

**Communications Policy**

**Isleham C of E Primary School**

January 2021

1) Principles and Values

Schools have many methods of maintaining communication with parents, other schools, their community and external agencies. At Isleham Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, we recognise the importance of clear and effective communication with everyone.

We are committed to being transparent and accessible to all who have an interest in the school while still upholding the values of discretion, confidentiality and the requirements of GDPR. We greatly value communication between home and school and expect that, even in difficult situations, all parties are treated with respect. In this policy, the term ‘parent’ refers to parent(s) and / or carers.

2) Objectives

a) As a school, we aim to:

i) Make sure all communications are professional in their presentation and their content.

ii) Endeavour to communicate with parents and children in a timely fashion.

iii) Ensure that communications are treated with appropriate levels of confidentiality.

b) From our parents, we expect:

i) All communications issued by the school to be read and acted upon fully (for example, attending parents’ evenings, returning slips promptly).

ii) Any issues or concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity with the school in an appropriate manner.

iii) All communications to be courteous and respectful in manner.

iv) Social media to be used in a productive and non-judgemental manner (for example, to share a lost piece of homework or double check a date). It should not be used to discuss individual members of staff or children.

3) Forms of Home-School Communication

a) Communication with Teachers

Teachers should always be the first point of contact for parents if they have any questions or concerns about their child. Staff are frequently available for brief messages just before school starts, or at the end of the day. If you require a longer conversation, please organise a meeting or telephone call with the teacher via the school office. 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 will only be invited to discuss their own children. Staff will not talk about other children in front of other parents/carers.

b) Office

The school office is open 8:30am – 4:30pm on weekdays, term time only. The school office staff are able to deal with a large range of queries and have many years of experience in positively supporting parents and external visitors.

c) Letters

Letters from parents can be handed in or posted to the school office. Please ensure that letters are addressed to the appropriate member of staff wherever possible. We aim to respond to a letter within 5 school days (term time only). If the content of the letter is more complex, we reserve the right to respond within 10 school days. When correspondence is made to an individual parent on an important matter, the letter will be sent by post (hand delivered or recorded delivery) or handed directly to the parent to ensure confidentiality and security.

For day to day or routine matters, correspondence will be sent via the online communication software but may occasionally need to be sent home in the children’s bookbags.

d) Email correspondence

It is expected that parents send all email correspondence to the office@isleham.cambs.sch.uk address. These emails will be treated in confidence. Emails will generally be responded to by the appropriate member of staff and sent back to the parent via the office@ email address. Occasionally, a member of staff may use their internal email address to respond, particularly if the content is sensitive. This does not mean their internal address should be used for future correspondence; these emails will be redirected via the office.

We aim to respond to emails within 5 school days (in term time only). If the content of the email is more complex, we reserve the right to respond within 10 school days (in term time only).

e) Telephone calls

We have three options on our telephone line which usually ensure that you will be able to speak to a member of the school staff, if this is not possible, or you do not wish to do so, there is the option to leave a message.

If a communication is urgent, please wait to be connected to a member of the office team. We expect that those receiving and making the call are courteous in tone at all times. We reserve the right to stop a telephone call if, after a warning, there continue to be signs of aggression.

Teaching staff aim to respond to telephone messages within 5 working days.

f) Newsletters

We aim to send a weekly newsletter that give updates on the previous week and an outline of any future events. This correspondence will also highlight any reminders that affect parents. Each newsletter contains a calendar and this is updated regularly; the calendar on the school website is also updated.

g) Written reports

Teachers write an in-depth report in the summer term which is issued in July. It is expected that parents read this report and return the acknowledgement slip to school. Other reports may be written across the year, including notes and assessment grades shared prior to parents’ evenings. Children requiring additional support may also have additional reports or ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ individual plans shared half termly with parents. The correspondence can be requested by any adult with parental responsibility– please refer to section 7 of this policy for further information.

h) Website

The school website is updated regularly. It contains information required by law but is also designed to support everyone with their understanding of the school ethos, curriculum and calendar. If there is a school closure, the website will be updated accordingly and an alert page will appear over the homepage.

i) ClassDojo- the school’s online learning platform

Quick queries can be sent via the ClassDojo messaging tool to teachers and a member of teaching staff will attempt to respond to you without delay. If your quick query requires more than a very quick response, it will be dealt in line with the rest of this policy and you will receive a response within 5 school days. If your query is felt to be more than a 'quick question' it will be forwarded to the Office email account and dealt with as if it had been sent to the office, in line with the rest of this policy.

j) Social Media

It is expected that everyone connected with the school will use social media responsibly, sensibly and fairly. Before posting, please consider whether you would be prepared to say this message directly to the person concerned. If you would not, we respectfully ask that you do not submit the post.

