COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES AND PARENT/GUARDIAN COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

Communicating with and involving Parents and Guardians in Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between home and school plays a very important part in a child’s education.

Communication between school and parents is seen as essential to promote a mutual understanding between both parties to enhance the quality of education at this school. With effective communication it is believed that a more supportive environment will develop.

Two-way communication is a critical factor in the partnership between parents and the School. Where a partnership exists, it is easier for parents to feel confident about the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom and to solve problems.

We will seek to keep parents well informed about what is happening at their child’s school.

At Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School our staff will acknowledge any inquiries, concerns, requests or complaints from parents and other school community members and will welcome any questions or feedback. Our Policy in dealing with inquiries, concerns or complaints is simple and straightforward.

Our school will maintain processes to ensure inquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are addressed promptly and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. Every effort will be made to resolve any issues at the school level.

This Policy ensures that enquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly and contribute to continuous improvement.

2.0 HOW OUR SCHOOL COMMUNICATES WITH PARENTS:

There are a number of avenues of communication within the School, eg; newsletters, diaries and appointments with staff. Communication is a critical aspect of ensuring the best possible outcomes for individual students. In the first instance please contact your child’s Pastoral Care Teacher/Class teacher to make an appointment to discuss any areas of concern. If you are uncertain who to contact or need further clarification or issues are not resolved, please contact the Personal Assistant to the Principal for advice on further action.

It is not always possible to speak to academic staff during school hours, except during morning recess and lunchtime, if they are not on duty.

Should you need to contact academic staff, please phone and make an appointment for a meeting or leave your name and a message so that staff may return your call.

Please remember to allow sufficient time for staff to return your call dependent upon their teaching and pastoral duties on any given day.
A blue phone is available for use by students outside Student Administration. Students may use this during morning tea and lunch breaks. Permission from student administration must be obtained for use outside these times.

Communication will take place in many different forms:

- Regular information about the School through newsletters
- Portfolios displaying student progress – Junior School students only
- Formal written reports
- Parents and Friends meetings
- Parent information evenings
- Parent/teacher interviews
- Notes and letters
- Displays of children’s work
- Assemblies
- Special events and celebrations
- Student Guide
- Student Diary
- Policies
- Parent information sessions

Parents are welcome to talk to their child's teacher when they need to and should make an appointment to avoid disrupting the learning program.

2.1 Newsletter

A newsletter is distributed fortnightly.

2.2 Portfolios – Primary School

Portfolios will be produced and sent home and include work that gives an indication of the student's progress.

Portfolios will focus on the outcomes students are achieving, particularly in the School priority areas. A portfolio provides a record of a child’s learning throughout the year. The samples of work will:

- reflect a child’s progress and achievement;
- encourage the child to take responsibility and have pride in his/her work; and
- provide Parents and guardians with the opportunity to be involved in and informed of their child’s learning.

The work presented in this portfolio is not always your child’s best work but shows how they are developing.

2.3 Formal Written Reports

Preschool, Kindergarten and Years 1 - 6 reports are in Portfolio format and will be shared with parents at the end of each semester.

Years 7-10 receive a formal report at the end of Semester 1 and 2.

Year 11 receive an interim appraisal at the end of Semester 1 and a formal report at the conclusion of their preliminary year (end of Term 3).

Year 12 receive two formal reports – one at the end of Term 1 and one at the end of Term 3.
2.4 Parent/Teacher Interview Procedure

Formal parent / teacher interviews are conducted at various times throughout the year at both campuses. The dates of these interviews are published in the School newsletter.

**Senior School** - Information will be sent home prior to the interviews. Parents are to book interviews online via the PTOOnline link on the School’s website.

**Primary School** - Letters and forms will be sent home prior to the interviews and parents will be asked to nominate a time and the staff member they wish to see. Appointments will then be made and parents notified via the student.

Should a parent request an appointment outside of normal parent / teacher interview times, teachers will ring the parent and arrange a mutually convenient time.

2.5 Calendar

The School calendar is located on our website and includes all important activities, meetings and excursions for the School year. If you would like an item included in the School Calendar please contact the Assistant Principal – Head of Secondary.

The Principal approves all calendar dates and changes to dates. School activities take priority over social events. Where possible, dates will be advertised ahead of time, however, in some instances this may not be possible.

Calendar changes and updates are published in the School Newsletter. Extra copies of which are available from the Administration offices.

2.6 Diary Procedure

All students are provided with a School Diary. Diaries must be brought to school each day and carried at all times except for recess and lunch.

Diaries provide an invaluable means of communication between parents and teachers. When necessary, parents may write short notes in the diary to arrange an interview appointment, etc.

Please note: Absentee notes must still be sent in separately.

Diaries must be kept entirely free of graffiti, stickers or decorations and are not to be used as a social diary. Students not abiding by this rule, will be required to purchase a replacement diary from Student Admin.

