



Policy title: Communication

Date created: May 2018

Review Date:

Date ratified:

Signed:

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition

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.

1.2. Rationale

Our school aims to ensure all communications are:

- Clear
- Comprehensive
- Two-way
- Timely
- Share respective responsibilities

1.3. 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, team leaders and/or the Headteacher or Senior Teacher 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.

2. Leadership and management

2.1. Roles and responsibilities

The School will ensure that:

- Pupil safety and well-being is paramount following all safeguarding protocols
- Parents and children have clear lines of communication
- Parents are informed of forthcoming events within appropriate timelines
- Regular meetings take place to communicate the progress of children
- All communications will be treated as confidential within the school context
- Where a parent has a concern, the school will:
 - Explain clearly how and when problems are raised
 - Respond within a reasonable time and keep complainants informed
 - Attempt to resolve problems in line with the complaints procedure

Parents will:

- Read the key communications issued by the school
- Raise issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity with the school in the appropriate manner
- Act on the communication (for example, attending special meetings)





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- Treat school staff with courtesy and respect
- Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence, aggression or verbal abuse
- Recognise that resolving an issue can take time
- In the case of a complaint, follow the school's complaints procedure
- Not use any social media platforms for the purpose of complaint

Pupils will:

- Ensure they take home any letters
- Be kind and speak politely to everyone in school
- Ask for help and try their best
- Tell a member of staff if they have worries or are unhappy

Governors will:

- Have a notice board detailing the names of governors on the school website.
- Be contactable via the school (email: clerk@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk or written communications left at the school office and will be forwarded to the Chair of Governors).
- Support the school in a strategic role, if parents contact them on a matter to do with the management of the school, governors will be unable to respond and will direct them to take their concern to the school.

2.2. Reviewing and monitoring

This policy will be renewed triennially in accordance with updates on communication arrangements.

3. Teaching and learning and specific guidance

3.1. Telephone calls

- All calls are received through the main office. A message will be taken and sent to the relevant person as soon as possible. The person concerned will try to respond as soon as possible and by the end of the next school day if possible.
- Urgent calls 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 will be taken by a member of staff and passed on as soon as possible.
- The office is particularly busy between 8.45am-9.15am and 3.00pm-3.30pm. Calls may be recorded on an answer machine.
- If teachers have arranged to receive calls at particular times of the day they will try to ensure they are available. Should other commitments or events make this impossible, a staff member will take a message.

3.2. Letters and emails

- We ask parents to email admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk for any administrative queries or to contact their child's teacher
- For the purposes of administration we require all emails to go to a central email address. However, all emails will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses





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will be made by the member of staff addressed. Please note all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed.

- Staff will try to respond to the most pressing concerns of parents/carers as quickly as possible. It is our intention to try to **acknowledge** letters and emails within two days during term time and **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.
- 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, home address and contact details.
- Letters can be handed into, or posted to, the school office. As with emails all letters will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff addressed. Please note all letters should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. Please let the office staff know if the letter contains information about your child which you would like the class teacher to receive urgently.
- 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.

3.3. Meetings with class teachers

- The class teacher is the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. Teachers are not available during the teaching school day but mutually agreed appointments can be made 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.
- Teachers are available before and after school on the playground for quick messages but if parents need longer to discuss issues with teachers then we ask they speak to the office to arrange an appointment.
- Parents can visit the school to ask questions, gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or the Senior Management Team.
- Parents are asked to phone the school office on 01223 880408 to make an appointment or email admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk.
- This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents. We will aim to make appointments within 5 working days and are willing to meet after school (3.30 – 4.30pm) to fit in with parents.
- Parents are asked not to approach teachers to discuss their child if they meet them outside of school as this does not allow for confidential discussion.





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3.4. Parent Consultations

- Twice a year parents are invited to attend parent consultations to discuss the progress and attainment of their child(ren). Parents sign up online after receiving the invite through ParentMail.
- Where possible it is more effective for parents to attend the consultation together so that a common approach to supporting the child in their learning can be agreed. If exceptional circumstances mean this is not possible we will try to arrange separate consultations.

3.5. Written Reports

- In the Autumn and Spring Terms, parents receive an overview with details of the child's attainment and progress in the core subjects and their attitude to learning. There is a more in depth report in the summer which gives feedback on all areas of the curriculum.

3.6. Absence Requests

- We ask parents to complete a school 'Absence Request Form' which we require to be given to the school a minimum of 10 working days before the requested date, in order to receive a response before the date of the absence.

