

WOLGARSTON PYRAMID OF SCHOOLS  
**Princefield First School**

**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY STATEMENT**

**1. Introduction**

Definition of Communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of the relationships and the need to involve people so it is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. It also involves active listening.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that their quality of communications reflects the school's reputation. So, all staff hold a responsibility both for communication and also for the effective carrying out of that communication.

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, with other schools, with the local community, with outside agencies, and within the school. As individual schools within our pyramid of schools, we pride ourselves on maintaining good communication between all stakeholders. We encourage and expect mutual respect between all staff, pupils and visitors who are asked to listen to the views of others and express their views in a courteous, polite and respectful manner, working together for the benefit of the school and its community.

- 1.1 Clear and effective communication is important to our school. We communicate with a diverse range of people and across a wide range of ages and abilities. Good communication between school and home is an essential ingredient in supporting children in achieving their best. When schools and parents/carers know what a school is aiming to achieve and work with the school to achieve this, the outcome can only be positive, since parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to do. This, in turn, can lead to successful, happy children living within our community.

**2 Aims and Objectives**

- 2.1 In all twelve partnership schools, we aim to have clear and effective communication with all pupils, colleagues, governors, parents/carers and with members of the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, through keeping every stakeholder well informed about school life.
- 2.2 We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font, coloured or enlarged text where necessary and add pictures if appropriate.
- 2.3 We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination, recognising and celebrating the contributions made to our society by the diversity of cultural groups represented in and beyond our school.

- 2.4 We also aim to communicate respectfully whether verbally or in written form and to avoid using language which may be misconstrued – particularly in writing.

### **3 Communicating Within School**

- 3.1 So that we all know what is happening, there is a weekly newsletter, a copy of which is available to all staff. Diary dates are updated weekly and posted on the notice board in the staff room. It is the responsibility of the staff to ensure they check it each week.
- 3.2 Staffroom notice boards contain further information about day-to-day arrangements.
- 3.3 Written communications are delivered through pigeonholes or by e-mail.
- 3.4 Staff should make arrangements to discuss any specific issues or concerns with their line manager within school rather than allowing a concern to “rumble on”.
- 3.5 On arrival, visiting teachers are given an information pack to read which contains essential information about what is expected of them, together with other useful information to support their work with classes.
- 3.6 Staff members' personal details should not be shared with other members of staff without their permission, with the exception of telephone numbers for School Closure and Emergency Procedural needs. It is the responsibility of individual staff to ensure that this information is kept up to date with the school office manager.
- 3.7 It is the personal responsibility of all staff, and in particular, part-time staff, to ensure that they have read the shared information from staff briefings, emails and notice boards, so that they are kept fully informed and aware of decisions/requests made in their absence.
- 3.8 Formal Meetings should be structured, have an agenda and be minuted. Less formal meetings should take a note of action points agreed for distribution and records.

### **4 Communicating the School's Values to Pupils**

This is achieved through:

- modelling respectful and supportive relationships between all adults in the school community, irrespective of roles or responsibilities
- treating all children with respect and warmth
- using positive language to emphasise and praise desired behaviour rather than focusing on negative behaviour
- using a firm but calm and low tone of voice, on the rare occasions when this may be required, to determine boundaries without shouting loudly or yelling
- teaching an emotional vocabulary so that children develop the language skills to help them recognise and understand their own and others' feelings
- teaching social skills of sharing, turn-taking, listening, giving and receiving compliments, giving and receiving positive criticism
- using social problem-solving structures such as circle time to give a framework for resolving difficulties constructively

- using playtimes, clubs and educational visits as opportunities to extend social skills and develop independence and responsibility
- giving pupils leadership opportunities i.e. Classroom Monitors, Huff and Puff Helpers, School Council and Eco group Representatives

## **5 Home-School Communication**

- 5.1 A weekly newsletter, is sent to parents and carers. It contains details of expectations as well as school events and activities. Parents and carers expect and enjoy our newsletter and appreciate the regularity of the contact. When necessary, other letters are sent to parents to keep them informed of particular issues or requirements.
- 5.2 At the beginning of each term, parents/carers receive a curriculum summary which provides an overview of the work to be covered during the forthcoming term. We invite parents and carers to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home.
- 5.3 At the start of each year parents receive an overview of expectations in terms of weekly homework. Where a child is falling behind teachers may set some extra homework in liaison with individual parents.
- 5.4 The school encourages parents and carers to share any issues about their child with school at the earliest opportunity. Teachers will aim to communicate and see parents/carers as soon as is possible, though it must be understood that teachers are working in the classroom with children for most of their day and often have after-school meetings to attend. Where immediate contact is not possible, parents will be contacted and an appointment will be made for them to consult staff.
- 5.5 We arrange a variety of evening meetings for parents and carers during the year. We hold a meeting for new parents/carers for both Nursery and Foundation each summer term, and a meeting for prospective parents annually usually in the Autumn term. Our residential visit to Laches Wood is preceded by an information meeting with parents and carers regarding the planning and content of the visit.
- 5.6 If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, as part of our safeguarding procedures, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence and offer any support we are able to give as is required. We also have a responsibility to monitor attendance and liaise with the Educational Welfare Service when attendance for individual children is falling below agreed thresholds, since Ofsted require us to take action on attendance to improve figures year on year. The Educational Welfare Service may communicate with parents as required.

