

Inspires Mat

Communications Policy

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This policy was created in response to the Government's toolkit to reduce Teacher workload. As part of the Department for Education's action to support schools in reducing workload, the DfE has launched a 'workload toolkit' to support school leaders reduce workload in their schools. The need to communicate with parents and carers places a significant demand upon our teachers within a busy teaching day. This policy from the government's toolkit is our way to manage both parental expectations of teachers, and ensure high standards of home-school communications.

Overview

It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers, and communication between home and school is key.

We believe that clear, open communication between the school, parents/carers and other agencies has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

We recognise however that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; and we recognise that parents and carers also have very busy lives.

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers and other agencies
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers and others
- 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

Roles and responsibilities

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

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's 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 the following hours (8.00am - 5.00pm), or their working hours if they work part-time.

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.

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
- Respond 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 directed communication hours (8.00am - 5.00pm), or during school holidays.

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.

Parent Mail

We encourage all parents to inform the school of their current e-mail address, to allow them access to ParentMail through our MIS, which is a quick, economic and efficient method for the school to communicate with parents. ParentMail is used to send out a variety of information, either to a targeted group, or to all parents on ParentMail. The newsletter, information about whole school events and all letters relevant to the whole school are sent out to all parents on parent mail and in addition, some specific communications regarding trips and events are sent out to the relevant groups of parents. It is our aim to have 100% of parents signed up to ParentMail to facilitate paperless communication.

We use Parent Mail to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Parent & Carers updates and newsletters
- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests

Text messages

Text messaging incurs a cost to the school, therefore is not our preferred method of communication. We will use text messaging to provide short notice information. We will text parents about:

- Short-notice changes to the school day
- To signpost to our website, social media sites or an email for important information and increase our reach
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

Phone calls

We will usually only phone parents

- To check on school non-attendance if no message has been received
- In an emergency situation
- If a member of staff wishes to discuss an issue.

Reports

Parents receive reports from the school about their child's learning, including:

- An end-of-year report covering their achievement, how well they are progressing, and their attendance
- A report on end of Key Stage 2 statutory assessments (SATs)

Meetings

We hold 3 parents' evening(s) per year. During the first two of these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress & their child's wellbeing. The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings if there are concerns about a child's behaviour, achievement, progress, or wellbeing. The final meeting affords parents the opportunity to discuss a child's end of year report if they so wish.

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.

School website

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience and provide guidance on admissions for prospective parents and pupils. It also has a regularly updated area for information for current parents. In addition, it has up-to-date policies available for parents to view. Copies of all newsletters to parents and information guides are also accessible through the 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

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc (See also E-Safety Policy)

Staff **will not** communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites nor accept them as their “friends”. The exception is networks or blogs set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Home-school Communication

Pupils are issued with a Pupil Planner or similar at the start of the year. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share with the teachers. Most importantly, parents should use planners to check independent learning work and pupils’ weekly reflection homework. This can also be used to communicate day-to-day issues with the teacher. Parents and a member of staff should check and sign the planner at least weekly.

A calendar of school events is available on the website, and is updated on the key dates that are sent out in September, the upcoming terms dates are always shared in the newsletter. The school’s newsletter is published fortnightly and is sent to all parents, it is also available on the school website. Members of the school will be invited and are encouraged to contribute appropriate items to the newsletter which should be e-mailed to the Headteacher.

How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Parents should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

Email

Parents should always email the school at adminwoa@inspiresmat.co.uk, about non-urgent issues in the first instance. We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 3-5 working days. If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office at adminwoa@inspiresmat.co.uk and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 3 working days either before or after school hours.

This policy aims to ensure that a balance is maintained between the priority that staff time is dedicated to teaching commitments and essential meetings which are critical to the quality of education that pupils receive, with the need for effective communication. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 3- 5 days of your request. (Some staff members only work part time so may not be in school within 3 days of your call).

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.

Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, in the first instance, they should complete the '[Request a Meeting](#)' form available on Parent and Carers section of the school website. Failing this, parents should email their request and reason for meeting to adminwoa@inspiresmat.co.uk, or call the school to book an appointment. Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff. We try to schedule meetings within 7 working days of the request, but this will depend on the nature of the request. Some requests will be assessed to be urgent and will take place as soon as the school (and other relevant agencies) deem necessary. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

Parents and carers should report to reception prior to meeting with a member of staff. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them.

In the event of parents/carers becoming aggressive or abusive, the meeting will be terminated and reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will follow up in accordance with the Parent Code of Conduct.

While teachers are available at the 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

Staff will schedule meetings to occur between 8am and 4:00pm

Inclusion

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

Monitoring and review

The Headteacher will monitor the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every 2 years. The policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.

PARENT/CARER CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Purpose and scope

At Witham Oaks Academy we believe it's important to:

- Work in partnership with parents to support their child's learning
- Create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for pupils, staff and parents
- Model appropriate behaviour for our pupils at all times

To help us do this, we set clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the staff code of conduct) and pupils (through our behaviour policy).

This code of conduct aims to help the school work together with parents by setting guidelines on appropriate behaviour.

We use the term 'parents' to refer to:

- Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil
- Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents or child-minders)

2. Our expectations of parents and carers

We expect parents, carers and other visitors to:

- Respect the ethos, vision and values of our school
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our pupils
- Treat all members of the school community with respect – setting a good example with speech and behaviour
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues
- Correct their own child's behaviour (or those in their care), particularly in public, where it could lead to conflict, aggression or unsafe conduct
- Approach the right member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern

3. Behaviour that will not be tolerated

- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches)
- Swearing, or using offensive language
- Displaying a temper, or shouting at members of staff, pupils or other parents
- Threatening another member of the school community
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the school, its staff or any member of its community, on social media platforms
- Use of physical punishment against your child while on school premises
- Any aggressive behaviour (including verbally or in writing) towards another child or adult
- Disciplining another person's child – please bring any behaviour incidents to a member of staff's attention
- Smoking or drinking alcohol on the school premises (unless alcohol has been allowed at a specific event)
- Possessing or taking drugs (including legal highs)
- Bringing dogs onto the school premises (other than guide dogs)

4. Breaching the code of conduct

If the school suspects, or becomes aware, that a parent has breached the code of conduct, the school will gather information from those involved and speak to the parent about the incident.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the school may then:

- Send a warning letter to the parent

- Invite the parent into school to meet with a senior member of staff or the headteacher

- Contact the appropriate authorities (in cases of criminal behaviour)

- Seek advice from the trust's legal team regarding further action (in cases of conduct that may be libellous or slanderous)

- Ban the parent from the school site

The school will always respond to an incident in a proportional way. The final decision for how to respond to breaches of the code of conduct rests with the headteacher.

The headteacher will consult the Chief Executive Officer before banning a parent from the school site.

Appendix 1: school contact list

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office on– adminwoa@inspiresmat.co.uk -01376 513322
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) in the subject line (for emails)
- We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff

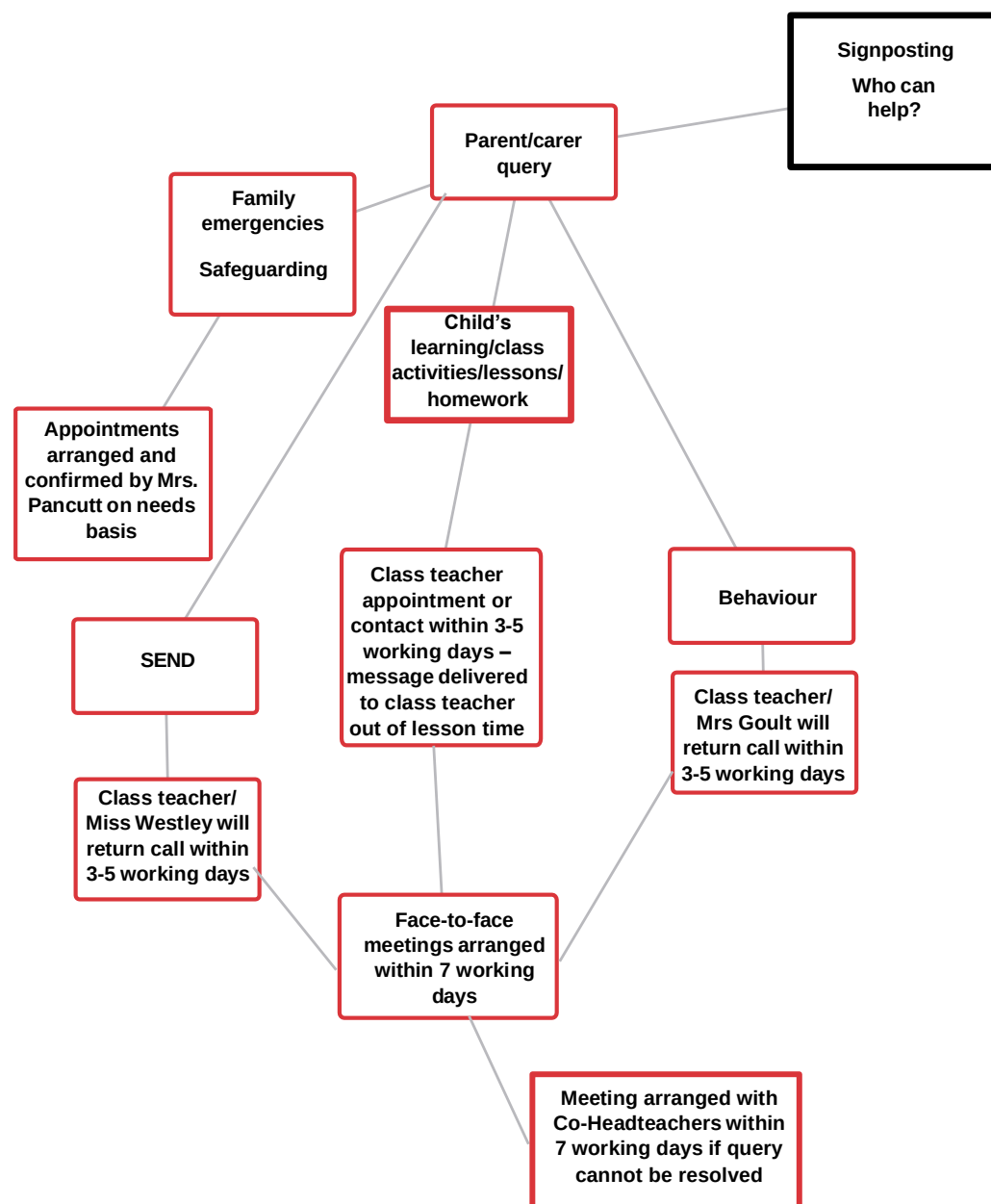
Remember: check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

We try to respond to all emails within 3 days.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	School office/Mrs J. Pancutt (Family Liaison Officer)
Payments	School office – Mrs J. Hitchcock
School trips	School office – Mrs J. Hitchcock
Uniform/lost and found	School office
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01376 513322 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the school office and report to Miss S. Owen.
Bullying and behaviour	Your child's class teacher in the first instance Mrs K. Goult (Behaviour Lead)
School events/the school calendar	School office
Special educational needs (SEN)	Your child's class teacher in the first instance Miss A. Westley (SENDCo)
Before and after-school clubs	School office – Mrs J. Hitchcock
PTA	School office
Governing board	School office/Clerk to Governors

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

Communications



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Meetings - We try to schedule meetings within 7 working days of the request, but this will depend on the nature of the request.

Phone calls - The relevant member of staff will contact parents/carers within 3--5 working days for non-urgent matters. Calls will be returned either before or after school hours.

Email - We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 3-5 working days.