

# Whitstable & Seasalter Endowed Church of England (Aided) Junior School



# Home-School Communication Policy

*This policy reflects our schools vision*

LET YOUR LIGHT *Shine*  
Matthew 5:14-16

**Love ★ Joy ★ Goodness ★ Resilience ★ Trust**

Reviewer	Headteacher
Reviewed	September 2023
Date of Next Review	September 2024
Headteacher Signature	<i>EM Taylor</i>
Chair of Governors Signature	<i>Diane R Clements</i>

## 1. Introduction

Parents and carers can help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. We believe that it is important to have clear and effective communication with all parents and carers. Keeping parents well informed about school life reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school and their child's education.

## 2. Our Aims

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

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents and carers
- Setting clear standards for responding to communications from parents and carers
- Helping parents and carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so that they can get a response as quickly as possible

## 3. Responsibilities

3.1 The Headteacher is responsible for:

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

3.2 All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communications from parents and carers in line with this policy and the school's ICT and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure that parents get timely information, including if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves
- Ensuring that all communications are treated as confidential within the school context and not shared wider amongst the school staff team
- Ensuring that all communications are dealt with respectfully and with courtesy

Staff will aim to respond to communication during core school hours (8.30am to 3.30pm) or their working hours if they are 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.

3.3 We ask Parents and Carers to:

- Ensure that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Read the key communications issued by the school, including the weekly school Newsletter, which is published on the school website by 4.30pm each Friday during term-time with a link to the Newsletter emailed to families
- Read emails and text messages sent through the School Gateway as soon as possible
- Make every reasonable effort to address the 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
- Check all communications from the school

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our Parent/Carer Code of Conduct

Parents and Carers should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours or during school holidays.

#### **4. How we will communicate with you and how we would like you to communicate with us**

##### **4.1 Email**

For the purposes of administration, we require all emails to go to a central email address. We ask parents to email [homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk](mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk). All emails will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Please note all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. In the first instance, this is usually your child's class teacher.

If a response is required we will endeavour to respond to parents' emails on the same day. However, if a response needs more information, then we will aim to reply within 3 working days during term time.

Parents are asked to inform the school via the Home Contact email if your child will be absent from school, including the reason for the absence. We ask that you communicate this information by 9.30am on each day of absence. If a child is absent from school and we have had no indication of the reason, we will attempt to contact you or your second or third nominated emergency contact by telephone to find out the reason for the absence.

For other key email addresses and how these should be used, please refer to Appendix 1 at the back of this policy.

##### **4.2 School Gateway (Schoolcomms)**

We encourage all parents to inform the school of their current email address, to allow them access to School Gateway, which, in addition to the school method through which to transfer payments, is also a quick and efficient method for the school to communicate messages with you.

School Gateway is used to send out a variety of information, either to a targeted class or group, eg specific communications regarding class trips and special events, or to all parents, for example, urgent messages such as unplanned school closures or changes in arrangements

For further information about how School Gateway works, please click on the following link and watch the video guide <https://parent-support.parentpaygroup.com/hc/en-gb/articles/6531835583633-Parent-Support-Guide#parent-support-guide-o-o>

##### **4.3 Telephone**

Whilst email is preferable, telephone calls are appropriate to notify us that your child will be absent from school. Please telephone us to communicate brief information about your child that the school needs to know in an emergency, eg to let us know that you will be late collecting your child. We ask parents and carers to telephone the school on 01227 273630. The school office is open

between 8.30am and 4.00pm, Monday to Friday in term time. At all other times there is an answering service available to take your message. If the call requires a response, we endeavour to do this within 3 working days during term time.

#### 4.4 School Calendar

Our school website and weekly Newsletter includes important dates that parents need to know about. Where possible, we try to give parents at least two weeks' notice of any events or special occasions, eg non-uniform days, visits or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items.

#### 4.5 Messages, Appointments and Meetings

Parents and carers can visit the school to ask questions; gain support or have the opportunity to talk about issues affecting your child with either their teacher or a member of the school leadership team. If you wish to share information or discuss an issue affecting your child, please telephone the school office on 01227 273630 or email [homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk](mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk) to make an appointment.

The day to day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them. In the first instance, you should contact the members of staff who are responsible for your child as set out in Section 4.1 above, in the following order:

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Class Teacher
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Assistant Headteachers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – Headteacher

Your first point of contact in the school is always your child's class teacher. For all other queries, the school office will direct you to the appropriate member of staff, to deal with your query and arrange any appointments for you.

Meetings should **always** be pre-arranged with members of staff. We would advise you not to arrive at the school with the expectation that you can be seen with an appointment as this is unlikely to be possible. We also ask that parents and carers do not approach class teachers at the start of the day from the decking with individual queries relating to their child, but ask instead that any message for the teacher is written in the School-Home contact book or passed on through the school office.

If you urgently need to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone ahead and the office staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see you.

For non-urgent meetings we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of emergency at its discretion to enable us to manage multiple demands. If you have not received a response from the school within three working days please contact the school by emailing [homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk](mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk) and we will chase up your enquiry.

#### 4.6 Pupil Progress Consultations

We hold two pupil progress consultations across the year. These are held in the Autumn and Spring Terms (1 and 4). During these meetings you can talk with teachers about your child's achievements and progress; their well-being and any areas of concern. You will need to book your consultation meeting in line with instructions sent from the school that will be made available to you in a timely manner.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between these times if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress or well-being.

