



Winlaton West Lane Primary School

	Communications Policy
Issue date:	May 2024
Review period:	3 years / following significant event

- 1 Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated.

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers promotes partnership and 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 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 The school admin team will set up login details. The admin team will manage these systems and can reset some system login details – they do not have access to passwords. They can resend password links for some systems but others with high security levels do not allow us to do this. However, the admin team will always be happy to assist as much as they can.

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- regularly reviewing this policy

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- responding to communication from parents in line with this policy, following email rules (see appendix 3) and the school's ICT and internet Acceptable Use Policy
- working with other members of staff to make sure parents receive timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will not be expected to respond to communications outside of school hours or their working hours (if they work part-time), or during school holidays.

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that communication with and within school is respectful at all times including interactions with other parents or children on the school yard.
- following the Parent Code of Conduct
- making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance (see appendix 1)
- respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- regularly checking all communications from the school, particularly Arbor

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will not be tolerated and may result in the perpetrator being banned from certain forms of communication or from the premises – this is linked to our 'Parent's Code of Conduct'.

3 How we Communicate with Parents and Carers

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

- Arbor is our web-based management information and parent app. We use this for paperless communications by sending letters and messages electronically. It is the school notification system for sending urgent news, or emergency information to parents via in-app message and text message. Various functions are accessible on the Arbor parent app such as seeing information, logging change requests, paying for school meals, trips, after school clubs and other events. This is our only guaranteed method of communication with parents so it is vital that it's used. An invitation login email will be sent to you from the school office.
- School website www.wwlcp.school - general information and letters as well as curriculum information, links to our social media and other items.
- Seesaw - Early Years only. Online communications and assessment tool.
- Marvellous Me – positive messages and reminders are sent through the app.
- Social media – facebook and X.

4 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
- a KS2 SATs tests
- 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).

5 Meetings

- We hold a minimum of 2 parents' evenings per year. 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. Appointments can be booked via the Arbor app.
- The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.
- We offer the option of a remote (video call) or telephone parents meeting.
- Parents of pupils with special educational needs or disability (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be invited to attend further meetings to discuss these additional needs linked to our SEN Review cycle.

6 How Parents and Carers can Communicate with School Y

6.1 Email

Parents can always email the school about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 3 working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and you need a response sooner than this, please call the school.

6.2 Phone calls

If you need to speak to a specific member of staff about a non-urgent matter, please email the school office and the relevant member of staff will contact you within 3 working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will get in touch with you to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure you have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 3 days of your request.

If your issue is urgent, please call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- family emergencies
- safeguarding or welfare issues
- specific concerns about your child or their wellbeing

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

Please remember that the person at the other end of the phone will often not be the person who can deal with your issue and so we expect all contact to be courteous and polite. See appendix 1 for dealing with abusive calls or interactions.

6.3 Meetings

If you would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, please email or call the office team to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 7 working days of the request.

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

- any concerns you may have about your child's learning
- updates related to pastoral support, your child's home environment, or their wellbeing

7 Inclusion

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

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

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

Please contact the school office to discuss these.

Appendix 1

Who to Contact

West Lane Primary School staff seek to accommodate your needs, questions and concerns in the most efficient manner. In the first instance, any matter relating to a child's particular needs or situation can be communicated to the class teacher at drop-off or collection. This is often the most suitable and useful channel.

If you can't get into school, contact the office via phone, email or Arbor and the admin team will send on messages about children to the teacher concerned.

Dealing with Abusive Interactions

Sometimes staff may have to deal with challenging, abusive, aggressive or threatening interactions. It is unacceptable for any member of staff to be subjected to such behaviour. The following is recommended but staff may not know how to handle such a telephone call.

Do

- remain calm and polite
- actively listen – repeat information back to the caller to test understanding of the issue and gain their agreement
- inform the caller they are trying to help them
- be positive and say what you can do
- be clear and avoid using jargon
- if necessary, apologise for an error and take action to put it right
- if you have to go and get some information, let the caller know why you are putting them on hold and do not leave them on hold for a long time; update them as necessary
- make notes of the conversation
- follow the procedure below if appropriate
- refer the caller to the head teacher, deputy etc.

Don't

- respond in the same manner as an abusive caller
- take it personally
- allow yourself to be bullied
- slam the phone down.

If the caller starts to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms please don't raise your voice/swear at me, I am not raising my voice/being rude to you
If you continue to raise your voice/be rude to me then I will be forced to terminate the call.

If the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms I understand you are upset/frustrated however I am not prepared to continue to be shouted/sworn at so you can either call back when you have calmed down or if you prefer you can put your views in writing.

Staff should also have the confidence that it is acceptable to end an abusive telephone call.

If, despite the two warnings above, the caller continues to raise their voice/be abusive:

Mr/Mrs/Ms I advised you earlier during this call about raising your voice/swearing and you have continued to do this, so I am afraid I am going to have to terminate this call. Hang up.

Further actions:

Make a written note of the telephone call on CPOMS and report the incident to your line manager.

