Home-school communication policy

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| **Audience** | Governors, staff, students, parents/carers |
| **Review Cycle** | 3 years |
| **Current Review** | January 2020 |
| **Next Review** | January 2023 |
| **Approved by** |  |

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1. **Purpose of the policy**
* To promote the partnership between school, parents and pupils through efficient and effective communication
* To ensure The Oswaldtwistle School is a welcoming school
* To achieve outstanding parental engagement
* To give parent/carers the information they need to support their child’s education
* To help the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
* To help build and maintain trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child’s educational and pastoral needs
* To explain how the school communicates with parents/carers
* To set clear standards for responding to communication from parents/carers
* To help parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible
1. **Definition of communication**

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communication and needs to recognise that the quality of their communication reflects on the school’s reputation. Parents and carers, governors and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school’s reputation. We strive to ensure communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

1. **Principles**

The Oswaldtwistle School uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable, appropriate means to contact the recipient.

Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

Staff will always seek to establish friendly relationships with parents and carers but they will ensure relationships are professional and parents and carers will be addressed in a formal manner. Staff are to avoid developing close relationships with parents and carers. The use of a parent, carer or staff member’s first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms etc.

The communications Policy embraces the principles of the school’s Equality and E-Safety policy (copies available on the policy page of the school website or on the Whole School Drive SharePoint).

1. **Introduction**

The Oswaldtwistle School recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents and carers, governors, the local and wider community outside agencies, etc.), and is committed to being transparent and accessible for all who have an interest in the school.

The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and pupils and this policy addresses the main ways in which our school will ensure there is an effective two-way communication between home and school.

Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child’s education. The school will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to creating a shared view of their child’s needs.

1. **Aims of the policy**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders and that there are robust processes to facilitate this.

The school recognises that engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our aim is to involve as many parents and carers in their child’s education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

* To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
* Signage will be clear, informative and positive.
* All written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly.
* A variety of forms of communication with parents and carers for example, telephone contact, email, post and text.
* Parents and carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons
* Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child’s learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely manner to enable this support to be effective.
1. **Communication with parents and carers**
	1. **Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query**

Please see Appendix A which details who to contact and how to progress any query that is not successfully resolved.

* 1. **Letters**

Staff will always reply to a letter from parents and carers as quickly as possible. A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter will be made by telephone, letter or email **within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days.** Letters to parents and carers must be processed through the school administration team and approved by the Headteacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting or emailing. Emails being sent out to all parents and carers should be approved by the Headteacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Copies of correspondence with parents and carers will be placed on pupil files. Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school’s Complaints Policy (copy available on the policy page of the school website and on the Whole School Drive SharePoint).

The school will use the schools letter headed template for letters where possible.

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication. However, if we are unable to obtain a current email address for any parent or carer, communication will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post.

The correct salutations must be used when writing to or emailing parents or carers. The use of a parent, carer or staff member’s first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms etc and sign off is always full name Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Teacher Surname.

All school reports will be sent by hard copy through the post.

* 1. **Email**

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating necessary information and is the school’s preferred method of communication. **Emails received will be treated in the same way as letters: acknowledged within 2 working days and responded within 10 working days.** Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given when sending a letter. Any items longer than a paragraph should be attached in word format.

Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email address is: adminoss@oswaldtwistle.org

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address.

 **6.4 Telephone Calls**In a non-emergency, a return call will be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request / query / problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer on Behaviour Watch contact log.

 **6.5 Texts**

Automated texts are sent to parents and carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school and absences) but are not used for general communications from members of staff and staff should not respond by text to a text message received from a parent or carer (but should respond using an alternative means of communication such as email or telephone if appropriate).

1. **Absence**

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence, by speaking to someone or leaving a message on the absence line. For full details please refer to the Attendance and Punctuality Policy (copy available on the policy page of the school website or on the Whole School Drive SharePoint).

1. **Meetings with Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. **This request should be responded to within 2 working days.**

Parents and carers should report to Reception prior to meeting with a member of staff. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them.

Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of parents or carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

**9. Social Networking**

The School has a Twitter account which is used to provide updates to parents and pupils who wish to subscribe to this. It is not compulsory to do so and therefore any key messages will be relayed through formal school communication channels.

**10. Reports and Progress**

Parents and carers receive an interim progress report and a full annual report by post to provide information about their child’s progress in each academic year.

In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child’s subject teachers twice a year at parent’s evenings. Parents and carers should contact the school if issues arise about their child’s progress or wellbeing. **The first point of contact should be their child’s key worker.**

We welcome the presence of any other adult a parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting to support or to act as an interpreter.

 **11. Accessibility**

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication. The font used in all printed documentation is Arial, 11. Documents printed using a larger font can usually be provided and requests should be made via the office.

 **12. School Website**

The school website provides a wide range of information about the school, including:

* Inclusion information
* Pupil premium information
* School policies
* Uniform list
* Timetables
* School events
* Holiday dates
* Admissions

It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

**13. Communication between staff**

***Verbal***

Staff can use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils.

***Email***

* Consider whether an email is appropriate when face to face communication may be more conducive;
* Avoid exclusive email correspondence without requesting or organising a face to face meeting;
* Avoid send or reply all unless necessary;
* Line managers are to be copied in where appropriate
* Keep emails concise, use standard English and bullet points if necessary
* Staff to check emails as regularly as possible
* Use group emails as appropriate

Agendas for staff meetings are to be circulated at least 3 days in advance. The minutes of the meeting should be circulated to all relevant parties where possible within 3 days of the meeting.

 **14. Dealing with the media**

All media enquires must be directed to the Headteacher.

 **15. School trips, visits and activities**

Parents and carers will be notified by letter of trips, visits and activities that their child/children may wish to participate in as early as possible, and within at least three weeks of the proposed trip, visit or activity. The school will always ensure parents and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events.

 **16. Severe weather and emergency closure**

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via text. Parents and carers should also tune in to local radio and check the school website.

**17. Prospective parents and carers**

The school admissions procedure is on the website. Prospective parents and carers may request a printed copy.

Prospective parents and carers are invited to the school for an admissions meeting to attend a tour round school to enable them to see the school operating.

**18. Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The school recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of all pupils with additional needs. All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents and carers.

All staff within the school is expected to help parents and carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child’s education and will make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to.

When pupils who have special educational needs are making less than the expected progress or if they are experiencing behavioural difficulties, we would expect to meet with parents and carers more regularly. Parents and carers are encouraged to communicate immediately where they have a concern about their child’s needs being met and should also refer to the Inclusion section of the website.

**19. Communication with other Schools and outside agencies**

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and where required are supported by
various agencies and groups of professionals including medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, ELCAS), educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare and the local authority Children’s Services. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment.

We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (copies available on the policy page of the school website or on the Whole School Drive SharePoint).

 **20. Investigating incidents**

When investigating an incident involving pupils, school members of staff interview all pupils involved and ask them to complete a written account. The school will only share any information that would identify any pupils in accordance with data protection regulations and legislation and our policies (copies available on the policy page of the school website or on the Whole School Drive SharePoint).

 **21. Monitoring, evaluation and review**

A member of the senior leadership team and the governors will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

**Appendix A – To whom should my query or concern be addressed to?**

If you have a general query or concern, not specific to your child, please contact the office on 01254 231553.

If your query or concern is about your child, please follow the communications route applicable to your specific question below.

**My query is about my child’s learning:**

* Subject Teacher
* Deputy Headteacher for Teaching & Learning – Mrs S. McKenna
* Headteacher – Ms A. Kyle

If, following the communications route above you are still dissatisfied with the response, please refer to the schools Complaint’s policy available on the school website.

**My query is about my child’s wellbeing, behaviour or non-compliance:**

* Key worker
* Form tutor
* Family/Child Protection Manager – Mrs J. Walker
* Behaviour Manager – Mr G. Reed
* Deputy Headteacher – Mr P. Bridge