

Communications Policy

The aim of this policy is to foster good communications between parents/carers and the school.

Introduction

The school always welcomes contact with parents/carers because this fosters mutual understanding and support which has a positive effect on children's performance and their attitudes to learning.

The school wants to ensure that parents/carers always have an appropriate and helpful response to their communications. However, unlike some businesses and other occupations, the professional duties of staff can make it difficult for them to speak or meet with parents/carers during the school day.

Due to teaching commitments, staff will typically be unavailable between 8.40 am and 3.00pm each day. There are also other times outside these hours when they attend meetings. The important business of working with and responding to parents/carers must be managed within this context.

Teachers can receive **brief** messages from parents/carers when they drop off their children at the door / collect at the end of the day.

Principles for responding to parents/carers

In order to achieve the most effective balance for children, parents/carers and teachers, have always followed the following principles:

- welcoming contact from parents/carers;
- responding as quickly and fully as possible to parents/carers;
- involving parents/carers in our work with children;
- sharing information as often and as fully as possible with parents/carers.

When correspondence is made to an individual parent/carer on an important matter, the letter will be sent by post or handed directly to the parent/carer to ensure confidentiality and security. On some occasions it may be appropriate for the school to contact parents/carers by e-mail. For day to day or routine matters correspondence will be sent via the children's book bags. The school will refer breaches of the communications policy to the Chair of Governors.

Guidelines on responding to parents/carers

It may be helpful for parents/carers to know how they can expect their telephone calls, letters, emails, messages in communication books (in KS1) and requests for meetings with the school to be dealt with. The following guidelines show how we aim to respond to parents/carers.

Telephone Calls

- **Messages:** All telephone calls are received by a member of the admin team. A message will be taken and sent to the relevant person as soon as possible. Staff will normally take details of the caller's name, telephone number and purpose in calling. The person concerned will try to respond as soon as possible and by the end of the next school day if possible. The school's telephone number is 01480 466919.
- **Urgent calls:** The call will be put through to the most appropriate or available senior member of staff if possible or a message will be taken.
- **Messages for pupils:** Messages for children will be taken by a member of staff and passed on as soon as possible.
- **Busy times:** The office is busy between 8.40 am and 9.15 am in the morning and 2.50pm and 3.20pm in the afternoon. At these times and at other times, calls may be recorded on an answer machine. This is checked regularly and if a message is left, it will be passed on.
- **Telephone calls made at arranged times:** If teachers have arranged with parents/carers for them to receive calls at particular times of the school day, those teachers will try to ensure that they are available. Should other commitments or events make this impossible, a staff member will take a message and the person concerned will try to call back the same day.

Letters and emails

- The school will always try to **acknowledge** letters and emails received from parents/carers within five working days during term time.
The school email is office@wheatfields.cambs.sch.uk Emails to parents will always be directed through the school office.
The postal address is Wheatfields Primary School, Nene Way, St Ives, Cambs.
PE27 3WF
- If more time is required to provide a fuller response or to arrange a meeting, staff will try to include in the acknowledgement details of when these will happen.
- Staff will try to respond to the most pressing concerns of parents/carers as quickly as possible. It is our intention to try to **respond** to any letter or email as soon as we can and within ten working days within term time. If there is likely to be a delay we will let you know the reasons why.

Complaints

We will investigate a complaint and aim to respond within ten working days. If we cannot provide a full response within ten working school days then we will write to the complainant explaining this, giving a date by which we will endeavour to provide a full response. For further information please see our complaints policy.

Meetings

Where situations are more complex, a face-to-face meeting is preferable to a letter or phone call and this will be arranged at the earliest convenience for parents/carers and staff.

Meetings with class teachers

The class teacher is the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. Teachers are not available between 8.40am and 3.00pm but mutually agreed appointments can be made outside these times either through the office or directly with the class teacher.

Depending on the nature of the situation, a meeting may include a more senior member of staff.

A record may be kept and notes shared with all parties where appropriate. Parents/carers will only be invited to discuss their own children. Staff will not talk about other children in front of other parents/carers. All meetings and discussions are confidential between the staff involved and the parents/carers and parties should not divulge information to others without the agreement of parents/carers and the school.

E- Mails

The school has a system of sending all standard forms of communication home to parents/carers who have requested it via e-mail. For all other correspondence, hard copies will be provided. Parents/carers must ensure that the school office is informed of any changes to e-mail addresses.

Website

The school seeks to put as much information as possible on its website. Most general information that parents/carers would seek can be readily found at www.wheatfields.cambs.sch.uk

Parents/carers are encouraged look at the website on a regular basis.

Protocol for Communications

The school undertakes to treat all communications with parents/carers with courtesy. It expects to receive the same in return. Both parties will work towards identifying and resolving problems quickly and efficiently. Where difficulties cannot be resolved, phase leaders and/or the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher/SENDCo may be involved. An Education Officer or other agencies will be invited in situations which are particularly complex, and in an effort to move forward.

The school reserves the right to take appropriate action if aggressive behaviour from any party occurs on school premises.

Social Media

The school recognises that social media is increasingly used as a form of communication. Staff **will not** communicate regarding school matters, with parents or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook or Twitter) or accept them as 'friends'. The exception to this rule

would be if the school decides to establish a secure Learning Platform akin to a social networking site (such as Starz) for the purpose of Teaching and Learning.