



# St. Mary & St. Andrew's Catholic Primary School

## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

*We are guided by God who is at the centre of everything we do.*

*We support each other to be the best we can be to secure bright futures for everyone.*

*With our parishes, families and the community, we work together to create a school that is safe, happy, respectful and inspirational.*

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### 1. Purpose and principles

This policy aims to promote the partnership between the school, parents and carers, volunteers, pupils, the parish and the wider community through efficient and effective communication. Good communication should allow and encourage all parties and stakeholders to participate in the development and enhancement of the school, and its varied activities. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

a) St Mary & St Andrew's Catholic Primary School believes that:

- Effective communication systems not only promote effective learning and the well-being of our pupils but strengthen the quality of our work and the relationships between stakeholders.
- Families have a crucial influence on the education and development of our pupils, and our partnership with them makes an essential contribution to effective learning for our children.
- Parents, carers and other stakeholders should have access to information and receive our support, guidance and help quickly and effectively.
- Parents, carers and other stakeholders should be consulted and given opportunities and clear mechanisms to provide feedback to the school, its staff, the governors and other relevant parties.

b) We define communication as the process whereby meaning is assigned, conveyed and interpreted in an attempt to create a shared understanding. It may be visual, non-verbal, oral or written.

Good communications should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, 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.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies.
- Be compatible with our core values and School Improvement & Development Plan.

## 2. Development Priorities

*Overall priorities*

- To embed all the new interactive communications with key stakeholders (Twitter, staff@ account, MS Teams)
- Specially to build on the use of ICT, the school website, and related technologies, and to build more effective modes of communication, with the flexibility to meet future development needs and opportunities.
- To distribute and manage information via the website and twitter and promote e-communication over alternative conventional types as far as possible, encouraging stakeholders to use the website as their first option. Weekly email to be shared with staff and half termly to families.
- To foster the involvement of people with disabilities by using appropriate e-communications but also to meet the needs of those for whom these are not the preferred choice.
- To develop mechanisms for stakeholders to give feedback to the school, its staff, the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body to support the development of the school and improve the quality of its work.

*Specific priorities and actions*

- To continue to provide up-to date IT training to all staff and identify further training areas or individual training needs.
- For the admin staff, bursar, Head Teacher and teachers to continue to update the website, train new staff to develop those skills and for governors to take turns in RAG rating it against the latest DfE criteria.
- To continue to develop the use of the website, twitter and email as a key communication tool, encouraging more parents to engage with this; and to develop further ways of using the website to promote teaching and learning.
- To further develop clear, easy and secure mechanisms for parents and carers to communicate and receive information via the website regarding pastoral issues and concerns (including absences, lateness, medical and health issues). This will include a generic staff account email for all parents to respond to.
- To develop use of MS Forms for parental consultations.
- To relaunch the PTFA and draw upon new support.

- To place key policies, documents and procedures in areas of the website that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to stakeholders.
- To maintain quality standards for communications and the website, to ensure that items are:
  - carefully planned and written;
  - accurate in content and language;
  - targeted;
  - well publicised to relevant stakeholders;
  - used to inform school development and improvements;
  - communications will be checked by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or administrative staff.
- Over time, to foster educational, charitable, campaigning and networking links which are compatible with the school's aims, objectives, policies and ethos, as part of the school's interaction with the local and wider community.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities - School

a) The **Senior Leadership Team (SLT)** are responsible for:

- ensuring that the spirit, principles and procedures of this policy are understood by all relevant parties, acted upon, adequately resourced and efficiently achieved, so that the school enjoys high-quality, timely and effective communications with all its stakeholders;
- to ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face;
- to ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively;
- to maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff;
- to keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

b) **Teachers and Support Staff** are responsible for:

- ensuring that the spirit, principles and procedures of this policy are followed, particularly the pastoral, welfare and educational aspects;
- communicating proactively with parents/carers about pupil progress and helping parents/carers to support children's learning;
- sharing best practice and relaying successes to ensure a consistent and effective approach to communication with all stakeholders is achieved;
- provide regular up to date content for the website and school blog;
- to communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment;
- to ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school;
- to use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed;
- Read their email account each working day and reply to all emails from SLT;
- Communication to parents is strongly encouraged to take place during the working day. Emails after 6pm should not be sent (staff may work and use their directed time as they

see professionally appropriate with the 'send later' function being activated to ensure the email lands with families between the hours of 8.30am and 6pm).

**c) The Administration Team and any other appointed Staff are responsible for:**

- maintaining day-to-day communication with all stakeholders, in particular:
  - managing and regularly updating the website;
  - managing correspondence;
  - making available information required by parents, carers and others in accordance with this policy.

**d) The Governing Body is responsible for:**

- monitoring and evaluating communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parents and other stakeholders (both formally and informally);
- facilitating feedback from parents and other stakeholders (through the Parent Forum, Parent View, questionnaires, publicised meetings and other activities); and acting upon this evidence, as appropriate, to provide strategic direction to the school;
- supporting the Head Teacher, the school, and all its stakeholders in developing high-quality levels of communication and interaction for the benefit of the whole school community;
- evaluating the effectiveness of this Communication Policy.

