



# Communications Policy

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## Statement of intent

At Spring Meadow Infant and Nursery School, we understand the importance of the relationship between parents, pupils and the school.

We have a strong inclusive ethos where pupils have positive relationships with staff members and with each other. This policy sets out the aims of the school with regards to internal and external communication, and the responsibilities of the school, its staff members and parents.

The school aims to promote effective communication between pupils, members of staff, parents, stakeholders and all members of the school community. The school's objectives are to:

- Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which helps to keep parents well-informed about their child's educational progress and any other matters related to their child's overall wellbeing.
- Improve the quality of education by making sure there is a robust process in place for consultation between the school, parents, staff members and pupils on key areas.

### **1. Monitor and evaluate communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parents and members of the school community. Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Data and E-Security Breach Prevention and Management Plan
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Adverse Weather Policy
- Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Acceptable Use Agreement
- Confidentiality Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Complaints Procedures Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Placing key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community.
- Communicating the curriculum clearly to parents.
- Informing parents of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- Regularly keeping parents informed of their child's progress.
- Informing parents about the types of data that the school holds concerning pupils, who controls the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent and easily accessible; written in a clear and plain language; and free of charge.
- Ensuring that parents understand their right to access information about their child that is held by the school.
- Ensuring that parents also understand their rights to rectification, to erasure, to restrict processing, to data portability and to object to processing.
- Ensuring that consent obtained from parents, or pupils, regarding the processing of personal data, is freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the individual's wishes. Consent cannot be inferred from silence, pre-ticked boxes or inactivity.
- Ensuring that individuals are informed of their rights to withdraw consent and are provided with easy ways to do so.
- Ensuring that information regarding staff pay and conditions of service is made available to all who are employed at the school.
- Taking steps to ensure parents who do not have access to the internet can still access the information that is included on the school website.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Ensuring the principles and procedures of this policy are followed.
- Communicating proactively with parents about pupil progress and helping parents to support their child's learning.
- Ensuring that relevant information is passed on to supply teachers.
- Updating classroom planning files with specific pupil information.

Parents are responsible for:

- Reading the key communications circulated by the school and responding and/or acting on communications, e.g. by attending meetings.
- Engaging with verbal communications, so that they understand the information being communicated to them.

- Logging on to the school website for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, school achievements and other useful downloads.
- Informing the school of medical conditions or allergies their child has, along with medical documentation relating to these conditions.
- Informing the school of child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation.
- Raising any issues or concerns they may have with the class teacher.

### **3. Internal and external communications**

A weekly briefing session is held that outlines weekly activities, as well as daily email messages. Written communications to staff members are delivered via email.

All staff members are aware of the policies, which detail a variety of school procedures in relation to communication.

Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies if the reason for sharing does not fall under a lawful basis for processing as outlined in the UK GDPR. Under no circumstance will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.

Staff members will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites, or accept 'friend' requests, except in the case of blogs or social media pages set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning, in accordance with the Social Media Policy.

Parents will be contacted through the following methods:

- Letters home
- SchoolComms messages
- Phone calls
- The school website
- School newsletters
- Parents' meetings
- Governor drop-in sessions
- Class assemblies
- TEAMs

Parents will be given the opportunity to sign up to receive newsletters, etc via school comms

For general enquiries, parents are required to ring the school office, which is open from Monday to Friday between 8:45am and 4:30pm, on 01353 664742. For non-urgent enquiries, parents are required to email the school using [office@springmeadow.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@springmeadow.cambs.sch.uk).

All emails to the school will specify the member of staff that the query is addressed to. All emails to the school will be treated as confidential, unless there is a specific reason not to do so.

#### **4. Continuous home-school communication**

Each term, class teachers will write to parents detailing the work that will be taught in the forthcoming term.

The school regularly updates parents of ways in which they can support pupils' development and progress through activities to be completed at home.

The school subscribes to an electronic communication system called SchoolComms, which is utilised to achieve effective and consistent communication with parents. The school will ensure that:

- Only the Headteacher and Operations manager and her team are able to access and use the messaging system.
- Parents are asked to provide their consent and details for the use of the system when the child is admitted to the school.
- If any changes are made to the service, or manner in which data is processed on the system, parents are informed and consent is renewed.
- Any parents who cannot be contacted via the messaging system are contacted via another method set out in this policy.

**Pupils in each class have an online reading log in** which can be utilised by parents to record their child's reading at home.

Class teachers will be available to discuss pupils' progress and any concerns with parents at end of each school day.

A meeting will be held by the Headteacher for new parents prior to their child's entry to the school.

If a pupil is absent from school, and the school has no indication of the reason for the absence, the school will follow the school attendance policy and contact a parent via telephone on the first day of absence, in order to find out the reason for the absence. If no contact can be made with any named parent, the school has the right to contact the education welfare officer to ensure the pupil's wellbeing and safety and may conduct a 'Live and Well Check'.

#### **5. Email communication**

Email and internet access will be used in line with the school's Data and E- Safety policies and Acceptable Use Agreement. All members of staff will have their own email account.

Emails will not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Staff members will consider the best way to communicate according to each individual situation.

Staff members will not engage in personal correspondence with pupils. Communication between pupils and parents with staff members will be carried out via the school email address, and not via staff members' personal email addresses.

Chain emails will not be allowed. Staff will ensure that the sending of attachments is limited to only work-related emails. Under no circumstances will adverts be embedded into emails.

