Communication Policy

2023-24

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Lead Reviewer(s) | Primary & Secondary Principal
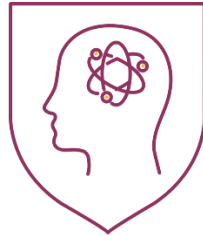
The Science of Learning

Social Enterprise

Student Agency and Innovation

Aims and Expectations

We believe that clear, open communication between the school staff, their peers and parents/carers has a positive impact on staff wellbeing and 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 staff and parents/carers in a realistic and timely fashion
- 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

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteachers

The headteachers and CEO are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet 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 school hours (7:10am – 5pm, weekdays). 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.

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
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our parent contract. Parents should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of Core School Hours (7:10am – 5pm weekdays), or during school holidays. During school holidays, communication can go through our Front of House Team who will direct parents to an onsite Leadership Team Members.

1. Communication Cycle

Familiarity in communication is important for staff and families. It means that the community and get into a routine of when to expect key information so that important messages are not missed. The Academy Communication Cycle allows these routines to be established. The Communication Cycle can be found in the Academy Parent Guide.

Whole School

Monthly – Academy Newsletter Released (Email)

Termly – Parent's Evenings (Online)

Termly – Progress Reports (Online)

Termly – Principal's Letter (Online)

FS and Primary

Friday – Class Newsletters Released (Email)

Unlimited Access – FS Seesaw Portfolio (App)

Unlimited Access – Primary Ladders at Home Reports (App)

Secondary

Weekly – Tutee of the Week and Head of Year Hero celebration (Email)

As and when appropriate – celebration and concern communication (Email, phone or meetings)

Unlimited Access – Secondary Go4School Reports (App or desktop site)

Open-door Policy to Communication

At The Academy, we operate an open-door policy. Parents are free to contact teachers at any time via email. They can also request a meeting, either onsite or online, at any point throughout the year - they do not need to wait for parents' evenings. This can be booked in by the teacher at a time that fits into their weekly schedule. However, parents should note that teachers are not

expected to read emails during lessons.

2. Communication Protocol

Rationale for Protocol

- To reduce unnecessary email traffic around school
- To maintain a high level of professionalism
- To ensure communication is clear, succinct and effective

Content and Tone

- Professional, polite and courteous – remember tone cannot be heard in text form (e.g. Do not use CAPITALS, multiple exclamations or question marks – both are open to misinterpretation)
- Use clear signposting of the purpose (e.g. Subject Heading – FOR ACTION by DATE; FOR INFORMATION to allow colleagues to priorities tasks)
- The purpose should be for information or to state a task that needs doing. If you have a strong opinion/frustration about an issue, then face to face or phone is recommended
- Emails are for professional use only (e.g. no selling of furniture, cars etc.)
- If a concern or issue is raised, then this should be addressed to the specific line manager/individual and should not be copied into whole departments or teams
- Parents may need to have a 'soft tone' about them when giving information – a brief statement may sound curt and be open to misinterpretation. Praise and polite manners go a long way
- If you need to have a difficult conversation, then use either phone (after consultation with line manager) or face to face – do not do it in an email
- Be aware of the communication needs of our ELL parents

Events, Drop-down Days and Parent Actions

If a parent is required to action a request (fancy dress, collect cardboard and resources, prepare a packed lunch) the following must be followed:

- Must be approved by PLT or SLT first and added to the School Calendar at least 1 half term before the event
- 3 Weeks' Notice period (appear in 3 weekly newsletters for Primary, Form Tutor to inform students 3 weeks in advance for Secondary)
- Be clear if this is a whole school or only for a particular school phase in all communication

Length

- Be concise and succinct and to the point
- Use of bullet points to support ease of processing for emails may be useful.

Communication Timings

- Where possible, send communication at the start of the day, lunchtime or after school so that core teaching is not disturbed. Delay delivery time in options menu or store in draft
- Cc emails to only those who need to know

- Avoid using 'Reply All' unless everyone needs to know the content of the message
- Staff should only email colleagues between 6am-6pm during weekdays. Weekend emails should only be sent if absolutely necessary/if it is an emergency

Expectation of Turn Around

Parents

- Response/answer within 24 hours (on return to school following a weekend/holiday) even if it is a holding email while you investigate
- Within 48 hours – follow up on action, outcome to parent or a meeting booked

Staff

- Action emails must be given the required length of time
- A response should not be required from teachers during the same working day. If urgent go and see colleagues face to face
- If a member of staff is required at short notice because of an emergency, then please use corridor phones

