



# Whitchurch Primary School



## Parent and School Communication Policy

**Last Review:** September 2024

**Next Review:** October 2026

Policy Details:

### **Purpose**

To promote partnerships between the school, parents and carers and relevant professional bodies. It will also set out communication between staff and pupils.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflect on the school's reputation. Parents and carers, governors and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school's vision and values. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

### **Principles**

Whitchurch Primary uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient. Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

Staff will always seek to establish friendly relationships with parents and carers but they will ensure relationships are professional and parents will be addressed in a considerate manner.

### **Introduction**

Whitchurch Primary recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors, the local and wider community outside agencies, etc), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and pupils and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective two-way communication between home and school. Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child's education. The school will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to creating a shared view of their child's needs.

### **Aims of the policy**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders and that there are robust processes to facilitate this.

The school recognises that engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital part of providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our wish is to involve as many parents and carers in their children's education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

- To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- Signage will be clear, informative and positive.

- All electronic, written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly within an agreed timeframe.
- A variety of forms of communication will be used with parents and carers, for example; telephone contact, email, post and text.
- Parents and carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Information is given to parents and carers on what pupils will be taught and tips for helping their child will be provided.
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective.

## **Section 1: Communication from parents and carers to the school**

### **Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query**

Teachers at Whitchurch are in the classroom teaching for 90% of the working week and will not access their emails during this time. We recommend that contact to the school is made through the appropriate channels as set out in Appendix A, which details who to contact for any query you have. This will ensure that your communication with the school can be dealt with by the appropriate team and that any staff absence or part-time working does not affect the response time of your communication.

#### **1.1 Letters and Email:**

- We will aim to reply by telephone, letter or email within 3 working days.
- Depending on the content of the communication, a further agreed timeframe will be used so the appropriate team/member of staff can gather and collate any relevant information for feedback to the parent or carer.
- Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication.
- Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email address is: [whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk)
- We kindly request that emails are not sent between the non working hours of 5:30pm through to 8:00am, to consider our staff wellbeing and work life balance.

#### **1.2 Telephone Calls**

- Calls to the school are made on our main number 02920623441.
- Our answerphone message has an interactive menu to guide callers to the appropriate area.
- During times of high volume it may not be possible to answer a call and there is an opportunity to leave a voicemail message.
- Voicemail messages will get picked up within the working day but are not checked out of hours.
- In a non-emergency a return call will be made within 3 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within an agreed timeframe. Please be mindful that teachers are teaching and running lunch and after school clubs and may not always be available on the same day.
- Conversations should remain professional and courteous at all times (See Appendix D).

#### **1.3 Absence**

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence, for full details please refer to the Attendance Policy (copy available in the policy section of the [school website](#)).

## **Section 2: Communication between school and parents**

The school has many means to communicate with parents and carers including letters/emails/texts and online platforms such as social media and our website.

For general information our website is the first place a parent or visitor should go. Relevant communication to parents is sent to parents through ParentMail, with more urgent communication through a phone call. These may be specific but also general for whole school or year groups. We aim not to overload parents with communication so the majority of information will be via ParentMail.

## **2.1 School Website**

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including:

- Inclusion information
- Pupil Deprivation Grant
- School policies
- Uniform list
- Year Group Information
- School events
- Holiday dates
- School prospectus and admissions information

It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

## **2.2 ParentMail**

ParentMail is a web-based system that allows us to provide information to you about your child (ren).

- The aim of the school is to minimise the amount of ParentMails that are sent by the school each day to parents.
- However, the school understands that some forms of communication are extremely important or urgent and therefore need to be sent as a full targeted message. (E.g. cancellation of a sports club/match or an important year group event/evening).
- Staff should always be aware of their target audience.

## **2.3 Texts**

- Automated texts from ParentMail are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from members of staff.

## **2.4 Social Media**

- The school has a Facebook account which is used to provide updates to parents and pupils who wish to subscribe to this. The same information will be shared on each platform. This is only used to celebrate whole school events, or special event days for year groups. (Please see class webpages for weekly updates)

## **2.5 Email**

- Emails are used either for individual communication to specific parents or if there is a need to inform all parents or a sub group quite quickly.
- Please refer to Appendix A for the email directory.
- We kindly request that emails are not sent between the non working hours of 5:30pm through to 8:00am, to consider our staff wellbeing and workload.