Social media can quickly damage the reputations of parents, staff and the school. Therefore, we ask that it is used in a supportive manner. If a parent has a concern, please speak to the school to see if a resolution can be sought. Please also be aware that negative social media posts can be legally challenged and can also affect the outcomes of internal investigations.

4) Governor Communication

a) Information about the Governing Body can be found on the school website.

b) The role of a governor is to provide strategic support to the school. The operational ‘day to day’ duties of running the school are delegated to the Headteacher and the staffing team. Therefore, any communications where the content relates to the day to day running of the school (such as SEND provision or a playground incident) should be addressed to a member of staff. Matters relating to the strategic development of the school can be addressed to the Governing Body via the clerk’s email address: office@isleham.cambs.sch.uk Such emails should be marked ‘For the attention of the Chair of Governors Mrs F. Borley’

c) Periodically, the Governing Body will include a message to parents in the weekly newsletter.

5) Community Communication

We will communicate with the community through the regular Parish Newsletter- the Isleham Informer. Occasionally, we may invite community members into school to support an element of the curriculum. The Parent-Teacher Association, known as the PTA, also issue regular updates. They welcome you to join them to raise funds that enable all children to participate in school life from those ‘little extras’ as well as organising events throughout the year. As they are a voluntary group, their minutes are informal and not published officially.

6) External Agencies Communication

Some families will have additional involvement from external agencies. If the school requires the support of an outside party (for example, educational psychologist or school nurse) then we will always ask for parental permission before sharing any pupil information. If we deem that there is a safeguarding issue that puts a child at immediate risk of harm, we will contact the MASH team without waiting to hear from parents. All other lower safeguarding concerns will be raised with parents first.

7) Separated Families

Requests for communications from split parents are accommodated. Please ensure that the school office is aware of the parental separation. We ask that you share all appropriate contact details needed to be able to send communications effectively. Please understand that we are only allowed to discuss a child with adult(s) with parental responsibility; this means that we are unable to speak individually with step-parents regarding their step-child.

8) Privacy

a) Confidentiality

We include confidentiality as part of our induction process for paid and unpaid staff, volunteers and external contractors and it is part of our school Code of Conduct.

It is expected that everyone within the school works to the highest levels of confidentiality. If this confidentiality is broken, it will be investigated by an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team or Governing Body.

b) GDPR

Due to the regulations governing data protection, we no longer issue copies of class lists etc. to parents. Please be aware that we do not use a child’s full name in any communication that is not directly sent to you as parent. Therefore, communications such as those found within newsletters, website articles and newspaper reports will only use the first name of a child if consent has been given by parents.

9) Inappropriate Behaviour

Everyone has the right to be treated with respect. Therefore, we have a zero tolerance rule on aggressive, rude or inappropriate behaviour, which includes persistent communications; this rule applies to everyone with whom we communicate. We will consider each incident carefully and decide on an appropriate outcome. The options that we may consider are:

• Organising a meeting to discuss the behaviour displayed.

• Banning the person from school site for a period of time.

• Calling the police.

• Calling the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) team if it is a safeguarding issue.

• Disciplinary procedures.

• Blocking email correspondence.

• Redirecting inappropriate correspondence to the Local Authority to deal with accordingly.

10) Informal and Formal Complaints

We greatly value positive communication between home and school, but we are aware that, at times, issues may present themselves. In order to resolve the situation successfully, we ask that all parents read the school complaints policy, before completing the official complaints form which is available from the school office and the school’s website. This form gives the opportunity to outline concerns and identify the preferred solution. Please refer to Appendix A of the Complaints Procedure.

We will investigate all complaints and will respond within the timescales given in our complaints policy. The school will not deal with complaints that have previously been raised if these have been fully explored through the complaints policy. For further information please refer to the school Complaints Policy and our Harassment and Persistent Complaints Policy.

Last reviewed: 21.1.2021

Date of next review: on or before 1.9.2021