



Communication with Parents Policy

Introduction

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, we believe that all stakeholders including children, parents, staff and governors should have clear channels of communication to give added value to the aspirational and positive outcomes of all of our children. When communication is effective and all stakeholders are united in achieving the same goals, the results will lead to confident, supported, valued, resilient and secure children. If we role model to children, effective and positive communication between adults then we can support children in taking forward this transferable life skill into every context they have access to, at home, in school, in the community and online. This policy has been implemented to give clear guidelines to parents of how information and communication will be shared. Communication for staff/governors is clear through the Staff Behaviour Policy and our children will follow our internal routes of communication/pupil voice channels.

Aims and Responsibilities

All communication at Willow Wood Community Primary School, should keep children, parents, staff and Governors and other stakeholders well informed in a timely manner. Communication should be honest, ethical and professional and should use the channel of communication that is most appropriate to audience, message and context.

Communication with parents will be in operation during school hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. If contact is made to school outside of these times, it will be dealt with once school reopens (in the event of emergency support, details of helplines are available at the end of this policy) this includes via any apps, telephone or email unless a staff member picks up the message and is able to respond – but this cannot be promised and there is no expectation for any staff member to do so.

Communication will occur in many formats (although this will be kept to a minimum) as set out below and this policy outlines how each communication will be used, for what purpose and the expectations for all stakeholders when using each platform.

This policy will be put into practice when communicating with parents. Our Headteacher Mrs Robertson is accountable for its implementation and review. This policy will be available on the school website. Regular and ongoing monitoring and review will take place with all stakeholders to measure its impact and effectiveness.



Methods of Communication

Face to Face

Willow Wood Community Primary School, our preferred method of communication wherever possible would be to have face to face conversations with parents. This is particularly important when giving feedback about children, raising any issues or concerns and likewise for parents who are wishing to raise any issues regarding their child. It is important that wherever possible face to face communication is private and parents may be requested to attend school to speak directly to a member of staff or the Headteacher and equally can contact the school to request a meeting also. These meetings will be held on the school site during school's opening hours and allow for appropriate confidentiality.

Staff or parents may have face to face communication at arrival and departures of children into breakfast club, school or after school club but this should be for short, quick messages that do not require a need for confidentiality. Parents should be aware that sharing information at this time may allow for other parents and staff to overhear and they will need to wait until all other children are collected to allow for us to safeguard our children.

Parents Evenings

Parents are asked to meet their child's teacher(s) at parents' evening. The School will meet with parents more regularly if pupils:

- have special educational needs
- are making less than expected progress
- are experiencing behavioural or disciplinary difficulties.

Telephone Call

In circumstances where your child may be absent from school, please telephone the school office to state your child will be absent and the reason for absence. This is the preferred method of communication as Facebook Messenger messages may be deleted or unread. This should occur every day that your child is absent from school. During the school day, contacting the school office by telephone will be the quickest and most effective form of communication to alert the school of any changes in circumstances or to deal with any administration issues via the school office.

Parents should only contact via telephone to the school office and not request personal contact details of staff. Parents should ensure that their own contact details are up to date so that school staff can return any contact in a timely manner.

Email

If you wish to contact the school for non-urgent matters or if it is outside of the schools working hours then e-mail will be the most effective form of communication. Please be advised that outside of the school hours you will receive an out of hours response with any necessary helplines and the school will respond to you when it is next open.



Letters

Letters will be sent out to notify you of trips and excursions and usually have a consent slip attached to request additional consent to the annual consent forms that are sent out from school. There will often also be a survey sent out to gather information and consent for trips too.

Applications Used by School

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, we use the following applications;

Sunderland City Council Payment system

Teachers2Parents – texts

These applications are for the purposes of instant messaging and sharing information as quickly and as efficiently as possible to a mass audience of parents. While certain applications allow for more direct contact between parents and staff, please ensure that this is regarding non urgent issues and is a process of sharing information quickly.

Social Media e.g. Facebook etc

The school's social media site is Facebook and consent to join our secure page must be granted by the school following the completion of a consent form.