**Mahers Lane** - Staff check school diaries regularly. Pastoral Care staff and parents/guardians are to sign the diary each week.

**Sunshine Avenue** – Diaries should be read and signed by the teacher and by the parent/guardians every day.

Diary notes from home should contain information from the parent relating to their child for that particular day, eg. pick-up or after school care arrangements.

2.6.1 Guidelines for the use of the school diary:

**For Students:**

1. Every student is required to have a School Diary.
2. Students are not to use the diary as a personal diary to record personal messages or social activities.
3. Students are to keep their diaries free of graffiti and in a clean and tidy state. Diaries deemed to be in an unacceptable condition will need to be replaced.
4. Students are to take their diary to class each lesson.
5. Pages are not to be removed or folded. If this occurs, a new diary will need to be purchased.

For Parents:

1. Parent/Guardian is to sign the diary each week.
2. Parents’ support of the diary system is essential for sound communication and monitoring of progress.
3. Parents should check that homework is not only completed but is being entered. If parents have any concerns they should contact the relevant Coordinator/Pastoral Care Teacher.
4. Students wishing to leave school early or be excused for coming to school late, are to provide a written note from the parent addressed to the Principal.
5. Please sign the diary at the end of each week in the space provided.

2.7 Parent Assemblies

Parents are invited to class Assemblies. Assemblies are notified in the Newsletter.

2.8 Parent Information Evenings

Parent information evenings will be notified in the Newsletter or a letter sent home to parents.

2.9 Interviews

Interviews will be of two types:

1. Parent/teacher interviews held as required at the request of either party.
2. Interviews for those parents who wish to discuss the student’s Portfolio or Reports.

2.10 Presentation Night

In December, an evening will be organised to enable the Lindisfarne community to farewell the Year 12 students and to view the presentation of the Annual awards.

2.11 Parents and Friends Association

The Parents and Friends Association is the forum for parents to discuss the education of their children, and members are also encouraged to embark on discussions of other key issues. Members are encouraged to discuss general education, safety, health issues, uniforms, matters that affect the staffing of schools, matters that have bearing on the welfare of students, as well as a whole range of local, state or national issues that arise. The Parents and Friends Association plays an important role in fostering community involvement by organising activities such as fundraising and social events.

It would be inappropriate for Parents and Friends Association meetings to discuss individual parent/student, teacher/student issues. These should be a matter for discussions between the parents and the teacher/Principal. In addition, it should be remembered that under the provision of the Education Act the Parents and Friends Association is precluded from exercising authority over the teaching staff.

The Lindisfarne Parents and Friends Association meets bi-monthly and the date and campus is advised in the School Newsletter. All parents, teachers and interested community members are invited to attend.
2.12 **Correspondence**

2.12.1 **Leave and General Information**

Letters regarding leave for students and general information should be in writing addressed to the Principal. These can be handed to the classroom teacher who will forward for placement on the student’s file.

2.12.2 **Complaints, concerns or requests please see Section 3.0**

2.12.3 **E-Mail**

Whilst email is a fast tool for communication, parents are advised that staff may not be able to immediately respond to email queries due to teaching commitments. Email is appropriate for forwarding items for information purposes, but not for urgent matters.

### 3.0 ADDRESSING INQUIRIES, CONCERNS, REQUESTS OR COMPLAINTS

Our school will maintain processes to ensure inquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are addressed promptly and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. Every effort will be made to resolve any issues at the school level. (see Introduction)

This Policy ensures that enquiries, concerns, requests and complaints are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly and contribute to continuous improvement.

The partnership between parents and our school is strong. Parents and school community members can be confident that staff will listen and respond to their needs and concerns.

#### 3.1 Principles underlying the policy

- In all matters the educational well-being of students is the first priority.
- All persons in the School community including students, parents, administrators, teachers and support staff have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents and community members are able to raise concerns and make enquiries, requests or complaints about any aspect of school life and have them dealt with fairly and promptly.
- Processes for managing inquiries, concerns, requests or complaints are straightforward and reflect principles of procedural fairness.

#### 3.2 Advice for Parents and Guardians - What can Parents do if they have a problem?

Many problems can be solved by seeking information as early as possible. If parents have any questions or concerns about their child's progress, or any other issues, they should contact the class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the School office to arrange a mutually-convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.

#### 3.3 Advice for Parents and Guardians - Process to follow when there is a problem.

- Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the School. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the School.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, a query, request or a complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. This can be arranged through the School office.
• Try to stay calm even if you don't feel it; being calm will help to get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry.
• If the issue involves an incident involving another parent’s child, do not approach the child or parent. Raise the issue with the School first.

