Water Orton Primary School

Communication Policy

Positive communication is an essential element of the aims of Water Orton Primary School. It enables our children and families to feel valued and listened to and protects all staff members from unreasonable demands both in and out of working hours.

The majority of communication takes place through the frequent verbal interactions between families and staff as children are brought to and from school as well as the school website, School Comms, Class Dojo, text, email, telephone and the school newsletter.

Aim

To ensure that Water Orton Primary School is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our children, with their families and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are open, honest, respectful, ethical and professional.

Contact details

The school holds emergency contact details for all children on the School Information Management System (SIMs) and families are contacted on an annual basis to ensure that these are up to date. Families are expected to inform the school immediately in the event that contact information needs to be revised. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact families.

Communications with Families

Hereafter the term 'families' will be used to refer to all those individuals who have a role in the up-bringing and care of the child.

Families are welcome and encouraged to visit the school to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, and gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with their child's class teacher, phase leaders or specific teams within the school and with the Senior Leadership Team.

Outside of teaching their designated class or undertaking their usual roles in school all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school. These duties will include care of children, organisation of extra-curricular activities or whole-school coordination of a curriculum subject (and many other roles and responsibilities).

Because of this although we aim to be able to facilitate requests for an immediate meeting, for the reasons stated above this is not always possible. Where staff are not able to facilitate an immediate, unscheduled appointment we will aim to do so **within 5 school days**.

Arranging a mutually convenient appointment allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the families and to gather any necessary information prior to the meeting. This process can make the meeting much more productive.

Home/School Communication

The following list, whilst not exhaustive, covers the main ways in which we will communicate with families. All response times are indicative and where extensions are needed i.e., for further investigation, a holding response will be given to the family along with an updated expected response time.

Year group curriculum plans and information letters

Families will receive a termly Year Group Newsletter via email from the school. This will identify the focus of the learning taking place during the period indicated, any special events and identifies how families can support their child's learning at home through homework activities.

Emails and Electronic Information

The school subscribes to 'School Comms' allowing us to email letters to families. Not only is this more environmentally friendly as it decreases paper usage, it also reduces photocopying and other costs in the school. We urge families to provide us with a valid email address.

Families are able to use e-mail as a means of providing a quick, effective way of communicating information about their child or to arrange a meeting with their teacher. Any such e mails should be sent to admin2618@welearn365.com where they will be forwarded to the appropriate staff members in school. Families are reminded that teachers have little to no time during their teaching day to check emails and, therefore requests which require immediate or quick action should not be sent directly to teachers. *For example, emailing your child's teacher to inform them you will be collecting them for an appointment or to change pick-up arrangements is not appropriate due to the high- likelihood that the message will not be read in time.* It is important that families telephone the school office with this information. Staff, if appropriate, may forward emails to the Headteacher or other members of the senior team if support or advice is required.

All emails requiring an answer should be responded to **within 3 school days**. Staff are not expected to, *and are actively discouraged from*, checking and responding to emails outside of their working day and at the weekend. However, staff are encouraged to work flexibly and respond to emails in a way that suits them to balance their working hours.
Staff do not expect families to read, respond or action emails outside hours that suit them. Email does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. All staff should seek face to face communications, when email is not the most effective form of communication. Staff and families are discouraged from entering into in-depth discussions about a child's progress or well-being via email.

Telephone calls
Inbound
All telephone calls will be answered by staff in the main office. It is our policy that office staff do not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency. Messages are taken and forwarded to the relevant person. If the call requires a response from a member of staff, we aim to do this **within 3 working days**.

Outbound

Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for injuries or accidents. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed. Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact and so forth. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible.

Class Dojo

All classes use Dojo as a way to share information. It enables staff to share photos, videos, announcements and celebrations. Staff do not expect families to read or action Dojo messages outside hours that suit them. Staff will not respond to messages or comments on Dojo.

Social Media

Staff are advised not to communicate with families via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". The school will not routinely respond to any comments or messages on any social media groups.

Written Reports

Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child's families on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and next steps.

Newsletter

Our Newsletter is emailed by School Comms and contains important reminders, dates and messages for the coming weeks. Families are strongly encouraged to read these.

Parents Evening Meetings

All families are provided with two, 10-minute meetings each academic year. Families are asked to sign up for an allocated date and time. Should an appointment day not be suitable, families are asked to contact their child's teacher via the office. The teacher will make every effort to arrange a more mutually convenient time but is not expected to do this outside of their usual working hours if parents are unable to attend our planned parent's evenings.

Families are encouraged to request additional meetings should they have a concern regarding their child's progress or well-being. Likewise, staff will arrange additional meetings if necessary.

Annual Reviews for Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

All children with an Education, Health and Care Plan will have an Annual Review each academic year to discuss their progress in relations to the aims and objectives of their plan and half termly review meetings are held to ensure provision and support is appropriate.

School Website

The school website waterortonprimary.co.uk provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Complaints

All formal letters of complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the school's separate Complaints Policy.

The school does **not** accept or act upon anonymous communication unless in relation to matters of serious Child Protection.

Storage of information

If families communicate with the school using email and letter with a formal complaint or a matter of concern, a copy will be stored digitally. Formal correspondence with families will be kept in the child's personal folder in the OneDrive and held for a period of time in accordance with our Disposal of Records Schedule.

Requests for Information

Please refer to our Data Protection and GDPR Policy for copies of children's records, freedom of information and Subject Access Requests. This will detail procedures and protocols, including timings.

When communication becomes inappropriate, aggressive, vexatious, persistent or disproportionate and the school deems it is unacceptable, then actions will be put in place in accordance with our Zero Tolerance of Violence and Aggression Policy.

Monitoring and review

The school reserves the right to request a review by the Nominated Governor of any correspondence received from parents that appears to contravene the 'Zero Tolerance of Violence and Aggression' statement or that appears to be excessively demanding in its content or frequency. This will assist the school and Governing Body in improving its responses and monitoring complaints.

Policy written October 2021

Approved by the Governing Body November 2021

Reviewed August 2022, Reviewed 2023, 2024 2025

Next Review September 2026.