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# COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARENTS/CARERS POLICY



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| Reviewed/Adopted: | May 2021                        |
| Next Review Date: | May 2024                        |
| Review Frequency: | Every three years               |
| Reviewed By:      | Teaching and Learning committee |

### **Pilsley CE (A) Primary School: A Communications policy for Parents and Carers**

#### **Aims:**

Pilsley CE Primary School places great importance on communication between parents/carers and the school. Good communication between the school and the home is essential. At Pilsley, the school's aim is to have effective communication with our pupils, with the parents/carers and with the wider school community. Clear, professional, timely and appropriate communication enables us to share our aims and values through keeping the school community well informed about school life.

All parents/carers are equally valued as part of our school community. Pupil learning is improved when the school works in partnership with their parents and the wider family. The school therefore believes in close consultation with all families and in structured communication between the home and the school.

In a small school it is very important that the way we communicate is structured so as not to impinge on important teaching and management time. To this end, the school believes in having an open and transparent 'Communications Policy' between parents and carers and the school which clearly articulates what parents can expect from the school and in turn what the school can expect from parents/carers.

#### **What parents/carers can expect from the school:**

Pilsley CE Primary School has various strategies for communicating with parents and carers. Some of the school's communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement, while others reflect what the school believe is important.

The school undertakes to make our written communication as accessible and inclusive as possible. The school uses letters, emails and a text messaging service. The school uses an easy to read font and includes pictures where appropriate. The school seeks to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. The school will ensure our communication is clear, honest, ethical

and professional, written in jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all. The school will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements to enable a parent/carer with a disability or whose first language is not English to receive and engage in effective modes of communications.

Letters are emailed to parents and carers as a more cost effective and environmentally friendly option. However, paper copies can be made available on request. Text messages are sometimes sent as reminders. The school will ask to be provided with an up to date email address and mobile telephone number.

Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required e.g. for illness or injury. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact. Where no contact is made, a call will be made to the second contact and then the third. In the event of no live contact being made, a message will be left and repeated calls made to the contact numbers where possible.

If a child is absent/late for school, and we have not been informed of a valid reason by an appropriate adult, the school will contact a parent to find out the reason why. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure the school are provided with up to date emergency contact information.

In exceptional circumstances, where contact cannot be made with a parent/carer despite reasonable efforts, the school will consider contacting Social Services or Educational Welfare.

**For the school year, parents/carer will be provided with:**

- An annual report on pupil achievement in the summer term sharing both academic and personal development in the various subjects. It will identify areas of strength and areas for future development.
- Twice yearly Parent Consultation Meetings where parents can expect a short (e.g. 10 minute) dialogue on their child's attainment, progress and behaviour. The teacher will also listen to parental views. These meetings provide an opportunity to celebrate a child's success and to support a child in areas where there is particular need for improvement. Parents and carers are able to see their child's work during these sessions.
- Opportunities to have discussions with a relevant teacher or senior member of staff on a pre-arranged appointment at the school's discretion and agreed with parents.
- Regular newsletters from the head teacher that will include diary reminders, general information, updates on school events and achievements.
- A half termly class newsletter that contains key information about curriculum coverage and learning. This identifies the learning taking place in the classroom and how parents and carers can support their child's learning at home.
- Regular letters from the school about educational events, visits and extra-curricular activities.
- A regularly updated website that contains relevant information.
- Annual parental survey.
- A meeting for new parents and carers in Foundation Stage which they will be given a 'Welcome Pack'. (Covid procedures- welcome packs will be sent electronically)
- Meetings to share school developments or initiatives around teaching, learning and assessment and the curriculum.

- Meetings about residential visits.

Where a child has been diagnosed with a Special Educational Need (as defined in the current Code of Practice) the school will meet with parents and carers more regularly as outlined in the SEN policy.

It is important that the home school communication can, where appropriate and necessary, also take place outside these exchanges. Parents/carers are welcome to visit the school to discuss their child's progress – 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 a senior member of staff. In this instance, parents and carers are asked to phone the school to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise to make staff available to speak to the parents/carers. The school's aim is to see the parents/carers as quickly as possible and this should take place within 5 working days.

Parents/carers have the right to an appropriate third party in attendance and for the meeting to be minuted.