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities - Parents and Carers**

Parents/ Carers are responsible for:

a) Providing essential information to enable home-school communications by:

- ensuring that all contact information for them held by the school is up-to-date (including when parents no longer reside at the same address, or where there is a request for information to be sent to different homes, to both parents); and leave details of availability and contact numbers for contact, if they want to the school to make contact via telephone;
- ensuring that the school is informed of absences of their child(ren) in accordance with the attendance policy;
- informing the school of medical conditions or allergies, and supply the necessary medical documentation;
- informing the school of any child protection issues, legal matters, or relevant duties, using appropriate documentation;
- informing school of their child(ren)'s involvement in any exceptional sporting or creative activity.

b) Supporting their child's learning by:

- reading, acting on and if applicable meeting the deadlines in **all** communications;
- using the school's electronic and on-line communication systems;
- being aware of information provided by the school about learning programmes and homework;

- participating in parent/carer consultations;
- sharing concerns about progress with class teachers;
- following class activities on the school website.

## **5. All Members of the School Community**

All members of the community are responsible for communicating in a constructive and courteous manner.

## **6. Links with Other School Policies**

This policy links to other school policies, in particular:

- Safeguarding: any communication on issues that affect the safety or wellbeing of a student will be treated as a priority. The school's Safeguarding Policy sets out the specific requirements and procedures to be followed regarding safeguarding issues.
- Special Educational Needs: the school's Inclusion Policy sets out the role of the SENCO and how we communicate with parents/carers and external agencies.
- ICT: the Online Access & Safety Policy sets out how pupils will develop their ability to learn and communicate electronically and to use the Internet to develop communications with the wider world.
- Teaching and Learning.
- Pupil Behaviour and Discipline.
- Visitors Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy.
- Attendance.
- Complaints Policy.

## **7. Comments and complaints**

We welcome constructive comments about any aspect of our communications. Complaints will be dealt according to our complaint procedures.

## **8. Safeguarding & Child Protection**

We recognise that children's protection is a shared responsibility, and that St Mary & St Andrew's Catholic Primary School should provide a safe and secure environment. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Senior Person (DSP) for Child Protection, or the Deputy DSP, who may share this information with Social Services.

## **9. Review & Evaluation**

- This Communications Policy will be reviewed every three years by the Governing Body.
- There will be a six-monthly review of the website to determine how effectively it is being used to support the development of the school and its work and with a view to maximising the potential of the site beyond the role of disseminating school-produced information and materials. The results of the review will be communicated to the Governing Body.

- The school will consult annually with parents and carers to establish preferred modes of e-communication, with a view to refining and improving communications, and minimising the waste and duplication associated with a paper copy.

## **APPENDIX A - AUDIT OF CURRENT PROVISION**

- A Methods of communication
- B Basic Information
- C Emergencies, closures and unusual events
- D Reporting pupil progress
- E Consultation with pupils
- F School meals
- G Out of hours activities
- H Governors' communication with stakeholders
- I The school website

### **A Methods of communication**

We communicate through:

- Email - If a parent communicates with the school using email with a complaint or a matter that requires an action, a copy should be stored in a digital file or printed & filed. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Head Teacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. All emails requiring an answer should be responded to within 48 hours (2 school days). Email communications concerning a child are kept for the academic year in a digital folder unless they are required for evidence trailing, in which case a copy should be printed.
- Letters home - Staff will respond to parents' letters within 48 hours (2 school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Head Teacher immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Head Teacher or School Admin Team before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents should be placed in pupil files. A copy of general letters will be held digitally in the Admin shared area.
- Text messages (Teachers2Parents).
- School App (Teachers2Parents).
- The school website.
- Twitter
- Zoom
- MS Forms
- Regular School Newsletters (electronic and paper copies are available).
- Governing Body Letters.
- Parent/Carer Consultations.
- School Community Events.
- School Council.
- Parent Forum.
- Class assemblies.
- Transition meetings.
- Home Visits (Reception Class).
- Stay and Play Sessions (Early Years).
- Celebratory Masses.
- Curriculum Sessions.
- Informal communication between teachers and parent/carers.
- Virtual Learning Platform (Early Years).
- Parish Newsletter.
- Telephone - Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency.

We communicate with partners through:

- Meetings and networking with other professionals.
- The work of the Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) and other local schools.

