

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, A Voluntary Academy



School Communications Policy – DRAFT July 2019

Aim

To support our Primary School in its aim to become a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider school 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 involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people.

Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and each individual needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation. For the purposes of this policy, 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 is carried out.

Objectives

All communications at our Primary School should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, 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 actioned within a reasonable time.
- Endeavour to use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies, in particular Equal Opportunities & Computer Use.
- Be compatible with our core values, as reflected in our Mission Statement and School Development Plan.

Internal Methods of Communication

Meetings

There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formally and informally. All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team-based working and to contribute to subject leaders' reflections on priorities, activities and future plans.

For all other meetings, notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

Availability of Minutes/Notes of Meetings

The approved minutes of meetings are available on the school server, staff section of Moodle or on the school website.

Email

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information, however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. All staff will be assigned a work email which is solely to be used for work-related communications. Staff are required to access their emails at least once a day. It is recommended that teachers access their emails at least twice a day.

Mobile Phones

Staff - Mobile phones are not allowed and should not be used during lessons or when in contact with the children. In exceptional cases such as family illness the circumstances should be discussed with the Headteacher.

Non-intrusive work related mobile phone use is acceptable during PPA or management time.

During trips and off site provision, staff should ensure they can be contacted by mobile phone at all times.
Pupils – Pupils should not bring mobile phones to school. Any exceptions must be discussed with and approved by the Headteacher.

Written Communications

These are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room, which staff should check regularly, handed to staff personally or emailed.

School Newsletters

A copy is uploaded to the school website, for access by staff and families.

Notice Boards

The staff notice board is located in the staffroom. Parents' notice board is located outside the main reception entrance area or on the main front doors. Nursery noticeboard is in the main entrance to nursery area.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, the parish, the diocese, other schools, the community and with outside agencies.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well-informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents and carers play in supporting the school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents will always be addressed in an appropriate manner and staff will avoid developing close friendships with parents, unless previously acquainted or related.

We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Letters

Staff will endeavour to respond to parents' letters as quickly as possible, in a minimum of 48 working hours. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the Head Teacher. Letters to parents must be approved by the Head Teacher before they are sent.

Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed in pupil files.

Letters outlining details of class trips, visits or workshops need to be checked by the Head Teacher and a copy passed to the school office.

The school also publishes a regular newsletter on the school website, to keep everyone updated with events and school life.

Text Messaging

The school has a text messaging (and an email system from parents to school via the school website) that it uses to communicate to parents.

Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Headteacher. If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be printed. Staff should forward e mails from parents to the Headteacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. A hard copy of any e mail sent to a parent or received by you from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the school office.

The same applies to all internal email transmissions concerning pupil matters.

Telephone calls

Office staff should check the phone messages each day. They will forward messages to the relevant member/s of staff. A telephone log will record the details of any telephone message received. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends".

Written Reports

Once a year we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Pupils are also given the opportunity to comment on their own progress and parents are invited to make a similar comment. In addition, parents meet their child's teacher mid-way through the school year for a private consultation on Pupil Progress Day. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.

When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents more regularly. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

School Handbook

The school handbook contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated every year at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

School Website

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Home-school communication

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers arrange to see parents as soon as possible. Many parents have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher when they collect them after school or before school from 8.45 onwards. We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to Year 5 and Year 6 trip weeks to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements.

A meeting for new Reception parents is organised each July.

Each class holds a Meet the Teacher session at the start of the new school year.

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from health professionals and specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Care and Child Protection Units. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school 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 abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the Designated Officer for Children Protection, or the Deputy Designated Officer, who may share this information with the Multi-Agency Referral Unit.

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information may be passed.

Reviewed annually