#### **What the school can expect from parents:**

- Be mindful of when they engage in a short informal discussion with their child's teachers. The start and the end of day for teaching staff are busy times and so this may not be the best time to raise your concerns.
- Where possible set up appointments with the teachers/head teacher for such a discussion. These can be made through the school office.
- Keep their communication, written or verbal, reasonable, respectful, concise, and to the point.
- Accept that the school has the best interests of the child at heart and any communication with families will reflect this.
- Understand that in appropriate circumstances staff have the right to have an appropriate third party in attendance at meetings.
- Understand that teachers have the right to decline an invitation for a meeting.
- To email [news@pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:news@pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk) so that emails can be forwarded to the correct member of staff. Parents should not use staff personal work email addresses to contact a member of staff.
- An email window highlighting specific times staff will respond to emails will be established and communicated to the school community. **Emails will be responded to between the hours of 8am-5pm, Monday-Friday during term time.**
- Parents will be made aware that staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day as this impinges on teaching and learning time.
- The school community will be encouraged to only send emails during this window and that if emails are sent outside of this window, they should not expect an immediate response in most cases.
- The school will not expect work emails to be checked during staff members' personal time as this represents an intrusion into their private life.

- If there is a safeguarding or other confidential concern, emails can be directed to [headteacher@pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk)

## **Emergency situations**

School will contact a parent/carer if an emergency situation arises in school e.g. serious illness or serious injury. A school will contact a parent/carer to ask for a child to be collected in the event of illness of injury or perceived illness or injury.

A parent/carer should contact school in an emergency situation e.g. a child needs to be collected urgently due to an issue with a family member; an issue of immediate well-being that impacts on a child or children in the school; an issue that the school needs to be informed about to ensure the safeguarding of a pupil or pupils. Parents should contact school on 01246 583203. If there is no answer, a parent/carer should leave a message or visit the school in person where possible.

## **Communication with other schools and external agencies.**

The school recognises that children have diverse needs, and the school are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on additional ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully to achieve their potential now and in the future. The school holds information on pupils, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Support may come from Special Educational Needs services (e.g. MAT, Speech and Language, Educational Psychologist etc.), medical services (e.g. occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and hospitals and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units. When a child moves school, the school is required to pass on information to support the next stage of their development e.g. national test results etc. as requested by the new school.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that the school should provide a safe and secure environment. The school staff are the people most in contact with our children and therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So, when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the designated member of staff, who may share this information with the relevant services.

When holding and processing information both internally and sharing information with other schools and external agencies, the school will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **Use of images, films and names**

Images can be used and displayed in and around school for several purposes e.g. wall displays that celebrate visits or learning, pupil parliament, award displays, in books and on school reports etc. These would only be seen by school staff, other children, parents/carers and possible visitors to the school. Parents/carers should contact school if there are issues of safeguarding that mean it would be inappropriate to display photographs of a child.

Parental permission is obtained before using images of children in our external communications. For example, the school may use a photograph when communicating with parents and carers and the wider community in newsletters, on the school website or on school social media feeds (School Facebook page). The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in school or local events. Photographs will not be captioned with children's names.

A school information and consent form is provided to all parents and carers at the beginning of the academic school year which will cover permissions for the subsequent year. Lists of those children for whom permission has not been given will be held by the school office.

Filming and photographs in school or at school events can only be taken with the express permission of the school. If permission is granted, the films and images cannot be shared online or on social media.

In the event that requests for teacher or head teacher time (either verbally or in writing) mean that the level of communication is getting in the way of teaching and learning or risks becoming unreasonable or disproportionate, the school retains the right to set in place more formal structures for communication. The school also retains the right not to enter into vexatious correspondence or into correspondence of a historical nature, including on issues which the school consider resolved and/or which sit outside the school's remit. The school has the right to pursue further measures if it believes stakeholders are not adhering to the details set out in the 'Communications policy'.

Any complaints will be dealt with as set out in the School's 'Complaints Policy', a copy of which is available on the school website at [www.pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk](http://www.pilsleycofe.derbyshire.sch.uk)

The head teacher will monitor implementation of this policy and will submit periodic evaluation reports on its effectiveness to the governing body.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner as necessary.