



Sedbergh Primary School

Communications Policy

Approved by: *Peter Irvine*

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REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
Version 1	Original	18.11.2019
Version 2	Updates based on feedback	25.11.2019

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1. Rationale

It is widely recognised that the more involved parents are in their child's education, the better the pupil performs at school. In order to establish and maintain this interest and engagement, there needs to be regular and reliable communication and sharing of information between the school and pupils' families. Schools must create an effective partnership by providing an open and communicative environment with its wider community, forming a link between the classroom and the home, and the school and the family.

2. 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.

We should also remember the importance of listening.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communication 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.

3. Principles and Objectives

All communications at Sedbergh Primary School should:

- * Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed about school events, policies, procedures and information.
- * Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- * Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- * Be actioned 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 school policies.
- * Be compatible with our vision and values and our School Development Plan.
- * Written communications with parents and other external contacts must comply with agreed practice.
- * Consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the school must be inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

4. Responsibilities

The **Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for

- * To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels and 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 challenges.

Staff are responsible for

All Staff: Explain when staff are expected to acknowledge and reply to parents and the procedures they should follow (i.e. within school hours, on school email system).

How the staff intend on communicating with parents (i.e. via a school diary, letters or email).

- * 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 in order 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 are responsible for sharing the following routine information with school;

- * **Absence**
 - Planned; any absence from school for appointments, events or holidays must be communicated using our Leave of Absence Request Form available from the School Office or on our website. Please see guidance on our website and our Attendance Policy and Procedures for further information about the authorisation of term time absences.
 - Unplanned; absence due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances must be communicated with school on the first day as early in the school day as possible (preferably before 9.30am). Unless communicated otherwise school will assume that the reason for absence covers all recorded days of absence.
- * **Contact information**
 - On admission, and when contact information changes thereafter, parents are asked to provide the school office with up to date emergency contact information. This is obtained via a paper consent and information request form sent home in the first week of school in the first instance. School can be advised on any updates via the school app, email or in writing.
 - Where parents are estranged they can request second sets of hard copy letters to be sent to secondary addresses. All parents/family members have access to the school app and website for all other information.
- * **Consent choices**
 - Parents/carers are asked to provide consent for various concerns (routine trips in the local environment, photos etc.) when their child begins to attend Sedbergh Primary School. This consent is returned to the school office. Parents are asked to contact school when they wish to update their consent preferences.

5. Communication with Parents and Families

a. Reading Records

EYFS children are provided with a Reading Record on starting school. These Reading Records are routinely used by all classes in school as a means to record progress with reading skills. As children mature, increasingly they will become responsible for keeping these records up to date. Parents can choose to write notes in these Reading Records as a means to communicate with school, however, school would encourage parents to deliver urgent messages separately or verbally to the school office or staff member.

b. Bus Books

Any EYFS child who uses the school bus service is provided with a 'bus book' to maintain a communication link between parents and school.

c. Home/School Diaries (SEN)

On occasions, if it is deemed appropriate, particular children might be provided with a Home/School diary as a means to maintain a more routine communication link with school. These are arranged between the class teachers, the child's family and the school's SENCo and routinely reviewed alongside the child's progress and Individual Education Plan. Targets in IEP's are agreed and discussed at review meetings for SEN pupils.

d. School communication 'app'

School routinely updates parents about upcoming events using the notification system in the school 'app'. These notifications include information about upcoming events, reminders about trips and newsletters. This information can be targeted at the whole school community, classes, year groups, club groups and individual families as necessary. Where possible the app is used rather than hard copy.

The 'app' also includes a number of additional functions that enhance communication between home and school. These include;

- Events Calendar
- Absence Reporting
- Contact Information update service

e. Letters

Letters to parents are to be published on the school agreed letter format and shared with the head teacher or office staff prior to sending home; this ensures key staff are aware of planned events and the school can manage a consistent approach to communication. Where practicable, letters will be published to parents on the school app only (for both environmental and financial reasons) but where necessary a hard copy of the letter will be sent home. This will be accompanied by a 'soft copy' on the school app.

In particular, letters with return slip that require signed consent will be sent home as a hard copy with the information available on the school app.

There are exceptions where staff will apply their own formatting to a letter sent home. For example; class information letters to start the school term. These again will be checked by senior staff and the school office.

Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This may be a news board or other type of notice board. Every class will have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.

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.

Letters from parents are dealt with at the earliest opportunity, usually within 2 working days.

Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Headteacher immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Headteacher before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files.

f. Telephone Calls

The school secretary will phone parents in the event of illness or an accident/injury (in particular bumps to the head).

Staff will occasionally telephone parents or carers for specific purposes, particularly if a matter is urgent or a phone call has been requested. Dates, times and details of phone calls are recorded.

The headteacher, again, might telephone parents to discuss a concern or query. Dates, times and details of phone calls are recorded.

g. Meetings

- Informal; occasionally parents might wish to speak briefly with staff members at the beginning or the end of the school day. Where practicable this is acceptable but at all times must be avoided if it interferes with the safety of the children and school routines. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment to speak with the staff member at a more mutually convenient time or to leave a message with the school office.
- Formal; as noted above, parents can request to meet with a staff member at a mutually convenient time. These meetings are noted in the diary. Staff are encouraged to make notes when meeting with parents or family members to ensure there is a record of any discussions and decisions made during this time.
- 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 should always be addressed in an appropriate manner.

h. Email

Occasionally, the school will email specific parents, where an email address is known, to convey information with regard to a specific family or child in school. However, school's preferred option is to use the school app notification service.

i. Noticeboards

The school displays up to date newsletters in the school entrance area, the staff room window and in the notice board adjacent to the main school gates.

j. Social Media

Currently, Elder Class (EYFS) use social media to promote school events and also celebrate and share examples of activities undertaken during the school week. In addition, EYFS use Tapestry, an online learning and communication platform to interact with parents.

