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## **POLICY STATEMENT:**

Email allows us to communicate more efficiently and effectively but it may also become a burdensome means of communication. To maximise email communication, staff are encouraged to comply with the guidelines provided below:

1. **Answer swiftly:** The golden rule for email is to **reply within 24 hours**, and preferably within the same working day. If your response email is lengthy and complicated, send an email confirming receipt and let the sender know that you will get back to them. Ideally, you should continue to respond to parents' email during school holidays but when you are aware that you will be out of office with no access to your email, set an automated response which specifies when the sender should anticipate a response. An example of the standard St Benedict's formal automated response:

"Thank you for your email. I am out of the office at this time and I am not checking email. I will not return until February 15. If this is an urgent matter, please contact Jane Doe at [email and phone number optional]. Otherwise, I will respond to your email as soon as possible after my return."

## **Response times:**

The following timescales for checking email accounts apply at St Benedict's:

- School Administration/Auxiliary Offices: at least three times per day.
- Headmasters and Deputies: at least three times per day.
- Heads of Department and Year Heads: at least twice per day.
- Teaching staff: at least twice a day.

All incoming emails should be replied to within 2 working days, with an aim to acknowledge receipt within 24 hours. Certain emails may be prioritised in light of their content.

2. **Use a meaningful subject line:** Use a subject line that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. This makes searching for the email easier and gives the recipient an idea of the email's content so they can prioritise their emails.
3. **Don't abuse "Reply to All":** Only use **"Reply to All"** if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message. It is, however, advisable that when a parent cc's a member of management into an email that the staff member responding does likewise – this will keep management abreast with issues raised and attend to.
4. The use of email groupings such as **All Staff**, **High School Staff** and **Preparatory Staff** is predominantly restricted to management and should be used with the utmost discretion. If you would

not stand up and address the entire staff publically, don't do so via email.

5. **Use the Bcc field:** When sending to many people, some people put all the email addresses in the "To" field. There are two drawbacks to doing that: (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to a large number of recipients, and (2) you are publicising someone else's email address without their permission. Rather use the Bcc field to protect people's privacy.
6. **Include the message thread:** Include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. We all receive many emails and we can't remember each individual email. Leaving the thread may take a fraction longer in download time, but it saves the recipient time looking for the related emails in their inbox.
7. **Read and then send:** Treat email like any other official school document. Read it before you send it. **Spelling and grammar errors** are just as unfortunate in emails as anywhere else in our school correspondence. Look out for potential misunderstandings, the tone, and inappropriate comments; we use email because it is quick and easy but precisely that quickness may cause more trouble than you bargained for!
8. **Don't share confidential information:** Email is just too risky a place to include confidential information.
9. **Avoid abbreviations and emoticons:** Be careful when using email abbreviations such as BTW and LOL in business or professional emails. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). A lot of people don't know what they mean or misinterpret them, so it's better to drop them. Although they can be used to convey tone, they are not considered to be professional.
10. **Don't attach unnecessary files:** Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive.
11. **Don't forward junk:** Do not forward chain letters, virus hoaxes, chain email solicitations for charitable causes even if they sound bona fide, funny pictures and jokes. Staff who forward emails which are racist, sexist, culturally insensitive, or in any other way professionally inappropriate will face disciplinary action.
12. **Be concise:** Do not make an email longer than it needs to be. Email is harder to read than printed communications. A long email can be very discouraging and can be abandoned before the recipient gets to your final point all the way down at the bottom.
13. **Answer all questions and more:** Make sure you answer all the questions and pre-empt new questions in your reply. If you don't answer all the questions in the original email, you're wasting time.
14. **Make it personal:** The most effective word in marketing is "you"? Not only should the email leaving St Benedict's be personally addressed, it should also include personal, i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective. Remember that email correspondence between staff and parents is relational! Emails between staff and other schools are also promotional.
15. **Use the proper structure and layout:** Reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper so the structure and layout is very important for email messages. Make your paragraphs short



and use blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or separate each point with blank lines to keep the overview.

16. **Do not overuse the High Priority function:** If everything from your desk uses the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it.
17. **Avoid capitals:** IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING!
18. **Avoid over-formatting:** Remember that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. 20% of email recipients cannot read html or rich text email; they can only receive it in plain text.
19. **Don't request delivery and read receipts:** This will almost always annoy your recipient before he/she has even read your message. Besides, it usually does not work anyway since the recipient could have blocked that function, or his/her software might not support it.
20. **Do not recall a message:** Chances are that your message has already been read. A recall request just looks silly then. It is better to send an email saying you have made a mistake.
21. **Avoid infringing copyright:** Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator; you might infringe on copyright laws.
22. **Keep it short and simple:** Email is harder to read than printed material. People don't give email the same brain power as they do when reading for example a letter. Try to keep your sentences to no more than 15-20 words.
23. **Do not forward internal mail:** Internal emails intended for staff are not written for the public domain. Please do not forward them into the broader St Benedict's community or into the public domain.
24. **Respect confidentiality:** Please respect the privacy of our boys and parents. When requesting feedback on a certain individual e.g. when requesting a tutor report, target the relevant recipients. Do not use the "All Staff" button
25. **Do not send an email in anger:** Do not send emails in haste or in anger. Consider the facts and consequences of sending an email before you click on Send. It is often best to compose difficult emails and allow them to percolate overnight.

#### Sources:

<http://www.advantage-positioning.com/images/23%20Rules%20of%20Corporate%20Email%20Etiquette.pdf>

Updated by AC Oosthuysen March 2024

