



COMMUNICATION POLICY

2023-2024

Aim

To support St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary, a Voluntary Academy as a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, their parents/carers and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. **Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message.** We should also remember the importance of active listening.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

Objectives

All communications at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School should:

- keep staff, pupils, parents/carers, Governors and other stakeholders well informed
- be open, honest, ethical and professional
- use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- be actioned within a reasonable time, if required
- use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- take account of relevant school policies in particular Equal Opportunities and IT use
- be compatible with our core values as reflected in our Mission Statement and Strategic Development and Improvement Plan.

Internal Methods of Communication

1. Meetings

There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal. The school calendar stipulates the **minimum** standard of frequency of these.

All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to Phase reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff. Minutes should be dated, reflect clearly any actions to be undertaken and who will carry out these tasks.

The approved minutes should be available to staff. It is the responsibility of staff to read these minutes if they have missed the meeting.

2. Email

All information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of Microsoft email addresses. This helps to ensure that all Data Protection and Safeguarding Protocols are adhered to.

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. To ensure that each member of staff is using email effectively, the following actions should be taken:

- Do not copy in more individuals than required
- Check and delete mail regularly
- Use language and tone that are professional and appropriate at all times
- Subject headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily
- Email time should be blocked into your day if possible rather than allowing the received mail trigger to organise your day
- Do not use email to avoid face to face contact

The School has a separate policy for dealing with Safer Internet usage; you are required to make yourself conversant with this.

3. Written Communications

Written communication is used regularly, similarly to emails; and staff should ensure that they adhere to the same rules as bullet-pointed in section 2.

4. Telephone Calls

All staff should endeavour to return telephone calls within 24 hours or sooner if it is an emergency or urgent.

5. Mobile Phones

Staff **must not use mobile phones during directed time**, i.e. contracted hours (permissible during break times only, away from children) and must not take photographs of children on mobile phones. Please refer to the Staff Code of Conduct for Acceptable Use of Technology regarding further details.

6. Staff Briefings

Staff briefings take place on a weekly basis (8.30am Mondays). The diary for the following week is discussed and information shared. The main points are recorded and displayed in the staffroom. It is the responsibility of all staff to inform Phase Leaders/SLMT of any changes as soon as possible and to read the notice board on a **daily** basis.

7. Staff Handbook

A copy of the Staff Handbook is saved electronically on Staff Shared Area on the School Network and a hard copy is available in the Staff room. It is updated at least annually. The handbook contains timetables and reference to employment policies and procedures which are reviewed annually with revisions distributed to staff.

8. Notice Boards

The staff notice boards are located in the staffroom. All staff have a responsibility to check these boards on a daily basis.

9. Newsletter

The school's newsletter is published on a weekly basis and a copy is uploaded on the school website. The newsletter will promote school successes and will incorporate news relevant to the school. All members of staff are encouraged to contribute appropriate items to the newsletter which should be emailed to the Headteacher.

10. School Website

An increasing amount of information is being placed on the website and staff have a responsibility to contribute and ensure their sections are kept up to date. The school IT Leader and Business Manager are responsible for overseeing and ensuring the website is kept up to date.

11. Social Gatherings

The school looks favourably on opportunities to develop positive, professional working relationships and encourages informal gatherings within and outside the organisation in order to build on relationships, develop strong teams and encourage communication. The school will endeavour to organise at least one social event each term to which all members of staff are invited.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, the parish, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. Parents/carers can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents/carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents/carers play in supporting the school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents/carers, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. Staff will avoid developing close friendships with parents/carers.

We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

1. Letters

Staff will endeavour to reply to parents/carers' letters as quickly as possible. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the HT or SLT for advice. Letters to parents/carers must be approved by the HT or SLT before being sent out. Copies of all correspondence, (e.g. letters, minutes) with parents/carers will be uploaded into pupil files via CPOMS.

2. Email

Parents/carers are increasingly using email as a method of communicating with school via the School Administrator (admin@bsf-leeds.co.uk). The School Administrator will provide staff with a printed copy of

the email. Staff can then decide the most appropriate way to respond, e.g. meeting, phone call, letter. All emails to parents/carers must be sent via the School Administrator.

Safeguarding Protocols apply at all times and staff must seek permission from a member of the Senior Leadership Team before using their school email addresses to respond to parents/carers.

3. Telephone calls

Staff will endeavour to respond to parents/carers' phone messages within 24 hours. A comment will be recorded on CPOMS referencing the conversation. Office staff should always check first and ask if the person is available to answer the call.

4. Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

Staff will not communicate with parents/carers or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". Such behaviour may lead to disciplinary action. All behaviour must be in-line with the Safer Working Practice Guidance.

5. Written Reports

Once a year we provide a full written report to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.

In addition, parents/carers meet their child's teacher/s three times during the year for a face-to-face consultation at Parents' Consultation Evening. This gives them the opportunity to view their child's work, celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents/carers to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress, well-being, safeguarding or Child Protection.

When children have special educational needs/disabilities, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents/carers more regularly. We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent/carer wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent/carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

6. School Website

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. It also has areas for information for parents/carers, children and governors.

7. Home-school communication

A calendar of key school events is produced at the start of each term and issued to parents/carers.

A school Newsletter is emailed to parent/carers weekly. It contains general details of school events and activities. Parents/carers expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and upload copies on the school's website.

Children in Reception to 6 have Reading Records which are tracked online. This enables parents/carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher.

The school encourages parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers arrange to see parents/carers as soon as possible. Many parents/carers have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher when they collect them after school. An appointment can be arranged at a mutually convenient time if a more detailed discussion is required.

We arrange various meetings for parents/carers throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents/carers of planning, content and arrangements. A meeting for new parents/carers is organised each year. Additional meetings include High School Transition and English and Maths workshops.

If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, the school will contact a parent/carer (by telephone, if possible) on the first day, to find out the reason for the absence.

8. Communication with other schools and outside agencies

Prior to pupils joining Nursery/Reception, they are visited in their current schools or at home to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School.

We recognise that children have individual and diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully and achieve their full potential. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from health professionals and specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Welfare, Social Care and Child Protection agencies.

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

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details are sent to parents/carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under GDPR. Parents/carers have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

9. Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed bi-annually, or earlier if necessary.