



Communications and Engagement Policy -PP028

Introduction

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO Code: 22732), delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificates. It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the College can provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where open, transparent and positive relationships occur at all times with the College community.

Scope

This policy applies to the communication and engagement between the College and the College community.

Definitions

College community	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All school staff members • Students • Governing body (College Board) • Family members (i.e. parents/guardians of students) • Contractors • Volunteers
Electronic communication	<p>Includes internet-based tools for sharing information among people. It may include (although is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) • School website • Newsletter • Video and photo sharing websites • All electronic/digital communication applications (e.g. email communication).

Objectives

The objectives of this policy relate to the:

- acceptable communication channels between the College community to foster open and respectful communication amongst all College community;



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- communication of the College policies and procedures;
- methods of communication used and for what purpose to provide up to date information about current and upcoming events, share news, and achievements to the College community;
- management of personal and confidential information in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations;
- processes in place to raise issues or concerns for appropriate resolution.

Expectations

The College will communicate information to the College community so as to provide timely information, protect the rights of individuals, uphold its duty of care obligations and to comply with the College's legal requirements. Effective communication is essential in providing students, teachers, parents and the community with the necessary information to make appropriate decisions and/or keep informed.

The **relationship between families and the College is a very important partnership** in ensuring a student's educational progress and wellbeing. Central to achieving this is trust and respectful communication between all members of the College community.

The College is committed to using appropriate communication channels and techniques to build positive learning environments in order to inspire and educate all students to succeed in becoming productive and valued citizens.

Parent's expectations

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure:

- that their phone, mobile, home address and email contacts are up to date so that communication is ongoing as required,
- that they read information from the College's electronic platforms (e.g. website, newsletter, emails etc) to stay abreast of the current happenings at the College,
- they maintain high ethical standards in their engagement, references and dealings with the College to build and support the College community.

It is important that the College has current and correct details, phone numbers and email addresses of parents to ensure there is timely communication. Parents can contact the College if there are any changes to ensure communication can occur in a timely manner.

Implementation

Electronic communication is the primary method of communication which acts as an integral tool for communicating College events, performance and activities to the College community.



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This includes the use of the College website, newsletters, email communications, and telephone.

In addition to electronic communication, members of the College community may request printed copies of policies and other documents from the College. The availability of interpreters or having key documents in community languages can also assist with communication and can be requested. It is important that all communication by all parties is respectful and courteous.

Members of the community will also have regular, formal opportunities for engagement with the College staff at:

- Open Days,
- Parent/Teacher/Student conferences also known as Student Support Groups (SSGs),
- Parent Information sessions, or
- informal face to face meetings with classroom teachers as required, and
- other events in which the College community is encouraged to participate. Dates for these events are published in the College Newsletter or on the College website.

If parents wish to arrange a meeting with their child's teacher or the Executive Principal, please contact the College via email at admin@prc.vic.edu.au.

The College will use various electronic platforms to share information in an instantaneous format and in a respectful and courteous manner. In order to enable effective communication, the use of one or more of the following communication avenues will be used to communicate effectively with the College community.

- **College website:** publication of related information online about the College policies, events, activities and programs. Most college policies are available on the College website or upon request to the College Administrative office.
- **Email:** a form of communication to and from the College community and wider community in a recorded format.
 - For non-urgent matters, school staff including teachers will respond to emails within two school days during school term time.
 - School staff are not required to respond to emails at night or at weekends and ordinarily will not be checking emails during those hours,
- **SIMON** is the student management system used by the College to communicate with parents and guardians, primarily through text messages regarding student updates, excursions, and other important information.
- **PAM** is a mobile application used by the College for parents and guardians to communicate about students' information. Through PAM, parents and guardians can:
 - Notify the College of student absences



