

# Home-school Communication Policy

The Sittingbourne School



**Approved by:**

Lynn Lawrence

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NA

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### 1. Introduction and aims

We believe that children are empowered through learning, that education can deliver exciting ideas and opportunities – and change lives. In this fast paced 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a great education is more important than it has ever been in guaranteeing that young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to develop their talents and grow into successful adults.

Our staff are thoroughly committed to ensuring the wellbeing, happiness and success of every child; and before long, all students feel they belong and have the confidence to develop into the best they can be.

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent body. Our parents recognise that educating children is a process that involves partnership between students, parents, class teachers and the school community. As a partnership, our parents/carers will understand the importance of a good working relationship to equip children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our school.

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on 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 parents/carers
- 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

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### 2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

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

### 2.2 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 core school hours (8.30am – 3.10pm, Monday to Friday), or their working hours (if they work part-time). We aim for all communication to the school to be acknowledged within one working day and responded to within two working days. 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.

A copy of The Sittingbourne School's Partnership Agreement can be found here:

<https://www.thesittingbourneschool.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=346&type=pdf>

### 2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times

- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Responding 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 code of conduct.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (8.30am – 3.10pm), or during school holidays.

Please refer to our Partnership Agreement that can be found here:

<https://www.thesittingbourneschool.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=346&type=pdf>

### **3. How we communicate with parents and carers**

The sections below explain how we keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

#### **3.1 Email**

We use email to keep parents/carers informed about the following things:

- Providing updates on current attainment and engagement in class (both positive and negative)
- To inform parents/carers of a school sanction
- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests

#### **3.2 Phone calls**

In addition (or as an alternative) to an email, staff may call parents/carers about the following things:

- Providing updates on current attainment and engagement in class or around school (both positive and negative)

- To inform parents/carers of a school sanction
- To inform parents/carers of any first aid issue regarding the pupil
- Class activities or teacher requests

### **3.3 Text messages**

We will text parents about:

- Urgent reminder about upcoming events
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

### **3.4 School calendar**

Where possible, we try to give parents at least seven working days' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

### **3.5 Letters**

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our termly newsletter

Please note, letters will usually be sent via email

### **3.6 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
- A report on the results of public examinations

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

### **3.8 Meetings**

We hold the following meetings per year for each year group:

Progress evenings: one a year for Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 and twice per year for Years 11 & 13

Tutor Evenings – once a year

Options evening – one a year for Year 9 students and one a year for Year 11

**NB. Following parent/carer consultation, these meetings will take place in school, face-to-face**

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 with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

### **3.9 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.

### **3.10 Home-school communications app**

The Sittingbourne School uses two apps to communicate with parents/carers.

The My Child at School (MCAS) app to communicate with parents. This app also allows parents/carers to see their child's timetable and attendance information.

In addition to this, the Class Charts app is used to share information regarding students behaviour and conduct. Parents/carers will be communicated with via this app if their child has been issued with an after school detention.

## 4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

### 4.1 Parent/Carer contact form

The most effective way for parent/carers to contact staff in school is via the contact form, found on the school website here:

<https://www.thesittingbourneschool.org.uk/page/?title=Contact+Us&pid=2>

Requests for this are closely monitored by both year teams and the SLT to ensure timely responses. Parents/carers can expect a response within two school days.

### 4.1 Email

Due to the high number of emails staff can receive, we encourage parents to avoid emailing staff and use the contact form instead. Therefore, we advise that parents/carers only email staff if email dialogue has been first established by a member of staff. On these occasions, we aim to acknowledge all emails within a full working day, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within two working days. However, please note that responses can take up to five working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

### 4.2 Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a contact member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should use the parent/carers contact form. If this is not possible, we aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within five school days of your request.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

### 4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should either use the contact form or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within five working days of the request.

While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning

- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

## **5. Accessibility**

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

### **5.1 Parents with additional communication needs**

We aim to make communications accessible to all. We have taken the following steps to achieve this:

- All whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) are made available in multiple formats
- All communications are written as clearly and concisely as possible
- Staff are trained on accessibility and will endeavour to provide information in an accessible format

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- School announcements and communications in accessible formats
- Sign language interpreters for meetings

Please contact the school office to discuss these.

### **5.2 Parents with English as an additional language (EAL)**

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in English only.

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

- School announcements and communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

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

## **6. Monitoring and review**

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every two years.

The policy will be approved by the governing board.

## 7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- Home-school agreement:  
<https://www.thesittingbourneschool.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=346&type=pdf>
- Complaints: <https://www.swale.at/attachments/download.asp?file=624&type=pdf>
- Staff code of conduct: available on request
- ICT and internet acceptable use: available on request

## Appendix 1: school contact list

### Who should I contact?

| I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...                            | WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO   |
|---|---|
| My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework | Your child's teacher via the contact form<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>    |
| My child's wellbeing/pastoral support                 | Your child's year team via the contact form<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>  |
| Payments  | Call reception - 01795 472449   |
| School trips  | Call reception - 01795 472449   |
| Uniform/lost and found                                | Your child's year team via the contact form<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>  |
| Attendance and absence requests                       | If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01795 472449<br><br>If you want to request approval for term-time absence, email the Headteacher ( <a href="mailto:tss-headteacher@swale.at">tss-headteacher@swale.at</a> )   |
| Bullying and behaviour                                | Your child's year team via the contact form<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>  |
| School events/the school calendar                     | Your child's year team via the contact form:<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a> |

| I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...      | WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | <a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">QLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a><br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a> |
| Special educational needs (SEN) | The SEND team via the contact form:<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>  |
| Before and after-school clubs   | Your child's year team via the contact form:<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>   |
| Hiring the school premises      | <a href="https://schoolhire.co.uk/sittingbourne/the-sittingbourne-school">https://schoolhire.co.uk/sittingbourne/the-sittingbourne-school</a>   |
| Governing board                 | Email the clerk to the governors:<br><a href="mailto:sarah.scottdrysdale@swale.at">sarah.scottdrysdale@swale.at</a>   |
| Catering/meals                  | Your child's year team via the contact form<br><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdw9NxeQ2EWmtLMEbxh4Y3hWjxBAArYEGZSgYYQWBs2aLXdQg/viewform</a>  |

## Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy.

The policy can be found here:

<https://www.swale.at/attachments/download.asp?file=624&type=pdf>