



# Communications Policy

Audience:	Parents School staff Local Governing Bodies
Approved:	
Other related policies:	
Policy owner:	
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## An Overview of Communication at Civitas Academy

### Aim

To ensure that Civitas Academy is a thriving and successful educational setting, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and carers, and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

## Definition of communication

- Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected, and action coordinated.
- **Good communication starts with listening. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages are easily misunderstood, and communication breaks down.**
- Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.
- Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility has been carried out.

## Principles

All communications at Civitas Academy should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be shared/actioned/delivered within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Take account of relevant academy policies.
- Be compatible with our academy and Trust values.
- Comply with agreed practice for written communications with parents, carers and other external contacts.
- Ensure that consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the academy are inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

## Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

### Senior leadership

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

### All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

### Parents/Carers

- Read the key communications issued by the academy, including the newsletters and bulletins and where a response is required (e.g., school trip letter), reply within the established timeframe.
- Raise issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity with the academy in the appropriate manner.
- Act on the communication (e.g. attending special meetings).
- Communicate with respect and courtesy.
- Follow the Parent Code of Conduct.

## Methods of Communication between Staff

### Internal

- All staff receive an induction and induction checklist providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- Key dates, events and meetings are published every term for the following term, to enable staff to plan accordingly. This then informs the list of dates which are given to parents and carers.
- Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through face-to-face discussion, and where necessary, the use of email to follow up with. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Written communications should be sent electronically to reduce printing costs, but where hard copies are necessary, they should be placed in pigeonholes, in the staffroom, which staff should check daily or handed to staff personally.
- Where e-mails are used for communication, they should not require specific action to be taken, unless this has already been discussed in a face-to-face situation to clarify any points staff may have about what is expected.
- Whole staff professional development meetings take place every week on a Wednesday from 3.40-4.40pm.
- A full staff briefing is held every Monday morning at 8.30am via TEAMS. All staff are expected to attend. The diary for the coming week is discussed and the CINFO (Civitas Information) is uploaded onto TEAMS.
- Events are discussed in advance at meetings, but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions.
- The whiteboard in the staffroom is used for day-to-day notices, as well as a copy of the CINFO.
- Within each individual class, class teachers will produce content for bulletins where appropriate and keep their class pages on the school website up to date.

- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day when necessary.
- Some communication may take place at the end of collective worship/assembly. All staff must be informed of messages given to the children.

## External

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about academy life. This reinforces the important role that parents, and carers play in supporting the academy.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents and carers, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents and carers should always be addressed in an appropriate manner, e.g. Mr/Miss/Mrs etc. We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

## Communication between Parents/Carers and the Academy

To ensure there are clear lines of communication within the academy, please find below a range of ways that parents/carers can get in touch so that they know who to approach to ensure their query is dealt with effectively.

Your query	Who you need to talk to	How to get in touch
Anything to do with <b>your individual child</b> : their progress, behaviour or something that has happened on the school playground.	<p><b>Your child's Class Teacher</b> is always the first port of call for any of these queries; they may then involve the <b>Phase Leader or other member of the Senior Leadership team if necessary</b>.</p> <p>Phase Leader for Early Years (Reception): <b>Miss O'Reilly</b></p> <p>Phase Leader for Key Stage 1 (Year 1-2) <b>Mrs Alim</b></p> <p>Phase Leader for Lower Key Stage 2 (Year 3-4): <b>Mr English (Mrs Hargrave-Hammond - Maternity)</b></p> <p>Phase Leader for Upper Key Stage 2 (Year 5- 6): <b>Mrs Rapley</b></p>	<p><b>Make an appointment</b> via the school office <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a> 0118 467 6720 or drop them a short note which can be passed to them.</p> <p>Year group emails can also be used:</p> <p><a href="mailto:eyfs@civitasacademy.co.uk">eyfs@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year1@civitasacademy.co.uk">year1@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year2@civitasacademy.co.uk">year2@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year3@civitasacademy.co.uk">year3@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year4@civitasacademy.co.uk">year4@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year5@civitasacademy.co.uk">year5@civitasacademy.co.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:year6@civitasacademy.co.uk">year6@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></p> <p>Please note that each teacher will have different times available due to after school clubs and meetings etc.</p> <p><b>Please try to avoid 'catching' your child's teacher in the morning as they need to make a prompt start to the day.</b></p>
<b>Messages</b> about medical appointments, childcare arrangements, who is collecting your child etc.	<b>Office Coordinator:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A brief note/email</b> is best for these matters. Our Office Coordinator/Assistant will let teachers know and we have a record in case of any problems.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Anything to do with your child's <b>Special Educational Needs/ Disability (SEND)</b> provision or any concerns you have about possible SEND.	Again, <b>your child's class teacher</b> is the first port of call for any of these queries or conversations as they are the teacher responsible and know them best.	<p><b>Make an appointment</b> via the school office <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a> 0118 467 6720 or drop them a short note which can be passed to them.</p> <p><a href="mailto:senco@civitasacademy.co.uk">senco@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></p>