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- Update their child's medical information
- Provide consent for activities such as excursions
- View their child's timetable
- **Academic reports:** the College will issue academic reports twice yearly at the end of Term 2 and Term 4.
- **College meetings or parent/teacher/student conferences or Student Support Groups (SSGs):** a form of in-person/online communication to provide avenues to discuss or raise issues.
- **Face to face meetings:** parents are encouraged to meet and speak with school staff and get to know them. However, it is important to make an appointment and have confidential conversations if regarding anything specific about their child.
- **Telephone:** All phone calls should be made to the Administrative Office. The College Office is generally open for calls between the hours of 9.00am and 4.00pm. Telephone communication is useful for confidential queries, or urgent messages that need to be relayed to students, teachers or parents.
 - For non-urgent matters, the College will endeavor to return calls as soon as possible.
 - It is not appropriate to contact school staff on their private mobile numbers.

Guidelines

At all times, the College encourages the College community to provide positive and constructive comments. Concerns can be addressed by contacting the College directly to ensure they are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner via email admin@prc.vic.edu.au.

All communication must be respectful in tone and language used. Parents are encouraged to speak to staff in a respectful manner (and vice versa) and get to know them.

If the tone of the email from a parent is perceived as aggressive or offensive, it is recommended that the staff member seek advice from the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader. In these cases:

- Do not respond in kind.
- Be respectful in the tone and language used.
- Acknowledge the concern raised in the response and if possible, address each issue or concern.
- Ask the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader to proofread the email or if unsure how to proceed, please seek advice as appropriate.



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Other considerations (Social Media)

- Only the Executive Principal is permitted to introduce the use of new social media sites on behalf of the College and make moderate posts to the pages. All affiliated social media accounts that are connected to the College will abide by this policy.
- Information or content that staff or community members would like shared on social media, must be approved by the Executive Principal and comply with the College's privacy policy and other associated policies.
- Proper resource citations and copyright laws must be upheld.
- Facebook and X users are able to 'Like' our page or view posts.
- Online comments are NOT private. Information, internal discussions, or specific information about students, staff or other parents should not be shared. When interacting, even on the strictest settings, parents should act on the assumption that all postings are in public domain.
- Users cannot author a post of their own on the College social media pages. The College reserves the right to withhold any content it deems to be in breach of the College's policies. This includes discriminatory, illegal, obscene or misleading/fraudulent comments, spam or any content which may break intellectual property laws.
- When responses are permitted online, users are personally responsible for the content that they post, share and respond to online. When posting online, all information is considered representative of the user's views and opinions and NOT of the College.
- When comments are not permitted or enabled on the College's posts, users may connect regarding a post by contacting the author of the post or the Executive Principal, and as such, details will be provided (if deemed appropriate).
- Failure to comply with this policy may lead to an account being blocked from the College social media pages.
- Media permissions, including photograph or video usage (relating to the use of students' images, schoolwork and names), will be gained on enrolment (and updated/requested when required). The College will not use any student image without prior parental approval.
- Parents contacting a teacher by phone will be directed to the teacher's voicemail if they are not available, where they are welcome to leave a message for the staff member.
 - It is important to note that teachers are often in the classroom and in may not be able to respond immediately.
 - Staff are expected to check their voicemail on a regular basis and respond to phone messages as soon as they can. In the interest of protecting privacy, no teacher can provide private or home phone numbers to parents.



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- Parents can expect to receive a response from staff within 2 working days. If it is not possible to address the concern or question, then the staff will let the parent know and pass the information on to the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader.

Complaints

Complaints can be lodged in line with the College Complaints Policy in relation to how the College has engaged or communicated to the College community. More information about the complaints process can be found in the **Complaints and Grievous Policy on our website**.

Governance.

The Executive Principal will have oversight into the implementation of this Policy.

Reporting

To ensure appropriate oversight, the Board will receive relevant reports on any issues raised by the College Community from the Executive Principal at its regular meetings or as appropriate.

Communication

The College will communicate this policy and all relevant policies via the College website to the College community.

Contact

If you have any concerns, contact the Executive Principal.



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