## **2.6 Telephone calls**

- Staff will call parents for a variety of reasons, initial contact regarding a concern or to reply from an earlier communication
- Calls will be focused and not take a disproportionate amount of time.
- Parents and carers must ensure that contact details are always up to date.
- Staff may have to leave a voicemail. This could include the relevant information or a message to state they will try again at a later date
- Conversations should remain professional and courteous at all times (See Appendix D)

## 2.7 School Newsletter

- A school newsletter is produced every half-term and shared through ParentMail

## Section 3: Reports and Progress

As a school we communicate progress both informally and formally. The formal avenues include a child's school report and parents evening and informal updates can happen throughout the year through the various methods of communication.

### 3.1 Reports

- Parents and carers receive regular reports, which will be shared through emails directly to parents/ carers.

### 3.2 Parents evenings

- Parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher(s) regularly.
- In the autumn term, there are 10 minute slots available for an online appointment with your child's teacher- this is booked in advance through the School Cloud platform.
- In the spring term, we offer face-to-face parent meetings, with a 10 minute time slot.
- Parent and teacher communication should be formal and professional.

### 3.3 Informal progress updates

- Parents and carers should contact the school if issues arise about their child's progress or wellbeing. Please use the appropriate email to refer your concern. (See Appendix A)
- Staff may contact a parent/carer if there is a concern about the progress or wellbeing of a student. This is to ensure the parent is fully aware and that the school and home can work together to support the needs of the child.
- Unless there is a court order to the contrary, the school will provide the same information to both parents, provided that contact details have been shared.
- Copies of communications can be sent via the pupil if both parents are in agreement.

## Section 4: Meetings

### 4.1 Requesting a meeting

- Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. This request will be responded to within 3 working days.
- **If it is an emergency we will respond as quickly as we can. The definition of an emergency, though not finite, is that the wellbeing and safety of a child is at immediate risk. Any safeguarding concerns should be directed to the safeguarding team. (See Appendix A)**
- We cannot accommodate unarranged appointments.
- Teachers and other school professionals may request a meeting with a parent/carer and a suitable time can be booked.

### 4.2. The Meeting

- Parents and carers should report to reception prior to meeting where they will then be accompanied by a member of staff. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them to the meeting if it is deemed necessary.
- Time is precious to both parents and staff so meetings will aim to be productive and efficient.
- Staff will call a meeting to a close in the event of the parents or carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the senior leadership team.

- Staff will take relevant notes during the meeting.
- We welcome the presence of any other adult a parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting for support or to act as an interpreter, however, they must notify the school that they are bringing another adult to the meeting in advance.
- Communication during the meeting should stay focused, courteous and professional at all times.

### **4.3. Accessibility**

- We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.
- Documents can be printed using a larger font if needed and requests should be made via reception.
- If a translation of a document is required, in the first instance parents/carers should access Google translate.

## **Section 5: Homework / home learning**

### **5.1 Google Classroom in Google Apps for Education**

- The Google platform is a powerful tool for motivating pupils as it gives them more choice and flexibility about when and where they complete their learning. It also encourages parent and carer involvement in homework, especially with extended learning tasks. Homework may sometimes be requested to be completed on Google classroom from year 3 upwards.
- Google classroom is also used to communicate with pupils for Pupil Voice groups.
- Parents must not contact staff through their child's google account but through the recognised channels in Appendix A. By using your child's account it is a **GDPR breach**.

### **5.2 Severe weather and emergency closure**

- In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via text or email. Parents and carers should also tune in to local radio and check the school website and social media channels (e.g. Facebook).

## **Section 6: Prospective parents/carers**

- The school prospectus is published on the website. Prospective parents and carers may request a printed copy.
- Prospective new parents and carers are invited to a tour to enable them to see the school site prior to applications. These are offered when needed throughout the school year.
- Nursery and reception parents and carers are also invited, along with their child, to an induction evening in the summer term where the main channels of communication are outlined and important information will be shared.

## **Section 7: Whitchurch Primary PTA**

- Whitchurch is very fortunate to have an active and supportive PTA run by current parents and their focus is to run events and activities. Fundraising is an important aspect of their work but is not their sole focus.
- The PTA will communicate through school channels having worked with a member of SLT on proposals and dates.

## **Section 8: Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

The school recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of all pupils with additional learning needs. The ALN Bill emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and carers and user-friendly information and procedures.

- All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents and carers.

- All staff within the school are expected to help parents and carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities.
- All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to communicate where they have a concern about their child's needs being met.

### **Section 9: Communication with other Schools and outside agencies**

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and where required we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals including: medical services, educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Children's Services and the local authority. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment (see the school Child Protection Policy).

