



Wateringbury Church of  
England Primary School

# Home School Communication Policy

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Learning, growing, achieving.....our journey together with God.

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## Our Vision and Values

Guided by our Christian values and nurturing culture, we aspire to enable everyone to grow green leaves to meet the challenges of our ever-changing world and to send out our roots to the wider community.

Every child is seen as a unique learner, loved by God and is equally valued and championed to grow and achieve their very best in all they do.

LOVE    FORGIVENESS    JOY    RESILIENCE    RESPECT    COURAGE

### 1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- ◆ Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- ◆ Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- ◆ Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- ◆ Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers
- ◆ Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- ◆ Helping 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

We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information on another child. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers then this will be shared with the school's legal advisers.

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- ◆ Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- ◆ Regularly reviewing this policy

### 2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- ◆ Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy, the staff code of conduct and the school's acceptable use policy
- ◆ Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours (8:00am – 5:00pm) or their working hours (if they work part-time). However, during this time, staff have many responsibilities and commitments to fulfil so are unlikely to be available during teaching time. In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Our acceptable use policies can be found on our website.

### 2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- ◆ Ensuring that communication with the school is always respectful
- ◆ Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance through the school office
- ◆ Responding to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- ◆ Checking all communications from the school
- ◆ Ensuring the school has the most up-to-date contact and medical information for their child. This is to be provided in writing by emailing the school office.

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our parent code of conduct. We ask that parents consider whether their communication is necessary before messaging or emailing; staff receive large numbers of communications every day. Tone of voice is hard to convey in a written message sometimes it is better to request a meeting to talk about something rather than offload it all in an email or text message.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of school hours (8:30am – 3:30pm), or during school holidays.

Our parent code of conduct can be found on our website policies area.

## 3. How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

### **3.1 Email**

We use email (via parentmail or outlook) to keep parents informed about the following things:

- ◆ Upcoming school events
- ◆ Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- ◆ School surveys or consultations
- ◆ Class activities or teacher requests
- ◆ Weekly update letter

### **3.2 Text messages**

We will text parents about:

- ◆ Short-notice changes to the school day
- ◆ Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

### **3.3 Class Dojo (Home-School communications app)**

Class Dojo is the main form of communication used by school and parents.

We will use the class/school story page to:

- ◆ Share updates on your child's class' learning (at least weekly)
- ◆ Post information about events
- ◆ Post urgent updates about school
- ◆ Post useful links or documents from outside agencies
- ◆ Post requests for help
- ◆ Post letters or other communications

We will use the messaging function to:

- ◆ Send updates about school opening
- ◆ Send updates about clubs
- ◆ Contact you about your child's learning or behaviour
- ◆ Contact you to arrange a face to face meeting
- ◆ Remind you about returning letters or payments

### **3.4 School calendar**

Our school website includes a full school calendar for the year. Parents are also sent a list of key dates for the year in September. Our weekly update email includes dates for the term and reminders for the coming week.

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

Most events will be included in the school calendar.

### **3.5 Phone calls**

We will call you during the school day if your child is unwell and needs to come home or has received a head injury. We will also call you if they have been involved in a significant behaviour incident, however, this may not be until later in the day as we will need to establish all the facts first.

You may also receive a phone call to check on a child's absence, to ask you to bring something in or to remind you of an overdue payment.

We may just ring to talk through an issue with your child.

Your child's teacher may ring to discuss a concern or to tell you about something that your child has achieved well. Phone calls are not always bad news!

### **3.6 Letters**

We do not send many paper letters home and if we do, we usually send an electronic version via email or Class Dojo too. We send the following letters home regularly:

- ◆ Letters about trips and visits
- ◆ Consent forms
- ◆ Letters from other agencies, such as the church or NHS.
- ◆ Letters about attendance or leave requests

### **3.7 Reports**

Parents receive reports from the school about their child's learning, including:

- ◆ An end-of-year report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance
- ◆ Seasonal progress reports (new for 2024/5)
- ◆ A report on statutory assessments (EYFS profile, phonics screening, multiplication tables check and KS2 SATs)

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

### **3.8 Meetings**

We hold two parents' consultation evening(s) per academic year as well as three open classroom sessions. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern. Open classroom sessions give parents a chance to look at their children's work with together with their child.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

### **3.9 School website**

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- ◆ School times and term dates
- ◆ Important events and announcements
- ◆ Curriculum information
- ◆ Important policies and procedures
- ◆ Important contact information
- ◆ Information about clubs (including breakfast and after school club)
- ◆ Termly newsletters

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

## 4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Parents should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

Even if parents know members of staff personally, these official lines of communication should always be used for school matters, not personal mobile numbers or social media accounts and apps.

We would ask that you consider whether your message needs to be sent. Have you tried to find the answer elsewhere, e.g. on the school website, weekly update letter, class dojo story, ask a friend?

### 4.1 Email

#### Regular emails

Parents should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within two working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within five working days. If a response is unable to be provided within this timeline, which can be to ensure a full and considered response, then a revised timeline will be provided and communicated. We ask that parents await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

Emails will be most helpful if they are concise, explaining concerns in a clear way. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.

#### Parentmail

We use parentmail for bulk emails as it removes the risk of data breaches caused by sending and replying to emails to a large groups of recipients.

If parents reply to a parentmail message it, by default, goes to the office parentmail account not necessarily to the person who sent the email nor directly to their email inbox. If your reply is urgent, you should send it directly to the office email address.

### 4.2 Phone calls

School office: 01622 812199

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office who will acknowledge their email within two working days and the relevant member of staff will contact them within five working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within two days of your request.