## **6. Home-School Agreement**

- 6.1 Our home-school agreement has been in place since September 1999. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents and carers, and the school's expectations of the children. We ask parents and carers to sign this agreement when their child starts at our school, and to renew it each year.

6.2 The agreement outlines the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the school, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework. Staff across our pyramid of schools, review this annually.

## **7 Contacting and Meeting with Parents or other Stakeholders**

7.1 It is vital that we remember that all visitors to school are made very welcome on entering the building, at reception and around school. Visitors will be asked to give their name and the reason for their visit when arriving at reception. They will then be asked to sign-in and wear a 'visitor's badge', before entering school and to sign out and hand in their badge before leaving the building.

7.2 Visitors are asked to follow and respect our agreed procedures whilst in school and in being equally courteous and polite at all times with our reception staff and all other people that they meet during their visit.

7.3 When parents/carers or other adults telephone the school, a sympathetic manner and a willingness to listen will often make an anxious caller feel more at ease.

7.4 Staffordshire County Council does not condone the use of violence against staff. Violent behaviour includes displays of verbal or physical aggression, racial abuse or comment, sexual harassment or any other behaviour which intimidates, frightens or discriminates against staff and it must be made clear that such behaviours will not be tolerated by our school communities. Where such unacceptable acts happen, staff will take the appropriate action to deal with the situation. This may lead to a request for police assistance. The County Council will consider starting proceedings or support staff in private proceedings against people behaving in a violent or threatening manner. Parents or visitors are expected to ensure that our staff are not placed in a position where such actions have to be taken.

7.5 Whilst we are committed to providing quality customer care and making visitors feel safe and welcome, we also expect to be treated with care and respect. We recognise that, at times, parents and carers may feel anxious or angry but this is not an acceptable excuse for aggressive and violent responses. Where staff are being subjected to verbal abuse from a parent/carer or other visitor face to face or by telephone, they will inform the person they are speaking with that they will withdraw from the interview or telephone conversation immediately and will leave the situation or place the 'phone down if the parent/carer or visitor continues.

7.6 We will aim to ensure that anyone kept waiting in reception is informed of any delays, reasons for the delay and for how long they can be expected to wait. Staff should keep the office informed of any expected visitors and appointments in advance of the day/time as well as where the receiving member of staff will be for contact, so that reception staff can deal with visitors efficiently and professionally. Members of the public must not leave the reception area and enter the main offices unless escorted by a member of staff because of safeguarding regulations for both their own protection as well as that of the children.

7.7 It is mainly the class teacher's responsibility to contact parents when the need arises. Comments made to parents should be based on factual evidence. Notes of **any** meetings with parents should be made and put in the respective **child's file**. It is essential that any letters from parents, copies of letters to parents and notes from parents **are dated** and kept in the pupil's record file. Lunchtime Supervisors will inform the office and contact will be made with parents/carers in the event of a pupil sustaining an injury at lunchtime. If after all attempts to contact a parent or pupil nominated contact have proved unsuccessful, a message will be left and the office team informed of the accident book details for when the parents return the call.

When communicating with parents it is important that we:

- are polite, calm and respectful at all times and that parents will also be the same
- do not weaken our professional position by responding with what the parents may feel they want to hear rather than with what we know to be right
- do not pass comment on matters which do not relate to us but instead refer the parent to the appropriate colleague
- do not unwittingly complicate an issue by attempting to resolve it on an informal basis, e.g. by talking with a parent in a local shop
- do not leave classes unsupervised to talk to parents
- do not engage in conversations with parents about perceived situations or staff at other schools but refer them to the school/member of staff concerned to discuss their issue directly

The positive approach must be:

- to ask the school office to explain that staff are teaching and inform the parent/carer that the member of staff will contact them to arrange a more convenient time to discuss matters with a parent/carer if the parent/carer arrives whilst we are teaching
- to contact parents the same day if this is possible to say that an issue will be investigated promptly the next day;
- to refer matters when in doubt to a senior member of staff.
- to clarify in our own mind what school policy is in a given area before entering into discussions with a parent;
- to arrange a meeting in a quiet venue i.e. Nurture room, an office, empty classroom, **NOT** an open area where interruptions may take place or comments may be overheard.
- to consider having a colleague present and ensure meetings are minuted/recorded and any follow up communication with parents is carried out.

