

CoStA - COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1 Introduction

The City of St Albans Swimming Club aims to foster respectful, positive and inclusive relationships between all its participants. Good communication is a key part of achieving this. This policy aims to ensure effective communication amongst all participants. Effective communication is where information is clear and accurate and people feel they have been heard.

All participants whether volunteer, committee member, coach, parent or swimmer need to bear in mind these aims. The tone and language in any communication should be respectful. Any concerns should be raised in a constructive manner and you should seek to consider the point of view of the recipient.

It is the responsibility of all participants to follow the communication policy when representing or dealing with the club.

This policy does not cover communications relating to welfare issues. Please see the club's welfare policies for information on this topic.

2. Written communication

It is generally expected that written communication with club representatives (i.e. volunteer position holders, committee members and coaches) will be by email. Email addresses for these functions are listed on the club website.

If any participant sends an email raising a point or query, he or she should be clear about the point or query and about the information or outcome sought. If the subject is emotive, it is advisable not to communicate immediately after a trigger event but to revisit the matter after a period of reflection. It is good practice to re-read any email out loud before sending in order to determine whether the tone or words could be misinterpreted.

3. Responsiveness

3.1 All participants

It is respectful and promotes good relationships to respond to all directly addressed emails promptly except where it is entirely clear that the email is for information only (addressees who are copied in rather than being directly addressed are not expected to reply; it is therefore important for the sender to identify clearly who the email is being addressed to and who the response is requested from). It is good practice for club representatives to acknowledge receipt and thank people for contributions received in an email even if the email does not require any action.

3.2 Club representatives (volunteer position holders, committee members and coaches)

It is expected that club representatives respond to any email which is raising a point or enquiry within three working days¹. If the club representative is unable to respond in full to the point or query made, then it is expected that a short email explaining that the matter is being looked into or information gathered is sent within the three working days. The time taken to look into the matter will vary by situation but the working assumption that this will be within a further week. If a full response is not possible by that point, an email should be sent explaining the status and providing a reasonably prompt timeline for further responses (which should then be followed).

¹ A "working day" means a day other than a Saturday or Sunday when banks are traditionally open for business.

Any follow-up action referred to in a response email is as important as the initial action or response. The club representative should take note of any follow-up required and ensure it is completed in a reasonable time frame.

This section 3.2 does not relate only to emails from parents to club representatives. The same principles apply to emails between club representatives, e.g. for emails from a committee member or volunteer to a coach and *vice versa*, emails from a committee member to another committee member, or from a coach to another coach.

4. All club representatives

Unless unavoidable (e.g. due to illness) or during club shutdown periods: (a) volunteer position holders and committee members should aim to check their club emails at least every three working days and (b) coaches should check their club emails daily. More frequent checking may be appropriate at critical times (such as immediately prior to an event at which the representative has responsibility e.g. meet, trip or important meeting). While, during periods of unavailability such as holiday, the representative could seek to offer alternative contact points or make cover arrangements, club representatives cannot be expected to look at email during such times.

Club representatives should read the whole of an email received and should ensure that they have addressed all of the points or concerns raised in the email.

In communications with parents, club representatives should not dismiss their concerns or use a dismissive tone. While the issue raised might appear minor at the club level, at the parent or swimmer level it is usually a priority. If unsure of the tone, the club representative could have an appropriate fellow club representative read the draft email (subject to any confidentiality requirements).

If in the course of their duties a club representative comes across personal information relating to swimmers or parents (such as personal details or financial information), the privacy and confidentiality of this information must be respected.

5. Committee members

Frequently matters discussed by the committee are confidential and/or sensitive. Committee members shall not discuss outside of the committee the confidential matters raised unless authorised by the committee to do so.

6. Coaches

6.1 Communicating with Swimmers and Parents

If a coach feels that an individual meeting with a swimmer is advisable, coaches will strive to bear in mind the age of the swimmer and if necessary will ask the parent (or another adult as agreed between swimmer and coach) to be present during the meeting. Coaches should avoid meeting swimmers out of sight of others unless previously agreed by all interested parties.

Coaches should seek to accommodate meeting requests from parents and/or swimmers within a reasonable time.

6.2 Communicating with the Committee

To the extent a coach wishes to raise points with the Committee, it would normally be the practice that coaches would communicate this via the Head Coach, who in turn will communicate via the Coach Liaison Officer. In situations where it is more appropriate to do so, coaches may approach the Coach Liaison Officer directly.

6.3 *Changes to arrangements*

It is important that coaches are aware that changes to swimming schedules need to be communicated to the CoStA community as soon as possible.

7. **Parents**

7.1 *Communicating with Coaches*

It is important that parents have opportunities to communicate their concerns to the coaches. Parents wishing to discuss specific issues with a coach must contact the coach outside of coaching sessions. This should generally be done via email in the first instance. To the extent an appointment is agreed, it would normally be before or after a coaching session.

Coaches generally have a very heavy work load on various fronts and parents should be mindful of this in seeking appointments. It should also be appreciated that while that 15 minutes with the coach outside of his or her scheduled hours may not seem much, when multiplied across all swimmers the coach is responsible for, this could end up being a large commitment – for example, the Head Coach is squad coach to over 50 swimmers, which would mean over 12.5 hours of meetings.

7.3 *Communicating with Volunteers and Committee Members*

While volunteers and committee members must make every effort to comply with the policy and the club generally maintains a high standard of professionalism in its dealings, parents should appreciate that the club is a largely volunteer run organisation without the advantage of the infrastructure which a commercial or educational institution would have.

7.2 *Communicating with Swimmers and Parents*

Parents may come into contact with swimmers other than their own children, including during activities as an official or volunteer. It is important that all parents promote a positive and encouraging ethos which further supports the aims of the Club stated above, including in dealings with other parents.

8. **Swimmers**

8.1 *Communicating with Coaches*

Just as the coaches respect the swimmers, it is the expectation of the club that swimmers will also treat their coaches with respect. Swimmers are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have regarding swimming or training in the first instance with their coaches. Swimmers should arrange to see their coach either before or after a training session. This, however, should be prearranged with the coach concerned.

8.2 *Communicating with Officials, Volunteers and Parents*

In the normal course of training and competing swimmers may be interfacing with officials, volunteers or parents. It is important that swimmers behave politely and respectfully in those communications.

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