If a query or concern is time sensitive and urgent the parent should call the school office, who will liaise as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- ◆ Family emergencies
- ◆ Safeguarding or welfare issues
- ◆ Last minutes changes to pick up arrangements

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

### **4.3 Meetings**

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see appendix 1) or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within five working days of the request.

Face-to-face conversations are the best way of communicating with the school at drop off or pick up for quick, short messages. When a member of staff is not available to speak to you immediately face-to-face due to school commitments, or a longer conversation is deemed necessary or appropriate, then a request for an appointment can be made to discuss the matter, either in person or by telephone, later.

Outside of teaching hours, all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school so availability of staff outside of teaching hours should not be assumed.

We recommend parents book appointments to discuss:

- ◆ Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- ◆ Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

### **4.4 Class Dojo**

All parents should sign up for the Class Dojo app (free) to ensure that they receive updates about their child's learning and events about school.

Parents can comment on posts on the school or class story pages, but please remember that everyone can see these comments. Also, staff do not get notifications of these comments and so may not see them. Therefore, do not rely on comments if you have a question or something that needs a response.

Parents can use the messaging function to directly contact your child's teaching staff. Staff try to check dojo messages at least once a day but are not able to check constantly throughout the school day and notifications are not always active when they are teaching. Staff will read information messages but may not always have time to respond immediately. If the message is urgent, you should ring the office who will pass on any messages.

Examples of messages for class dojo:

- ◆ Requesting a meeting
- ◆ Letting staff know about something at home that may affect your child, e.g. late night, family illness.
- ◆ Asking a non-urgent question about something in school.

Staff will aim to reply to dojo messages within two school days if a response is needed.

## **5. Accessibility**

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

### **5.1 Parents with additional communication needs**

We aim to make communications accessible to all. We have taken the following steps to achieve this:

- ◆ All whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) can be made available in multiple formats
- ◆ All communications are written as clearly and concisely as possible
- ◆ Accessibility is considered when designing/updating the school website, e.g. using text colours that show up clearly against the background colour, providing alt text for most images.
- ◆ Staff are trained on accessibility and will endeavour to provide information in an accessible format and support parents with completing paperwork.

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- ◆ School announcements and communications in accessible formats
- ◆ Sign language interpreters for meetings

Please contact the school office to discuss these.

## **5.2 Parents with English as an additional language (EAL)**

We currently make many whole-school announcements and communications on Class Dojo so that they can be translated into many different languages.

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

School announcements and communications translated into additional languages

Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

## **6. Types of unacceptable behaviour and communication**

There are some types of behaviour / communication that the school considers unacceptable. These are as follows:

- ◆ Any physical aggression e.g. slapping, hitting, punching, and kicking;
- ◆ Physically intimidating a member of staff, or pupils e.g., standing too close to them;
- ◆ The use of aggressive hand gestures including finger pointing towards a member of staff or pupil;
- ◆ Spitting at a member of staff or pupil;
- ◆ Shaking or holding a fist towards a member of staff or pupil;
- ◆ Shouting at members of staff or pupils (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing);
- ◆ Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010;
- ◆ Threatening or offensive comments about a member of staff or pupil of the school; this can include verbally, via texts, emails, social media, etc.;
- ◆ Sending abusive messages to a member of staff, including via text, email, or social media
- ◆ A large volume of emails in respect of the same matter over a short period of time.

- ◆ Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed by the school.
- ◆ Posting defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments about the school or its staff, on social media platforms

- ◆ Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches)
- ◆ Breaching or not conforming to the school's security procedures
- ◆ Covertly recording phone calls or meetings with member of staff
- ◆ Any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening, or offensive

This list is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour which has no place in our school community. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with in line with our parent code of conduct (on the website).

## **7. Monitoring and review**

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every two years.

The policy will be approved by the governing board.

## **8. Links with other policies**

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ◆ ICT and internet acceptable use
- ◆ Parent code of conduct
- ◆ Staff code of conduct
- ◆ Complaints
- ◆ Home-school agreement
- ◆ Staff wellbeing
- ◆ Social media policy

## Appendix 1: school contact list

### Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- ◆ Email or call the school office on [office@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk) or 01622 812199
- ◆ Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) in the subject line (for emails)
- ◆ We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff

**Remember:** check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

We try to respond to all emails within two days.

We would ask that you consider whether your message needs to be sent. Have you tried to find the answer elsewhere, e.g. on the school website, weekly update letter, class dojo story, ask a friend?

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher (email the office or message teacher directly on class dojo)
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's class teacher or the welfare team (Mrs Bryant or Mrs Henry)
Payments	School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
School trips	Check dojo and trip letter. School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
Uniform/lost and found	School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01622 812199  If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the headteacher via the leave request form (available on the website or from the office)
Bullying and behaviour	1. Child's teacher 2. Assistant headteacher (KS1: Miss Farrington; KS2 Mrs Jones) 3. Headteacher
Safeguarding concern	Safeguarding email <a href="mailto:safeguarding@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk">safeguarding@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk</a>

We would ask that you consider whether your message needs to be sent. Have you tried to find the answer elsewhere, e.g. on the school website, weekly update letter, class dojo story, ask a friend?

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
School events/the school calendar	Check website. Check weekly update and dojo class story. School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
Special educational needs (SEN)	Mrs Bryant (SENCo)
Before and after-school clubs	School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
Hiring the school premises	School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)
FOWPS	Chairs of FOWPS via school office or FOWPS whats app group
Governing board	Clerk to governors swallis@wateringbury.kent.sch.uk
Catering/meals	School Office (Miss Stone or Mrs Martin)

## Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy which can be found on our website.