Internal methods of communication:

- All staff receive an induction pack providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- An integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. teachers' meetings, teaching assistant meetings, office meetings, Key Stage meetings, Subject Leader meetings & whole staff meetings.
- All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda.
- E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Teachers' meetings & SLT meetings take place every week and the minutes are shared electronically. Events may be discussed in advance at meetings, but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions.
- TA meetings & office meetings take place half termly. Key stage & Subject Leader meetings are held informally or formally, as required.
- Governors' meeting minutes are placed in the Governor Folder in the School Office and in MS Teams e-folders which are secure.
- Weekly notices are e-mailed out to staff. Staff must check these regularly and read their emails on every working day.
- The whiteboard in the staffroom is used for day-to-day notices.
- The school uses Teachers2Parents to communicate with parents by text, and notifications via the App.
- Urgent messages for parents/carers will be sent by text as early as possible and followed up by the office staff to ensure receipt.

External methods of communication:

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Staff are advised not to communicate with parents via social media sites and will not accept friendship requests from parents on social media. Staff will not accept pupils or ex-pupils as "friends".

We will try to make 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 to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.



## **B Basic Information**

- The following information is available on open access through the website
  - The school's structure, staff roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability
  - School policies
- If parents/ carers have any general queries they are asked to email the School Office ([office@st-mary-st-andrews.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-mary-st-andrews.lancs.sch.uk) or [bursar@st-mary-st-andrews.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:bursar@st-mary-st-andrews.lancs.sch.uk)). For urgent queries and notification of absence please call the school office (01772 862335), an answering machine is available if the call is not picked up. Office hours are 08.15–15.45.
- Reply to text messages (Teachers2parents) are only monitored if a reply has been requested by a member of school staff, do not use this method to contact the school for any other reason.
- Direct contact with teaching staff is through the 'staff@' email account.

## **C Emergencies, closures and unusual events**

Currently emergencies, closures and unusual events are dealt with via a variety of methods of communication. These include phone calls (for individual and personal issues); letters, emails, local radio, texts and app notifications (for more general issues); and school letters for matters that are known in advance.

## **D Reporting pupil progress**

- There are three parent/carer consultations each year. The first consultation is in the Autumn Term and is used to discuss how individual pupils have settled into their new classes and sets targets for the year. Also in the Autumn Term a Parents Welcome Meeting is held in each of the classes to look at the curriculum and talk about how parents can support learning. The second consultation is in the Spring Term to discuss progress.
- If any problems or issues occur between these sessions a meeting is arranged between parents/ carers and class teachers at a mutually convenient time.
- Where parents/carers are separated or divorced and there are communication difficulties between the parties, it is possible for separate consultations to be arranged and for information to be sent to both.
- Each child receives a twice yearly report. These comment on attainment, achievement, progress, application, attitude and behaviour in all curriculum areas.
- Homework tasks are communicated through work set (homework sheets and tasks), letters and on the school's website. We would like to look at these areas and develop the texting service more, as per teacher and Parent's feedback.

## E Consultation with pupils

This takes place informally as an integral part of teaching and learning, and through:

- Class Circle Time
- The School Council

## F School Meals

A termly letter is sent out giving details of menus for parents/carers to make their choices. This information is also available online, on our website, also in paper form from the office.

## G Out-of-hours activities

Information relating to extra-curricular activities, extended school provision and out-of-hours activities is available on the school website.

## H Governors' communication with stakeholders

- The Governing Body issues periodic letters and holds 'drop-in' sessions to meet parents and carers.
- Formal contact with the Governors is made via letter or email, addressed to the Chair of Governors at the school. Some parent governors are available for informal contact at the start and end of the school day.

## I School Website

- The development of ICT and web-based technologies creates the potential for timely and interactive communication to occur between all of the school's stakeholders, as well with the wider community. We are seeking to ensure that our engagement events complement and do not clash with our community partners to ensure we maximise attendance at these events.
- The School website aims to enable:
  - The dissemination of key information within the school community and to stakeholders;
  - Genuinely interactive communication within the school community and with the wider community;
  - Receiving evaluative feedback to enable the school to develop further and improve the quality of its work; this will be done by ensuring that all feedback is incorporated into the school development plan;
  - Opportunities for networking and sharing information/ resources within the school community and with the wider community.
- The website contains:
  - **Home Page:** Welcome to our School; Upcoming Events; Search our website; Contact Details
  - **A school blog:** with rolling news updates
  - **About Us:** Background Information; Meet the Team; Mission & Values; Newhouse Out of School Club; The Governing Body; PTFA; Vacancies; Equality & Diversity

- **Curriculum:** British Values; Curriculum RE; Art & Design; Early Years at SMSA; English; Computing; Design & Technology; French; Geography; History; HRSE; Keeping Safe Online; Maths; Music; Phonics at SMSA; PSHE; PE; Science; SEND; Photo Gallery
- **Key Information:** Admissions; Complaints; Finance; GDPR; Mental Wealth; Policies; Safeguarding Our Children; School Performance
- **Parents and Carers:** Attendance & Holidays; Events; Newsletters; Presentations; School Dinner & School Milk; School Uniform; SCOPAY
- **Faith in Action:** Our Diocese; Our Parishes; Section 48 RE Report; Mater Ecclesiae Multi-Academy Trust
- **Contact Us**

This policy was approved by the Governing Body Summer Term 2024 and will be reviewed every three years.