Appendix 2

Guidelines for Parent Communications to Teachers & Staff

Maintain Respectful and Open Communication

- always use a respectful and polite tone
- request, don't demand
- be ready not just to provide information, but to listen to teacher/staff observations and perspectives
- enter the exchange with an open mind and assume a shared best interest for your child
- be prepared to work collaboratively to solve problems

Confidentiality

- recognise that confidentiality may limit information that can be shared from school to parents, including consequences for other students' behaviours

Time to Respond to Communications

- staff will make every effort to respond as soon as possible to parent communications during the working week, Monday to Friday, within school hours only, with the understanding that the teaching day often precludes immediate responses.
- staff will make every effort to respond to emails within a period of 48-72 hours.
- teachers and staff may need some time to collect needed information before responding.
- if the matter is more urgent then please telephone the office – 0191 4142557

Whom to Contact

- notification of pupil absence made via to the office in person or by telephone, email, text or Arbor app message.
- most communications of classroom and playground concerns should be directed at first to your child's teacher via the school email address school@wwlcp.school.
- the Senior Leadership Team may receive communications regarding non-academic concerns via the school@wwlcp.school email address.
- if you have an issue concerning a particular staff member or class, first try to address those concerns with that staff member directly in person or by telephone, bearing in mind impromptu personal meetings will often need to be very brief.
- if you have discussed an issue with your child's teacher and it has not been addressed to your satisfaction then contact the Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher in their absence at school@wwlcp.school

Please recognise that it is both the policy and the value of our school that we operate with openness, collaboration and the shared best interest for every student and that we ultimately seek to communicate effectively with all of our parents and carers.

Appendix 3

Email Rules – Staff and Governors

Email should be used where possible, as long as sensitive information is not concerned. If sensitive information is to be shared, an encrypted link should be used unless the parent specifically requests otherwise.

Don't get into the habit of replying instantly

Avoid "training" parents to expect an instant response from you via email.

It can be helpful to "batch" the times you check and reply to emails rather than dealing with them all day.

At West Lane Primary emails must only be checked when not teaching/in class and during the working week only; Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm only.

Replies must only be sent following the same guidelines.

Use a professional email address

Do not share your personal email. Always use your class or school email. Make sure the signature of your work email is short and professional (See guidance below)

Customise your subject line

Use a specific subject line that will attract the attention of parents. For example, "Tomorrow's sports day" would be more effective than "Update". (See 'Think before sending' for advice on not entering a subject until the end.)

Use this disclaimer:

Important Information

This e-mail and its attachments may be confidential and are intended solely for the use of the individual to whom it is addressed. Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of West Lane Primary School.

If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail and its attachments, you must take no action based upon them, nor must you copy or show them to anyone. Communications by e-mail are not guaranteed to be private or secure.

Please contact the sender if you believe you have received this e-mail in error.

Keep a record of communication you might need to come back to

Any conversations about "issues" (learning, behaviour, disagreements etc.) should be saved. When communication is sent via Arbor the outgoing email will automatically be attached to that child's communication log. Outgoing and incoming 'in app' and 'text' messages will be automatically attached to that child's or parents' communication log in Arbor.

Use CC and BCC professionally

- **use only this** - BCC (blind carbon copy) means you include others in the email correspondence and other recipients cannot see their email addresses. Use your own email address in the **To** box.
- **do not use CC** - CC (carbon copy) means you include others in the email correspondence and all recipients can see their email addresses.

BCC a school leader into the email if they need to be aware of a conversation (don't use CC unnecessarily).

Always use BCC if you email more than one parent so you keep their email addresses private.

BCC shouldn't be used to let people "eavesdrop" on conversations. This is poor email etiquette.

Be a little more friendly and polite than you need to be

Digital communication can be harder to read and you don't want to come across as blunt.

It's also best to avoid things like humour or sarcasm. See more tips for email word choice below.

Use a phone call or face-to-face conversation when necessary

It can be best to deal with difficult, sensitive, or complicated issues via a phone call or meeting.

Likewise, if an email exchange is going back and forth for too long, consider a phone call or meeting.

Think before sending

If you're feeling emotional or unsure, wait before sending.

Always think whether your words could be misconstrued. Ensure the tone of all emails is calm.

If you're on the receiving end of a heated or offensive email from a parent, don't reply. Consult with a school leader.

Add the subject after you have written the email – when you press send it will ask you for a subject and this gives you a "second chance" to review the contents and recipients.

Tips for choosing your words and style when writing an email to a parent:

- when responding to incoming emails, start by showing you understand the question or empathise with their concern
- keep your emails professional but friendly; you don't need to be too stiff or formal
- use correct spelling, grammar, spacing, and punctuation
- do not use text speak, slang, or abbreviations
- don't overuse emojis or exclamation marks
- be a little more friendly and polite than you think you need to be. You don't want to come across as blunt
- always ensure your tone is calm
- include an action plan if necessary — what will you do to help or what suggestions do you have? **Never promise to do anything unless you know it can be done.**
- make sure you address the parent by their name in a personal email
- end on a positive note and invite further communication

When there are strong lines of communication between home and school, everyone wins!

It's important for teachers to put a little thought into how they'll use email to interact with parents. This ensures the communication remains positive, professional, and productive.