Your query	Who you need to talk to	How to get in touch
	They may then involve the <b>Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo)</b> , – Miss Skelton	
Any queries with <b>administration</b> : pupil records, contact numbers, admissions etc.	<b>Office Assistant:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Any queries with <b>finance</b> : dinner money, music lessons, school trip payments etc.	<b>Office Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Any whole school concerns or questions regarding core curriculum.	<b>Deputy Headteacher:</b> Mr. English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Any whole school concerns or questions regarding our pastoral curriculum.	<b>Assistant Headteacher:</b> Mrs Rapley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Anything to do with whole school issues or ideas for the future or to give some feedback.	<b>Executive Headteacher:</b> Mrs Ducker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
Any concerns regarding <b>child welfare</b> or family circumstances which we need to be aware of or to discuss <b>serious issues or concerns</b> .	<p><b>Education Welfare Pastoral Lead Designated Safeguarding Lead:</b> Mrs Heslop</p> <p><b>Deputy Head and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:</b> Mr. English</p> <p><b>Assistant Head – Pastoral People and Culture and Upper Key Stage 2 Lead:</b> Mrs Rapley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an appointment via the office or write a brief note.</li> <li>• 0118 467 6720</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@civitasacademy.co.uk">office@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> <li>• <a href="mailto:safeguarding@civitasacademy.co.uk">safeguarding@civitasacademy.co.uk</a></li> </ul>

## Letters

Staff will respond to parents' letters within 48 hours (2 school days). Letters can be given to your child, to give to his or her class teacher, given to the school office or posted. As with emails, letters will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Where the letter is in relation to a complaint made by the parent/carer, the complaints policy should be followed to ensure that the appropriate procedure is followed. Any letters which are sent to parents/carers by the academy must be checked by the Phase leader/AHT/DHT before they are sent.

## E mail

The school has an electronic mailing system it uses to communicate with parents and carers. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Phase leader/Assistant or Deputy Headteacher. Our members of staff on the teaching and learning team are not office or computer based and therefore do not have the same level of access to email as our office staff. It is not our policy to provide parents with email addresses for teaching staff. This is also one of our strategies for reducing the unnecessary and excessive workload of teachers and we request that parents do not ask teachers for them. Teaching staff are asked not to respond to any e-mails which come directly to them, without going through the appropriate channel below.

All emails will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Please note all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. In the first instance, this is usually your child's class teacher. Parents should be aware that any e-mails which are sent to the academy may not be opened immediately, and as such if your message or query is urgent, we ask that you call the school office to ensure that the school receives this timely information. Any e-mail which is sent to school will be acknowledged and responded to within two school days of the date it was delivered. The school office will ensure that your e-mail is directed to the relevant person/persons.

Where necessary, a hard copy of an email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent will be filed on the child's personal file in the school office. The same applies to all internal mail, email transmissions concerning pupil matters. All emails requiring an answer should be responded within 48 hours (two school days).

## Telephone calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

Telephone calls are appropriate to notify us that your child will be absent from school, to communicate brief information about your child that the school needs to know or in an emergency, such as e.g., to let us know that you will be late collecting your child. We ask parents to telephone

the school on 0118 467 6720. The school office is open during school hours Monday - Friday. At all other times, there is an answering service available to take your message.

Any messages which are for school staff are taken by the office team and then passed on to the appropriate member of staff. Office staff will take note of the necessary details of the call. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call.

Where a parent or carer does call to speak to their child's class teacher, the office will liaise with the class teacher to arrange a mutually convenient time for this, within two days. As a result, it may be that a member of staff is unable to call back on the same day that the call was made.