3.7. School prospectus and website

- Our school prospectus and website contain a range of information to give parents and carers, and the wider public, a full picture of provision at our school. We update this for each school year. The school seeks to put as much information as possible on its website and parents/carers are encouraged to look at the website on a regular basis.

3.8. Home-school communication

- A calendar of school events will be produced at the start of each term and communicated via the school Newsletter and on the website. The school Newsletter is sent to parents at least monthly. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters when necessary.
- At the beginning of each term, all teachers write to the parents or carers of the children in their classes with details of the learning to be covered during the forthcoming term.
- We welcome and value all feedback from parents and carers about our school's policies and practices. We conduct an annual survey to canvas the views of parents and carers about our school and report back on the outcomes.
- We arrange regular curriculum meetings for parents and carers. These meetings explain various areas of our curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning. We hold a meeting for new parents/carers each June, and for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 parents and carers each March, concerning the national tests. For the biannual residential visit a number of meetings with parents and carers regarding the planning and content of the visit are held.





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- If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

3.9. Parent Forum

- The Parent Forum is the place where parents/carers, the Headteacher and governors meet to discuss aspects of school improvement.
- The Parent Forum does not have the power to make decisions unless the school has specifically asked for a decision to be made. However, the Headteacher and governors want to hear the views of parents so they can feed into the decisions made by the school.
- The Parent Forum meets at least three times a year. Dates of meetings are advertised well in advance, agendas and minutes are distributed.

3.10. Parentmail

- We encourage all parents to inform the school of their current e-mail address, to allow them access to parentmail. Those who do not have access to parentmail will receive a paper copy of any correspondence.
- Parentmail is used to send out a variety of information, either to a targeted group, or to all parents on parentmail. The newsletter, information about whole school events and all letters relevant to the whole school are sent out to all parents on parent mail and in addition, some specific communications regarding trips and events are sent out to the relevant parental groups.

3.11. Communication with the Community

- Members of the local community are invited to school functions such as Church Services and School Productions.
- Guest speakers from local churches, community organisations and charities come into school to speak to the children.

3.12. Communication within our school

- There is a timetable in the staff room of the week's activities, and a whiteboard for the day's messages.
- Every Thursday there is a weekly briefing to discuss safeguarding, health and safety and the following weeks activities
- All our procedures are detailed in the staff handbook.
- Written communications with members of staff are delivered through pigeonholes or by email.
- Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or persons external to the school, without due authority.

3.13. Communication with other Schools

- The school regularly communicates with staff and children of other primary schools. Such communication may be by means of personal contact with specific staff or





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through more formal contact such as cluster groups and by means of sports fixtures and other inter-school events.

- The school works closely with the Beacon Schools Network, a cluster of Church primary schools in the local area.
- Communication with the local secondary schools is predominantly for Y6 children. We have particularly close links with Bottisham Village College.

3.14. Communication with Outside Agencies

- Close contacts are maintained with support agencies including the Educational Psychologist, Learning Support Services, the Peripatetic Music Service, the Education Welfare Officer and the School Nurse.

3.15. Complaints

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

4. **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

4.1. Safeguarding and confidentiality

- The safety of children is paramount in all situations. Communication must ensure the confidentiality of all stakeholders of the school community.
- We store useful information about 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 and will be reflected within the new GDPR laws that come into effect May 2018.
- Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed. Refer to Great Wilbraham School's Freedom of Information Policy and our Privacy Notices which are distributed annually.
- The school will refer breaches of the communications policy to the Chair of Governors.

5. **Links to other policies**

5.1. Freedom of Information Policy

6. **Appendices**

6.1. Social Media Policy Guidelines

6.2. Headteacher's Checklist to review school complaints procedure

6.3. Resources available to schools

6.4. Parent Protocol Poster

6.5. Parent Communication Guidelines





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Appendix 6.1 Social Media Policy Guidelines

Rationale

- The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.
- For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff at the school.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the school from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected
- Safeguard all children
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school

Definitions and Scope:

- Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper site.
- Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.
- All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.
- Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media.

Use of Social Media in practice:

- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the school community in any personal social media whilst in employment.
- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection





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- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above
- Members of the school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts
- All email communication between staff and members of the school community on school business must be made from an official school email account
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the school community on school business, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.
- Staff are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account

School-sanctioned use of social media

- There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning.
- Courses require the use of blogs for assessment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop students' learning.
- When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:
 - Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.
 - The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the Headteacher or member of the SMT before access is permitted for students
 - The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
 - Staff must not publish photographs of children without written consent of parents /carers, name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts
 - Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe
 - Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SMT
 - Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public
 - All social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the About or Info page to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the school website. This will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by the School.