One or more of the following processes will be implemented to assist with managing the influx of email communications:

#### **Using a centralised email address**

- Parents will be provided with one email address to use as a main point of contact for general home-school communication, e.g. informing the school that their child is ill.
- Office staff will track communication sent to this email address and ensure emails are dealt with promptly and consistently.
- Office staff will first seek to deal with the enquiry themselves (e.g. if the email is in relation to dates of upcoming trips, uniform queries, sickness).
- If the message requires more specific support, it will be sent to appropriate member of staff.
- Parents will only use staff email addresses if they need to contact a specific member of staff directly.

#### **Implementing set emails times**

- Parents will be made aware that staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day.
- The school will aim to respond to all email enquiries within five working days
- The school community will be encouraged to only send emails during this window and that if emails are sent outside of this window, they should not expect an immediate response in most cases.
- The school will not expect work emails to be checked during staff members' personal time.

#### **Providing support to staff**

- Guidance will be provided to staff regarding email best practice, including in relation to prioritising emails, utilising filters, and carrying out regular inbox housekeeping.
- Staff will be provided with training in the email systems used by the school, so they are able to implement time saving functions such as Rules, Quick Parts, and view by conversation thread.

- Staff members will be advised not to subscribe to any junk type email chains, in order to reduce emails received.

The email protocols below will be followed at all times:

Examples of email content	Email (Y/N)	Action
Lost property	N	Send pupil to check in the lost property area.
Actions for the day or events coming up	Y	Briefing notes mailed
SEND top tips	Y	Email to teachers and TAs periodically.

The school will aim to respond to all email enquiries within five working days. Staff and parents will be made aware that part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule.

## 6. Meetings

A programme of all staff meeting/training sessions will be set out in the school calendar.

Time will be set aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to the school's reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

All formal meetings will be minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. For all formal meetings, minutes will be taken, action points progressed, and feedback given to staff members. Minutes of meetings will be copied to relevant staff members, as well as the SLT, and a copy will be saved on the staff shared area in a clearly marked subject folder.

When required meetings with parents will take place virtually via conferencing software.

Parents will be expected to behave in meetings in line with the Parent Code of Conduct. When parents wish to organise meetings with members of staff, they will first contact their child's class teacher (if the query is relevant to a specific subject). Parents will be required to organise meetings with members of staff prior to conducting a meeting. If parents urgently need to have a meeting with a member of staff, they will phone the school office and the office staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see parents.

Lessons will not be interrupted to accommodate parents needing to speak to a teacher.

For non-urgent meetings between parents and members of staff, the school will aim to meet parents within five working days.



The school will determine the level of urgency in requests for meetings, which will aid in managing multiple demands.

## **7. Recording meetings will not usually be permitted**

The school will decide if recording requests are appropriate, in consideration of the meeting's subject matter and the school's Confidentiality Policy.

The school will accept all recording requests in exceptional circumstances, e.g. if parents are hard of hearing and/or have a memory-related disability.

For virtual meetings and/or face-to-face meetings to be recorded, consent will need to be obtained from all participants. The final decision to permit any individual and/or parental recording of meetings will reside with the school.

If parents and/or other individuals fail to obtain the school's permission to record before the meeting begins, and insist on recording without permission, the school will be permitted to suspend the meeting.

Any complaints surrounding the school's rejection of a parent's request to record a meeting, or the school's suspension of a meeting due to permission not being granted, will be dealt in line with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.

## **8. School prospectus**

The prospectus and school website will be utilised to communicate information regarding the following:

- Clubs and activities
- School hours
- School uniform
- Term dates
- Pupil safety
- The school calendar
- Ofsted reports
- Assessment information

## **9. Emergency communication**

All parents will ensure that the school has their latest contact details, including their address, telephone number and email address, so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency.

If a pupil is seriously ill or injured, the school will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contact(s) via telephone.

Where an incident affects the whole-school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or SchoolComms message directing them to a special message posted onto the school's website.

If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or similar problem, an update will be posted on the website at least once a day. The local radio station, will broadcast a closure announcement in the event of the school closing due to adverse weather or another emergency situation, in accordance with the Adverse Weather Policy.

In the event of a serious incident, the school will follow its Invacuation, Lockdown and Evacuation Policy – parents will routinely receive updates on how the school will communicate with them during an invacuation, lockdown or evacuation via the school newsletter.

## **10. Accessing information**

In accordance with an individual's right of access under the UK GDPR, personal information (such as educational records), confirmation of data processing, and other supplementary information will be shared with individuals who request access.

The procedure below will be followed in terms of Subject Access Requests:

- The requests will be made in writing to the governing board and will be responded to within one month of receipt.
- The period of compliance may be extended by a further two months where the requests are complex or numerous. If this is the case, individuals will be informed within one month of receipt of the request, with an explanation of why an extension is required.
- A pupil, or the parent of a pupil, will have the right to access the information that the school holds about the child in question.
- Individuals have the right to access their personal data free of charge.
- Where requests are manifestly unfounded or excessive, a reasonable charge for the administrative costs of providing the information will be applied, or the request will be refused.
- If any request is refused, the individual will be informed of their right to complain to the supervisory authority and to a judicial remedy without delay within one month.

Under the UK GDPR, remote access to a secure self-service system will be given to provide individuals with direct access to their personal information.

In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, private data and public records can potentially be accessed through lodging a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The procedure below will be followed in terms of FOI requests:

- The requests will be made in writing to the school, stating the name and address of the requester, as well as a description of the information requested.
- Successful FOI requests will be responded to within 20 working days from receipt of the request, unless the request does not comply with the procedure set out in the school's Freedom of Information Policy.
- The school holds the right to charge the requester a fee, if complying with the request would cost the school an excess of £450.
- Certain information will not be shared, such as that explained in Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

### **11. Monitoring and review**

The efficiency of this policy will be continuously monitored throughout the year by the Headteacher and governing board.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing board.