Written Reports

Annually, teachers produce 2 written reports to update parents on their child's progress.

In the spring, this is a Mid-Year progress report outlining in brief children's attainment, progress and targets for the remainder of the academic year. This document is shared and discussed with parents at the mid-year parents' evening.

Parents and carers receive an end of year report in mid to late July that outlines each child's successes, including progress and attainment in all areas of the National Curriculum and in their personal and social development. This report will also share suggested learning targets for the next academic year. On receipt of the report, parents are asked to return a confirmation slip to school and also invited to pass comment on their child's report.

k. Trips and Visits

Letters with the details of all school trips are sent home prior to the activity taking place. Prior to any residential trip a meeting is held to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements.

l. Severe Weather and Emergency Closure (See Emergency Procedures)

In the event of closure, staff and parents are notified about school closure using the following mechanisms;

- Notification on the school app
- Update on the school website
- Update on the Cumbria County Council Website
- Updates provided by Local Radio Services
- Informal local networks – social media, text, word of mouth (these should always be verified by using the mechanism noted above)

The school will always attempt to communicate this information as early as possible in the day, preferably before 7am. Additional days of closure will be communicated in the same manner on each day of closure, unless the situation is longer term (3 days+).

m. School Website

The school website provides key information to families of children attending our school and to prospective families. In addition, the website is a publication platform for all statutory school information as required by the DfE and Ofsted. It is regularly audited and update to ensure compliance.

Information on the school website includes;

- Contact information
- School structure and organisation, including staffing and Governance
- Curriculum content and organisation
- School performance, including pupil outcomes
- Key policies

- Event updates and resources
- Links to other web based resources for parents, carers, children and families

n. Home-School Communication

In addition to the mechanisms outlined above the school also communicates with parents using the following approaches;

- A Monthly Newsletter with key updates, celebrations and upcoming events
- Homework activities
- Parents' Evenings; 2 each academic year (Children with SEN have 3 review meetings, 1 a term)
- Information Meetings for specific subjects or school development priorities

o. School policies

All policies that should be made available to parents (based on statutory guidance) are available on the school website. Printed copies can be provided to parents on request.

6. Communication with Staff

a. Staff Noticeboard

The staffroom noticeboard is updated each week to outline events over the following two weeks. Confidential meetings and information is not published on the noticeboard.

In addition, a schedule for upcoming staff meetings and their content are published on the staff noticeboard. Any additional meetings are noted down on the staff room whiteboard; the notice indicates which staff are invited to attend each meeting. All staff are welcome to attend any open meeting if they wish.

Teaching staff meet routinely, usually on Wednesdays after school. In some cases staff meetings are not arranged to allow teaching staff time to complete other school development activities. The schedule of staff meetings indicates the meetings teaching assistants are asked to attend (usually 6 meetings a term).

All formal meetings are structured and have minutes and members invited to contribute to the agenda. The headteacher provides all staff with a weekly summary of all items discussed and agreed during the staff meeting via email.

Time is also put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject leaders' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

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

b. 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, this does not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.

Written communications should be placed in pigeonholes, in the staffroom, which staff must check routinely, handed to staff personally or emailed.

c. Mobile Phones

(See Staff Code of Conduct) Staff are welcome to bring mobile phones in to school but are asked not to use them in front of children in teaching spaces and classrooms. Staff are welcome to make any necessary phone calls in administration rooms at breaks or lunchtimes.

If to be contacted in the event of an emergency, staff are asked to make arrangements that relatives/friends make contact using the school office.

Mobile phones are not to be used for photography without the express permission of the head teacher.

d. Policies for staff

All school policies are available to staff on the school network in the Staff Common Room. Printed copies of all policies can be made on request.

Prior to review and update, policies are routinely emailed to all staff in school for comment before being approved by the Governing Body.

7. Communication with Governors

The majority of communication between the school and Governors is done through email or, where possible, in person.

Governors are allocated their own email account that allows them access to the Governor OneDrive. All information remains confidential therefore information is shared using a password protected web based service, One Drive. This service is centrally administrated by the Headteacher. Each Governor holds their own password and the password for the central Governor OneDrive is routinely updated and changed in line with changes to Governing Body Membership.

Governors can also be contacted through a defined group on the school app notification service. This is administrated by the school office and the headteacher.

Governors are encouraged to remain aware of school updates and events using the school app, newsletters and the school website.

8. Safeguarding, Confidentiality (GDPR) and Health and Safety

All communication in school is underpinned by school policy implemented to ensure the safeguarding of all adults and children in school (see our Overarching Safeguarding Statement and Safeguarding Policy).

In addition, all communication is underpinned by the school's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices (for both children and adults – available on the school website) to ensure confidentiality is maintained and all communication, except when absolutely unavoidable, is driven by a consent based approach.

9. Feedback, Monitoring and Review

School regularly asks for informal feedback from all stakeholders on its methods of communication; where practicable, these suggestions or requests are implemented.

Annually, the school asks parents for feedback in Parent/Carer school questionnaire. Again, where practicable or reasonable, school will act on this feedback.

This Communications Policy will be updated as necessary to reflect any changes to the school's communication strategy and at least once every three years.