### Social Networking Sites/Blogs

Staff **will not** communicate individually with parents, carers or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Staff are instructed to report any such requests or interactions to the Executive Headteacher.

The academy uses Twitter as a way of posting reminders to parents/carers and sharing and celebrating the pupils' learning at Civitas. Where this method of communication is used, a professional manner will continue to be used at all times, as it would be for any communication within the academy.

### Written Reports

Once a year, the school provides a full written report to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each area of learning. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas for future development. Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress.

### Parent Meetings

Parents are invited to meet with their child's class teacher twice during the year, in the Autumn and Spring Terms for parent-teacher meetings. There is also an option to meet for a third time following the end of year report.

You will be advised of the date through a letter and asked to sign up for a specific day/time to meet with your child's teacher via our online booking system. If you are unable to use the online system you will be able to telephone or e-mail the school office who will assist you in making an appointment. We would encourage all parents to take up this opportunity. If you are unable to attend on the designated days, you can request to make an alternative arrangement directly with your child's teacher, or via the School Office at a mutually convenient time.

## **SEND Reviews**

Parents of children with SEND will meet with their class teacher at least three times a year as an extended parent meeting. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a need for support. Children with SEND may also have an Individual Learning Plan that will be shared with parents for their contribution during these meetings. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have educational needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly.

We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our academy, or to receive and understand communication.

## **School Website**

The website provides information about the school, as well as latest news and information and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

## **Transition visits**

Transition visits (either to pre-school or home) take place either at the end of the term before a child starts at school, or during the first two weeks of the term in which they start for those families with children in the Reception Class.

Several meetings for new parents are organised at an appropriate time for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school.

## **Bulletin**

Weekly bulletins keep parents and carers updated about what has been happening at Civitas. Parents are asked to ensure that the academy has the correct e-mail address on its system for communication.

## **Letters**

We may send other letters of a general nature out if necessary. We place copies of all communication (including bulletins) on the school's website.

## **Reading diaries**

Children in all KS1 classes have a reading diary/record. This enables parents to record a wide range of information about their child's reading. KS2 use a reading journal.

## Individual meetings

Parents are welcome to visit the academy to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, and gain support or talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or appropriate member of staff. Parents are asked to phone school staff to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents. Our aim is to see the parents as quickly as possible; we try to arrange a meeting within five school days.

Your first point of contact in the school is always your child's class teacher. For all other queries, the school office will direct you to the appropriate member of staff, to deal with your query and arrange any appointments for you.

Some parents, especially of the younger children, can have a brief word with a member of school staff before and after school. Parents/carers should be mindful that teachers have limited time in the mornings as they need to register the children and begin the days learning.

## Residential Meetings

Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content, and arrangements.

## Parent Drop Ins

At the beginning of each term, an informal drop-in after school session will take place in each class where parents and carers can come with their child and look at their child's learning and workbooks. There is also an opportunity to meet with the Class Teacher informally and ask any questions you may have. Class Teachers will also share with you what your child will be learning that half term. Parents are reminded however that if the discussion requires more time, that a formal pre-arranged meeting will be required.

## The school office

The office is open between 8.30am and 3.30pm, Monday - Friday during term-time. We would strongly encourage you to use one of the methods detailed above to get in contact with the school, however, should you wish to pass on a brief message, you may do so at the school office.

Your message will be written down and given to the appropriate member of staff at the earliest opportunity. We ask you to notify the office if your child will be absent from school by 9.10am at the latest. If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we will contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

## How parents/carers can share their views

### Parent Surveys

We welcome and value feedback from parents and carers about our academy's policies and practices. We conduct parent surveys twice a year at parents' evenings to canvas the views of parents and carers about our school and report back on the outcomes.

### Parent Workshops/ Stay and Play

We hold parent workshops for Phonics, Maths, Reading and other areas of the curriculum. We also hold information sessions to share some of our key policies such as our Behaviour Policy. Our Reception classes hold regular stay and play sessions when parents and carers can see how the children learn through play.

### Communication with the community

Members of the local community and guest speakers from local churches, community organisations and charities are invited to school events such as Special Assemblies, Class Talks, Christmas Carol Services, and school productions. Information about local community events and activities is featured in our bulletins.

### Safeguarding

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm; that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that Civitas Academy should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help any child needing protection. When any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children Protection, or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, who may share this information with Social Services.