3.4 **Recommended procedures for parents and guardians in raising concerns or complaints.**

3.4.1 **School-level resolution**

3.4.1.1 **Discussion with relevant staff member**

Contact the class teacher or other relevant staff member to discuss the concern/complaint. This is best done by making an appointment through the School office. The staff will work with you to resolve the problem.

3.4.1.2 **Review or investigation at the School level**

Contact should be made in writing as listed below. The Principal will work with you and the staff member to resolve the problem if your initial meeting with the relevant staff member did not resolve the issue. You may wish to formalise your concern/complaint in writing. The Principal will acknowledge the letter with a written reply as soon as possible, even if a resolution is not available at this stage.

The Principal will consider the issue and identify what action is to be taken and by when, and will clarify the process if a formal complaint is to proceed.

This action and timeline will be confirmed with you in writing. You should be aware that when a formal concern/complaint is made in writing about the performance of an individual staff member, that staff member will receive a copy of the document.

3.4.2 **Complaints regarding Students**

If a parent wishes to make a complaint about another student, then the parents should not contact the student or the student's parents. A letter should be addressed to the Principal outlining concerns. The Principal will then implement the Grievances Disputes - Procedural Fairness – Students, (a copy is available for parents to view).

If any complaint has been made against another student, the subject of the complaint has the right to be given a copy of the complaint and respond.

3.4.3 **Complaints regarding Curriculum**

All complaints regarding curriculum should be in writing and addressed to the Assistant Principal - Teaching and Learning, who will investigate the matter and advise the parents appropriately.

3.4.4 **Complaints regarding Child Protection Issues**

If a complaint is regarding reportable conduct or professional misconduct then the Child Protection Policy will apply. All complaints of this nature should be forwarded to the Principal in writing “marked Private and Confidential” or an appointment made to meet with the Principal through contacting the Principal’s Personal Assistant.

3.4.5 **Mediator Resolution**

If resolution is not reached at the School level, a Mediator may be brought in for assistance in resolving the issue. This will involve an independent review of the situation.
### 4.0 PARENT CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

The following is offered as the first point of contact regarding particular issues (phone numbers and contact details are available in the Student Guide).

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<th>Child's Progress</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Behaviour issues in class</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Behaviour issues in the School yard</td>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Child placement in class</td>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>School organisation</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>General enquiries</td>
<td>Reception</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Dress Code Policy</td>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<td>Uniform purchases</td>
<td>School Uniform Shop</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>Canteen</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Fundraising – whole school</td>
<td>Director of Marketing and Enrolments</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Contributions and charges payments</td>
<td>Accounts - Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Excursions/camps</td>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>Media/Publications Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Assistant Principal – Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Child Protection/misconduct issues</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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</tbody>
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### 5.0 PROCESS FOR SCHOOL STAFF - HANDLING ENQUIRIES, REQUESTS, CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

#### 5.1 Responding to verbal enquiries, requests, concerns or complaints

- Listen attentively and courteously. Determine whether the matter is an enquiry, a concern, a request or a complaint. If required by the parent, ensure access to an interpreter.
- Repeat your understanding of the issue and acknowledge the parent's feelings. It is important to focus on the issue and not on finding fault or blame.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Respond to all issues raised by the parent.
- Agree on action and timelines.
- Record the issue, the action and the outcome.
- Review the situation and confirm with the parent that the matter is resolved. If necessary, refer the issue to an Assistant Principal.
- If necessary, review relevant school policy or procedures.

#### 5.2 Responding to written enquiries, requests, concerns or complaints

- Acknowledge the enquiry, concern or complaint with a prompt written reply (within two days), even if a resolution is not available at this stage. The written reply should clarify your understanding of the problem, identify action and timelines and include a name and contact number. Respond to all issues raised. Any written reply must have the approval of the Principal or delegated Assistant Principal for academic matters or the Business Manager for financial matters.
- The seriousness of a complaint should be assessed. If it is capable of settlement at the School level, action should be taken to resolve the issue at the School level, and appropriate records written and retained at the School. If the complaint is sufficiently serious or incapable of resolution at the School level then outside assistance will be sought.
- At all times the Principal or delegate is to be kept informed of the handling of all complaints.
- Identify action and timelines.
• Confirm action and timelines in writing to parent.
• Maintain confidentiality at all times.
• Record the complaint, the action and the outcome.
• Review the situation and confirm with the parent that the matter has been resolved.

6.0 PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

• Act promptly: Find out as quickly as possible both the nature of the complaint and the outcome the complainant wants.

• Listen carefully, discuss the issues calmly and maintain confidentiality: Treat complainants with respect and courtesy. Approach the complaint with an open mind, taking the person seriously and letting them have their say. We should welcome complainants and assure complainants that they will be dealt with properly. Record all relevant details. Maintain confidentiality to protect complainants, their children and the staff involved.

• Focus on relevant issues: Keep the discussion to relevant issues and check the facts. It is important to hear all sides of the story and keep everyone involved informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint. Be clear about current Policy and processes.