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Appendix 6.2 Headteachers' CHECKLIST for reviewing the school's Complaints Procedure

- Are Governors and school staff aware of the local Authority's recommended policies and leaflets available for parents and stakeholders?
- Has the suggested local Authority Poster been displayed?
- Has the School Complaints Procedure been reviewed and adopted by the Governing Body?
- Has the Governing Body reviewed and adopted the Recommended Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy?
- Has the school produced a leaflet summarizing how to raise a concern with the school?
- Does the school have a clear link from the front page of its website to the school's documents associated with complaints including the School complaints Policy, the summary of how to raise a concern with the school and the school Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy?
- Are the documents posted online available from the school office as hard copy?
- Has the school considered other ways of ensuring that all parents know how to raise a concern?
- Do the school staff understand the school complaints Policy and their role in it?
- Do all governors know what to do if they are approached by a complainant?
- Has the school considered displaying a safeguarding poster in public areas?
- Do senior staff understand the powers of the Headteacher to warn or ban a parent following unacceptable behaviour on the school premises?
- Does the school have the appropriate model letters on the school Information Management System?





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Appendix 6.3 Resources Available to Schools

- Recommended Complaints Procedure for Schools
- Recommended Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy for Schools and Colleges.
- Suggested Local Authority poster reinforcing parental expectations.
- Local Authority guidance on banning parents from the school premises.
- Education Advisers' Flow Chart – detailing where to get appropriate support and advice/contact details.
- Headteacher's checklist for reviewing the school's complaints procedure.
- Local Authority guide for parents on how to contact their child's school in order to raise a suggestion, concern or complaint.
- Local Authority parent leaflet explaining the process for raising a concern or complaint.
- Local Authority training for governors and staff.
- Local Authority Exclusion guidance and Inclusion Officer Support.
- Parent Partnership Mediation and Advice.
- Advice from the School's Education Adviser.
- Advice and services from the Locality Team.
- Other services:
 - STAR
 - Support for Learning
 - Education Welfare Service





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Appendix 6.4 Parent Protocol POSTER

We welcome visitors to our school.

We will act to ensure it remains a safe place for pupils, staff, parents and other members of our community.

If you threaten or assault anyone in the school, or persist in abusive behaviour, you will be asked to leave or be removed from the premises and may be prosecuted.

Parents' expectations of the School

Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with the School can expect the School to:

- explain clearly how and when problems can be raised with the School,
- respond within a reasonable time
- be available for consultation within reasonable time limits
- respond with courtesy and respect
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure
- keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

The School's expectations of parents/ carers/ members of the public

The School can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the School to:

- treat all school staff with courtesy and respect
- respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff within the School
- avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the School a reasonable time to respond
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
- in the case of a complaint, follow the School's complaints procedure





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Appendix 6.5 Parental Communication Guidelines

Messages

For brief, non-urgent messages please speak to classteacher/teaching assistant in the playground or contact Mrs Crisp or Mrs Lockwood in the School Office who will pass the message on when appropriate. For urgent messages, please ring the school office.

General administration query:

admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk

Change of contact details/lunch requirements:

admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk

Classroom, behaviour or homework query:

admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk

Urgent message regarding a child:

office@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk

Child Protection or whole school query:

head@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk

Please bear in mind that although teaching staff endeavour to look at their emails once a day, their priority is the teaching, learning and safety of the children and they may not be able to respond immediately.

Meetings

We are always happy to arrange meetings when needed, please contact Mrs Crisp in the school office or admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk who will liaise with the appropriate member of staff.

Concerns

We appreciate at times you may have worries and concerns and both the school staff and the governors are committed to ensuring that you are listened to and any problems dealt with as speedily and as reasonably as possible. The channels that exist within the school by which you can raise such worries and concerns are below:

- Specific concerns related to individual children or queries about the running of the classroom should be raised with your child's class teacher in the first instance, either by speaking directly at an appropriate time or via admin@greatwilbraham.cambs.sch.uk
- If the concern is felt to be particularly serious or sensitive in nature it can be raised directly with the Headteacher, either by speaking directly or via direct email
- General concerns related to running of the school, pupil experiences, etc can be raised with either the Headteacher or one of the Governors via email or letter. Please note any issues raised with Governors will be relayed back to the appropriate staff so that any concerns can be addressed and responded to.

We would hope that you feel able and confident to approach the staff and we would encourage this in the first instance. As you will appreciate certain times such as the beginning and immediate end of school is very busy for all and it may not be possible for staff to deal with all concerns straight away or in a manner of confidentiality. At these times it may be appropriate for staff to agree with you a day and time that is both convenient and allows for your concerns to be raised in confidence.