Parents and carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or who have other additional needs will also be invited to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

#### 4.7 Social Media

The school has a closed private Facebook account for keeping current parents and carers informed of day to day activities, celebrating successes and other information also shared using email and posting on the website. Consent is sought from parents and carers at entry to school in Year 3 to use this and only those parents and carers who have given permission for these accounts will be included. On pupils leaving the school, parents and carers will be removed from the closed group. The school also has an 'X' (Twitter) account for connecting with wider educational initiatives and parents and carers are also made aware of this with necessary permissions requested, on joining the school.

The school does not operate or control any official WhatsApp groups for communication with parents and carers. Whilst we are aware that these groups exist to enable parents to communicate with each other, we strongly encourage parents and carers to only accept official information shared by the school. In any doubt, please check all other forms of communication as listed above.

If any parents and carers become aware of information shared in these groups that is considered abusive, harmful and disrespectful or personal information about staff or pupils is shared, we ask that this is reported immediately to the school, who will deal with this in line with school policies.

## 5. How you can find out more about school events and activities

### 5.1 School Website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- The weekly school Newsletter
- School times and term dates
- Calendar of events on the school website (this can be linked to your phone calendar)
- INSET (staff development training days)
- Letters to parents
- Events and announcements
- Curriculum information

- Information about your child's class
- Policies and procedures
- Contact information
- Information about Lighthouse Keeper's Club (wrap around care)
- School dinner menu and prices
- Governor information
- Staff information

**Parents and carers should always check the website and the latest Newsletters before contacting the school.**

#### 5.2 Weekly School Newsletter

The school Newsletter contains general details of school events and activities as well as celebrating what has been happening in school over the week. It is published by 4.30pm every Friday during term time and the link is emailed to parents and carers via School Gateway. A list of upcoming events and dates is always included at the end of each Newsletter. Please always read the Newsletter to ensure you have the most up to date information of school-related and community information. Newsletters are archived on the school website.

#### 5.3 Class Pages

At the beginning of each term, teachers notify the parents or carers of the children in their classes with details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming term. This information is posted on the class pages on the school website. We invite parents and carers to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home.

#### 5.4 New Class Induction Information

Information about your child's new class is shared with parents and carers by way of a letter in Term 6 and sent by the School Gateway. At the start of the new academic year, parents and carers are invited into school to hear more about class routines, learning, PE, homework expectations, behaviour etc. This information will also be circulated in a paper form to all parents and carers to ensure nobody misses important information.

## 6. How you can find out about your child's progress and achievement?

### 6.1 Pupil Progress Consultations

Parents and carers are invited to meet with their child's class teacher twice during the year, in the Autumn and Spring Terms for parent-teacher consultations. These are usually held within the first two weeks after the half term holidays. The meetings are usually face to face.

### 6.2 Annual Pupil Report

In Term 6 parents and carers will receive a written report to inform them of their child's achievement, progress and effort in all national curriculum subjects. The report will be printed and provided to parents and carers in a sealed envelope. If you require a PDF copy, please contact the school office [homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk](mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk) to arrange to have this emailed to you.

## 7. How you can share your views about the school

### 7.1 Annual Survey

We welcome and value feedback from our parents and carers about our school policies and practices. We will invite parents and carers to contribute to a formal annual survey and will report back to parents and carers on the outcomes of that survey.

## 8. What should you do if you want to make a complaint or pass on a compliment?

### 8.1 Complaints Policy

There are times when we feel that we would like to say something about the service or treatment that we receive. If you feel you need to complain, then please follow the procedure outlined here:

- In the first instance you should speak to your child's class teacher. If you are still dissatisfied, please contact the Headteacher as soon as you can to make an appointment. Please follow instructions in relation to making an appointment covered in point 4 of this policy.
- If the matter cannot be resolved, you should follow the school's complaints procedure, which is set out in the school's Complaints Policy. This policy is available on the school website.

### 8.2 Direct communication with School Governors or the Local Authority

Parents and carers should be advised that directly contacting individual school governors or the local authority is not a short cut to having an issue or concern resolved. The governors' and local authority's role is strategic and any complaints received by them will be directed back to the school to be resolved through the school's Complaints Policy.

### 8.3 Compliments

We also like to know what you are happy with, so please tell us. We welcome and encourage positive feedback, which can boost and encourage the school's staff team with what they are doing. We encourage every stakeholder in our school community to 'Let Your Light Shine' and this is one way of actively encouraging this. Compliments can be written down and handed to the school office to pass on to relevant staff or emailed to [homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk](mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk) clearly marking for whose attention the email is for.

## 9. Inclusion

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

- Hard copies of any correspondence
- School communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings of phone calls
- Assistance from the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to understand information communicated to parents and carers

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office or family liaison officer for support.

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

The Headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every three years.

## **11. Links with other policies**

This policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Home School Agreement

*This policy has been constructed with reference to best practice models and recommended advice from the Department of Education and The Key*

## APPENDIX 1

EMAIL ADDRESS	TO BE USED FOR:
<a href="mailto:homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">homecontact@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Contact with the school in relation to any pupil information, eg school absence, change in pick up information, messages for the teacher, request for appointments with the teacher, etc.
<a href="mailto:flo@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">flo@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Information in relation to any individual child related to medical or compassionate needs, request for help, school uniform.
<a href="mailto:lhkc@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">lhkc@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Information relating to bookings or changes in bookings and payments for Lighthouse Keeper's Club.
<a href="mailto:office@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">office@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Any non-pupil specific related information.
<a href="mailto:senco@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">senco@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Information related to SEND
<a href="mailto:headteacher@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">headteacher@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	Contact with the headteacher, if the enquiry cannot be dealt with through homecontact@ email as above.
<a href="mailto:dsl@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk">dsl@whitstable-endowed.kent.sch.uk</a>	For any child protection related matters.