• Give personal and specific responses: Give the complainant your name. Let them decide whether the matter is really an enquiry, a concern or a complaint. Be clear about what solutions the School can actually offer. Explain what will happen next and what steps and support are available. Make sure written responses address all of the issues, contain information and use plain English.

• Keep a record of complaints, timeline for action, action taken and outcomes: Recording details helps to ensure that the School deals with each complaint satisfactorily. In many cases some brief diary points and/or a note on the student’s file is all that is required.

A clear record is helpful where there are subsequent enquiries, concerns, complaints or investigation. Tracking complaints will help the School improve its policies and operations, both in managing complaints and in the areas of operations about which we receive complaints. The emphasis should be on learning rather than attributing blame. The Schools need information to plan for improvement.

• Reflect: How did the issues arise? How can similar problems be avoided?
7.0 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS OR SUGGESTIONS

THIS PROCEDURE REQUIRES THAT THE TEACHER / PARENT LEVEL HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN

Complaints arrive in person or via writing, fax, telephone, email. ➔ Respond to ALL complaints with 2 working days.

Find out what the problem is:
• what does the complainant want you to do?
• if you are not clear, contact the complainant to find out more.

If they are not satisfied, suggest they contact a mediator. Give them a name and contact number.

If you are the right person try to resolve the problem informally first eg meeting or phone call.

If resolved check if the complainant is expecting a letter confirming the conversation or meeting. Always make it clear they can take it further if they are not happy.

Principal ➔ Does the policy or administrative system need reviewing?

BE OPEN
BE POLITE
BE HONEST
- do not promise more than you can deliver
- deliver what you promise
BE HELPFUL
BE CONSTRUCTIVE
BE CLEAR
- on what the complaint is about and what a satisfactory solution would be

REMAIN PROFESSIONAL
ADDRESS THE PROBLEM
NOT THE PERSON
8.0 **STAFF CONTACTS**

Questions, queries, issues or concerns about any of the following from parents/students should be passed through communication channels. Issues should be referred, as necessary, to people based upon the following model.

*Should parents or students have a confidential matter that they wish to discuss or other avenues of communication are not suitable or have been exhausted please contact the Principal’s Personal Assistant.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Principal</strong></th>
<th>Chris Duncan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Assistant to the Principal</td>
<td>Julie Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business Manager</strong></td>
<td>Stephen Cooke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Assistant to the Business Manager</td>
<td>Deborah Conlin</td>
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**Teaching Staff Contacts:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Position</strong></th>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>Father Glenn Loughrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal – Pastoral Care</td>
<td>Meg Ayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal – Head of Secondary</td>
<td>Noelene Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 11 and 12 Coordinator</td>
<td>Simon Leach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 9 and 10 Coordinator</td>
<td>Matthew Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 7 and 8 Coordinator</td>
<td>Margaret Ayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal – Head of Primary</td>
<td>Michele Chandler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Coordinator</td>
<td>Jodie Cooper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Jo Hetherington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years 5 and 6 Coordinator</td>
<td>Tim Waugh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian (Primary)</td>
<td>Ian Ayers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal – Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Chris Bakon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of English</td>
<td>Nick Westhoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Coordinator</td>
<td>Suellen Walker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of HSIE/Religion</td>
<td>Bryson Coverdale</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSIE Coordinator</td>
<td>Melinda Rowe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Mathematics</td>
<td>Carol Knox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics Coordinator</td>
<td>Kay Richens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Performing Arts</td>
<td>Tracey Kriz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator of Performing Arts</td>
<td>Lucie Schuricht</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator of Art and Design</td>
<td>Ursula Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Coordinator</td>
<td>Margaret Gula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Science</td>
<td>Daniel Robins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science Coordinator</td>
<td>Caroline Jeffries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Sport and PD/H/PE</td>
<td>Gay Maynard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Technology &amp; Applied Sciences</td>
<td>Jo Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design and Technology Coordinator</td>
<td>Tony Wright</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of e-Learning</td>
<td>Jo Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET / Careers</td>
<td>Pamela Cooper</td>
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**Administration Staff Contacts**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Position</strong></th>
<th><strong>Name</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Manager</td>
<td>Phil Maynes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Human Resources Manager</td>
<td>Deb Robson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director of Marketing and Enrolments</td>
<td>David Stonier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts Administration</td>
<td>Kaija Keys - Finance Officer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chris Norman – Finance Assistant</td>
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<td>Belinda Layt – Finance Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolments</td>
<td>Julie Henderson-Jones</td>
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9.0 POLICY ADMINISTRATION

This Policy will be reviewed periodically, or in the event of any information or incident that indicates the need for a review, or following relevant legislative or organisational change.

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<th>Date of Policy Formulation</th>
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<td>Date of Adoption</td>
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<td>Signature</td>
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