We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (for full details see our Data Protection Policy, copy available on our school website).

#### **Monitoring, evaluation and review**

A member of the senior leadership team will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

## Appendix A: Directory

The following directory will assist you in addressing your email to the appropriate member of staff.

Query	General Contacts
I have a general enquiry not specific to my child	<a href="mailto:whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk">whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I need to inform the school of an absence or I have a query about an absence.	<a href="mailto:whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk">whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I have a concern about my child's wellbeing or behaviour.	Please speak to the class teacher by arranging an appointment through the school office by telephone call or sending an email; please put the name/position of the member staff or team you wish the communication to reach in the header box.
I have a query/concern relating to safeguarding	<a href="mailto:kelly.watkins@cardiff.gov.uk">kelly.watkins@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I have general concerns about my child's learning	Please speak to the class teacher by arranging an appointment through the school office by telephone call or sending an email; please put the name/position of the member staff or team you wish the communication to reach in the header box.
My child has additional learning needs and I have a question relating to their additional needs.	<a href="mailto:shawkins@whitchurchprimary.cymru">shawkins@whitchurchprimary.cymru</a>
I have a query regarding music lessons	<a href="mailto:cfmusiceducation@cardiff.gov.uk">cfmusiceducation@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I have a query regarding sports clubs and activities	<a href="mailto:whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk">whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I wish to contact the PTA	<a href="mailto:friendsofwp@gmail.com">friendsofwp@gmail.com</a>
I wish to contact the chair of governors	<a href="mailto:whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk">whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk</a>
I wish to make a complaint	Link to <a href="#">complaints policy</a>

## Appendix B: Methods of Communication

This plan sets out the school's different methods of communication and who is responsible for delivering these methods.

Method of communication	Details	Intended recipient/audience	Who is accountable for this?
School newsletter	Sent once per half-term	Staff members, pupils and parents	Headteacher
Posts on the school website	Key policies and reports kept updated	Open to all	Office team and Senior Leaders
Social media posts on school accounts	Facebook	Parents /pupils /Interested parties	Team Leaders
Letters and emails sent to parents	ParentMail	All parents / carers	Office team and Senior Leaders
Google Classroom	Main platform for pupil curriculum communication	Pupils from years 3 to 6	Teachers

## Appendix C Contacting the school

This table in this plan can be used to find out who in school to contact regarding different issues

Query	Who to contact	Contact information and availability
Absences	The school office	The office absence line can be reached on phone number: 02920623441 The office is open between the hours of 08:30am and 4:00pm
Complaints	Main school at Reception	<a href="#">Complaints policy</a> should be followed
Freedom of information and subject access requests	The school office	whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk
Safeguarding concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead (Headteacher)	kelly.watkins@cardiff.gov.uk
General queries	The school office	whitchurchprm@cardiff.gov.uk Please put the name/position of the member staff or team you wish the communication to reach in the header box.

## Appendix D Inappropriate Communication/Behaviour

Whitchurch School prides itself with being part of a very positive extended community. There are times however where there is a breakdown in communication and will need to be addressed. We will not tolerate any form of abuse towards our staff. This may be verbal, physical or in written form such as emails or letters. Harassment on any social media platform is also **not tolerated**.

Following an incidence of poor communication from any member of the Whitchurch community, it may be necessary to put into place actions that enable all parties to return to a positive standing. We will always aim to reconnect and rebuild relationships which reflect our values.

- Issues with a staff member: Please refer to the Complaints Policy. The school would support the re-building of trust. However, an alternative member of staff may be appointed as a contact point if the school felt this were appropriate.
- Issues with a parent/carer/visitor: Depending upon the severity of the situation, the following actions may be put into place:
  - A verbal/written warning to the parent about their behaviour / language
  - Any future meetings/discussions will be conducted with more than one member of the school staff so as not to compromise a lone member of staff. In more severe cases, the school will put stricter restrictions in place whereby:
    - Access into school will be pre-arranged and agreed in advance by both parties
    - A single point of contact within school through whom all communications should be directed will be put in place
    - Blocking of e-mail with a separate nominated contact person may have to be put in place.

Note: Any emergency or safeguarding situations would override any ban while the emergency is being dealt with.

The school does have the right to refuse access, physical or electronically, from the school site to anyone if they are deemed to be a threat to the safeguarding and wellbeing of any members of the school community, including pupils and staff. In this case a formal letter will be issued giving full details of when the ban begins and might end. The decision to refuse access would be agreed and reviewed by a representative of the governing body.