Messenger also allows parents to send messages to the office and school staff. However, there may be a delay in responding to these messages as staff members are not allowed to respond during teaching time so any urgent messages need to be shared via the office. If a message can wait for a response, please send a message via Messenger and start the message for the attention of the person it needs to be directed to. Be aware that this is not private to an individual teacher or member of staff and all staff members in school will be able to view the message. If it is a confidential message either see the member of staff on a morning or after school or ask the office to get the member of staff to phone you directly when they have time to do so.

This site is to share photos and images with parents of events and activities that have occurred for children inside school and on trips, excursions and residential. Again, these sites are to share information and parents should post only positive comments. If there are any issues with anything that is shared on the site it should be reported immediately to the school office and where necessary further action may be taken if the content is derogatory towards school, school staff or other families and children. This would also result in a parent being refused future access to the site.



Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent to parents and carers as required e.g. calendar dates, event information and activities. This will usually be sent by text link unless requested otherwise. Paper copies can be requested via the office.

Prospectus

The school prospectus is available on the school website and contains all the information required to give parents a complete picture of the school's delivery of education. It is updated every year, or more frequently if necessary.

Website

The school website both provides information about the school and promotes the school to a wider audience. It also has a regularly updated area giving information and current awareness for parents. It also provides access to the school's policies and curriculum information as well as a gallery of photographs showing what each class has been learning each week.

Please familiarise yourself with each of the platforms and how to use them safely and appropriately and seek further advice from school if required.

Parental Expectations on Communication

At Willow Wood Community Primary School, we have a clear policy around parental conduct (see Parental Expectation Policy), to support parents in understanding the school's expectations of them, both staff and children follow our agreed conduct policies. It is a clear expectation that all communications to and from the school are polite and respectful at all times. While we appreciate that at times as a parent you may feel upset, worried or angry, we would ask that you take some time before contacting the school while you feel this way in order to maintain positive communication at all times and to avoid unreasonable or extreme demands or threats.

Due to diarised commitments, the headteacher or member of staff may not be able to respond immediately to any concerns but will try to respond as soon as possible.

Any discussions that will be held with parents will be based on fact and not assumption. Gossip, hearsay or second-hand information is often incorrect and misleading and this means that it may take time for the school to fact find regarding any alleged incidents in order to ensure a full and fair picture of what has happened can be gathered. This means that meetings and discussions may not be held immediately.

Once information has been gathered and parents attend either a face-to-face meeting or receive a telephone call from school, it is important that all parties maintain an open mind in relation to the findings. In any situation each person will have their own perspective of what occurred which may also differ from the facts of the situation, It is important that all parents remember that the safety and well-being of every child is the priority of the school and that judgements on the outcomes of any discussion or complaint should be reserved until the



school has had a reasonable chance to respond and resolve. The school will always listen to your view and consider this within the best interests and feelings of the wider school community, as appropriate and in a balanced way.

Wherever possible, communications should always be clear, succinct and to the point. School will not tolerate any unfair, or personal comments made towards staff or other parents including if these are shared online. If this occurs and brings reputational risk to either the member of staff or school, then legal and potentially criminal action will be taken. Formal complaints must follow the correct school policy (Please see Complaints Policy).

The school reserves the right not to respond to communication which does not meet the expectations outlined above, and is considered to be abusive, unnecessarily aggressive, and/or bullying or harassing in nature. If staff judge your communication to be such, then further legal and/or police advice will be sought.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is a specific type of harassment under the law. It is unlawful and the school will not tolerate any type of unwanted behaviour of a 'sexual nature'. Any complaint of sexual harassment will be taken seriously by the person receiving the complaint and dealt with sensitively and as quickly as possible.

Summary

- Please telephone us to report a pupil absence.
- Please email us or Messenger us to request any admin-based support or to arrange a face-to-face meeting or call back from a member of staff or the Headteacher.
- Please access social media for updates on activities and events of the day including photographs.
- Please use our mobile applications for quick updates on what is happening in school and changes to the school timetable of events.
- Please complete and send back any responses for permissions from formal letters.
- Please get in touch with staff at the earliest opportunity to seek support.
- Please seek to resolve issues directly with school and please do not use social media irresponsibly and cause reputational damage to staff or school.
- Please access our school policies via the website to support you with any help you may require and to understand our procedures.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

School Complaints Policy

Parental Expectations Policy

School Prospectus

This Policy will be reviewed annually