Mobile phones

- Please switch mobile phones to silent when in school
- Staff WhatsApp groups are not official means of communication; there is not expectation that staff should be part of these or respond to conversations during their working day
- Never use your mobile phone during a lesson, when on duty or any other time you are directly responsible for students
- If you need to make or receive a call on your mobile phone this should be done away from classrooms and offices as not to disturb anyone
- Please do not walk the corridors on your mobile phone as this gives a very poor impression to parents and prevents you from interacting with colleagues and visitors to the standard the Academy expects
- Children are not allowed mobile phones at the Academy during the school day unless with prior approval and under the close supervision of a member of staff
- Staff seen using their personal mobile phone for a call or a text during instructional/lesson time with children in the class will receive an immediate warning from the Pri/Sec Principal.
- Staff are not permitted to take photographs or videos of students on their personal devices as part of the safeguarding policy.

3. Communication methods with other staff

The section below explains the methods we use to keep staff members up to date with what is happening across school.

Emails

- Emails are the main method of communication where no immediate action is required, and discussions are not necessary
- Emails are used to share key information amongst individuals, teams and whole school

Meetings and Work Phones

- Meetings and work phones are the main method of communication where immediate answers or discussions are required
- Meetings are booked with times being agreed by the participants
- If staff require a meeting room to be booked, they should do this through the appropriate administrative staff (Receptionist)

Weekly Briefings

- Weekly briefings provide an opportunity for whole school and phase messaging
- Weekly briefings should be used as a way of reducing emails throughout each week
- Any important information should be shared with the Principal prior to briefing for it to be included

Personal Phone Calls

We will call staff mobiles in emergency situations only about:

- Missing students
- School incidents
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

School Calendar

- The school calendars include a full breakdown of key events across each term
- Where possible, we try to give staff a minimum of 3 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions
- Any such event will be included in the school calendar.

4 Communicating methods with parents and carers

The section below explains the methods we use to keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Emails and Letters

We use email 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
- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our [weekly/monthly/termly/etc.] newsletter

Text messages

We will text parents about:

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

School Calendar

- Our school website includes a full school calendar which identifies key holidays and events throughout the year
- Where possible, we try to give parents a minimum of 3 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions
- Any such event will be included in the school calendar.

Meetings

- We have an Open Door Policy meaning that parents can contact a teacher at any time. Meetings can then be arranged to discuss matters in person.
- We hold multiple parents' evenings per year. 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.
- 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 of Determination, or who have other additional needs, will also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs regularly throughout the year.

Phone Calls

- Where meetings are not possible or appropriate, phone calls can be arranged and made to discuss a child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, a child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

Homework

- FS and Primary set homework via year group Padlets
- Secondary homework is recorded by staff on Go4Schools. Parents can also see this on the app.
- Year 7 students record homework in student planners. Other year groups have the choice to use planners. Students who do not keep on top of homework using Go4Schools will be given a student planner.

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
- Termly progress reports summarising current progress
- A report on student performance GL Progress, CAT4s and NGRT assessments

- A report on the results of public examinations and qualifications

Home-school communications app

- (FS) Seesaw – Used to share visual updates of student progress
- (Primary) Ladders at Home - Used to share live records of student assessment data
- (Secondary) Go4Schools - Used to share live records of student assessment and pastoral data
- (Whole School) GEMS Connect – Used to support parents in paying students fees, tracking STS buses, adding money to student IDs for lunches and other school admin

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 before and after-school provision

Parents should check the website before contacting the school for any of these details.

5 Parents and carers methods of communicating with school

Parents should use the Parent Guide to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school reception numbers and email addresses.

Email

- 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 24hours, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 48 hours
- If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school

Phone calls

- If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a non-urgent matter, they should email reception, the Parent Relations Executive or the teacher directly, and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 24 hours
- 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 48 hours of your request
- If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school reception

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues
- Sudden changes to student collection arrangements

For more general enquiries, please call the school reception.

Meetings

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

We try to schedule all meetings within 48 hours of the request.

We cannot guarantee that teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day and so if parents need to speak to teachers urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

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

6   Inclusive Communication

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

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) in English. We can translate to Arabic if needed and will endeavour to support any other translations where and when appropriate.

Parents who need help communicating with the school in English can request for an interpreter to be present for meetings or phone calls.

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

7   Links with other policies/documents

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Whole School Wellbeing Policy
- Staff Wellbeing Policy
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Academy Parent Guide