails

The following guidelines serve well. Many are standard etiquette for email communication. Parents may wish to adopt them in guiding children in use of electronic messaging in all its forms.



Greet your recipient by name - it's polite.



Emails are at their best with content that is informative. Avoid emails that have emotional overlay. Avoid negative emails. Pick up the phone instead.



Group emails have the potential to waste many people's time if they are not pertinent. It is courteous to avoid timewasting emails, and even joke emails broadcast to groups.



Avoid emails for topics in the least confrontational, and for any issue that could at all possibly be taken the wrong way. Pick up the phone instead.



We must never email words we wouldn't say to a recipient's face.



We must not write about third parties using emotion charged words they would be uncomfortable to read about themselves. Interpret behaviour in a most charitable light and stick to the facts.



If an email is received that is contentious. Neither staff nor parents should ever reply to such emails. A face to face discussion is needed.



Emails of any sensitivity must not be forwarded to a third party without permission of the sender. This is obviously all the more important if there is distribution to a group.



Brevity is the strength of email but it can be all too easily mistaken for impoliteness. Before pressing 'send', if it is not an email response, recheck the text and add some niceties.



Sign off with your name and contact details - it's helpful.



CC the home room teacher in all communications touching on the welfare of a child.

**Source:** One school's approach to building a positive email culture.