## **8 Annual Written Report to Parents and Carers: Children's Achievements**

8.1 Every year, we provide a written report to each child's parents/carers outlining progress in the various subject learning areas. This report identifies both areas of strength and of future development. In school, we ask the children to comment on their own progress, and we ask parents and carers to make a similar comment. In Year

2, pupils are also provided with details of their performance in the National Tests/Assessments when these are received.

- 8.2 In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers during the course of the year to share any pastoral, social or other concerns. We encourage parents and carers to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being during the course of the year if necessary.
- 8.3 When children have special educational needs, or are making less than the expected progress, we may request a meeting with parents and carers to discuss what course of action needs to be taken next.
- 8.4 Parents with particular needs, for example, who may need an interpreter or sign language support, may arrange this, informing the school of the arrangement. 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.

## **9 School Prospectus and Marketing Opportunities**

- 9.1 The School Prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents and carers a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated periodically.
- 9.2 Information for parents/carers and other interested parties can be found on the school's website.
- 9.3 The school seeks every opportunity to publicise its work and aims to celebrate successes in local newspapers i.e. The Staffordshire Newsletter.

## **10 Public Access to Documents**

- 10.1 The school makes a range of documentation available to parents and carers on request. A small charge for photocopying is usually made for extra documentation requested which the school has to specially compile.

## **11 Communication with Other Schools and Outside Agencies**

- 11.1 Toward the end of their final year, we pass on information about the children to their intended transfer schools. We try to give a picture of the whole child, and include test results, their strengths and development areas, interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, football captain, school council representative, playground buddy, etc.). There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. We may also send on several items of work.
- 11.2 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 in school life. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses amongst many other agencies. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Support. Service Providers are asked to communicate with us at least 48 hours in advance of any visit to pupils, giving notice so that arrangements with pupils and organisation of rooms can be arranged in advance of the meeting. Where meetings with staff are required, a greater period of notice will be required for planning and communication.

- 11.3 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 the children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help children who may be suffering abuse. So, when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the school's Designated Safeguarding Staff who will share this with the Head Teacher. This information, as is required of us, often needs to be shared with social services and the Local Authority officers as is required by safeguarding procedures. Parents/Carers need to be aware that this is a duty which is required of schools and something that we have to do rather than choose to do when any concern is raised.
- 11.4 We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents and carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and to whom we may pass it on.

This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents and carers have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed. It should be noted that when police are following up any incidents or making enquiries concerning pupils, we may be consulted and required to pass information to them on request.

## **12 Electronic Communication**

- 12.1 We use the internet and e-mail and we have a school website.
- 12.2 All school members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are many benefits to this, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our Safe Use of the Internet policy. Staff should be cautious of using sites such as Facebook and other social networking sites where information is widely available to the school's community and beyond. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.
- 12.3 The internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.
- 12.4 Our school website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.
- 12.5 Members of staff all have their own PC and e-mail accounts with a unique log in and password which should not be shared. Staff should ensure that if they are taking a school laptop home, they monitor carefully any family members using it.
- 12.6 Parents and carers are required to sign permission slips for their child to use the internet in school before this access is allowed.

## **13 Use of Photographs and Names**

- 13.1 Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes including displays, recording practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and are a visual and historical record of school events.
- 13.2 We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus and

on the school website. The local or national press may, on occasion, publish photographs of children participating in events at school.

- 13.3 Parental permission must be obtained before using photographs of children. Princefield First School seeks parent permission on entry of a child to our school. Local press often will only publish photographs of children if their names are printed with their photograph so this is something for parents to consider before giving any permission. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held in school. Staff should make careful checks of permissions before using any photos or materials for publication.
- 13.4 Photographs will be checked by staff to ensure that they are suitable for publication (e.g. photos of children in swimwear would be unsuitable).
- 13.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with children's full names unless they are part of a publicity article published officially e.g. newspaper article. Even on the school website, only children's first names may be used.

#### **14 Use of Mobile Phones/Personal Cameras in School**

- 14.1 Staff must not have their own mobile phones in classrooms during school hours. Staff must only use school cameras not their own equipment or mobile phone cameras. This includes when taking part in educational visits. (See Safeguarding Policy & E-Safety Policy)

#### **15 Monitoring and Review**

- 15.1 This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed as new information is received.

#### **Linked documents**

- Home School Agreement
- School Reporting System
- School Prospectus
- School Newsletters
- School Calendar/Inset Dates
- E-Safety Policy