

Communications Policy

Introduction

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain; with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents and carers work together. Parents and carers can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents and carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents and carers play in supporting the school.

We have various strategies for communicating with parents and carers. Some of our communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement, while others simply reflect what we believe is important for our school.

We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font and add pictures wherever appropriate. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Annual written reports to parents and carers: children's achievements

Every year we provide a written report to each child's parents and carers on the child's progress in the various subjects. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.

As well as receiving the annual written report, parents and carers meet their child's teacher twice during the year for a private consultation. Children are invited to attend with the agreement of their parents and carers. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's success, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Parents and carers are able to see their child's work during these meetings. We encourage parents and carers to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. Parents who no longer live at the same address will receive a copy of the annual report sent in the post.

We may also offer drop in sessions and open days at which parents and carers can discuss curriculum issues.

When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents and carers more regularly.

Children on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Register have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which is updated at least every six months, offering practical advice to parents on how they can work with school staff to support their child in achieving targets to assist their progress.

We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

School information and website

The school also publishes information for new parents and carers as a guide to the curriculum and the school day.

The school website is extensive and provides information, resources and educational links to help children learn and support parents and carers with the education of their children.

Public access documents

The school makes a range of documentation available to parents and carers, either on the website or in hardcopy in the school office. This may include minutes of governors' meetings, all school policies and action planning following an inspection.

Home-school communication

We send a newsletter to parents and carers at the beginning of each school week. It contains general details of school events and achievements of the children.

Each term parents and carers receive a curriculum overview from their child's class teacher. The overview clearly identifies the focus of the work taking place with the class during the term/half term, and identifies how parents and carers can support their child's work at home. Staff are available to discuss this further with parents and carers if needed. The curriculum for each year group may also be found on the school website.

Children in all classes have a homework diary. This enables parents and carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the homework diary to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents and carers.

Parents and carers are welcome to visit the school to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or a senior member of staff. Parents and carers are asked to phone the school to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents and carers. Our aim is to see the parents and carers as quickly as possible; we try to arrange a meeting on the same or next day.

We may arrange curriculum meetings for parents and carers to explain areas of our curriculum. We hold a meeting for new Reception parents and carers each year.

Letters will be emailed to parents and carers where possible as this is more environmentally friendly. We urge parents and carers to provide us with a valid email address. Text messages may also be sent for briefer messages and reminders. Where it is not possible to use

email/text, written correspondence will be passed on to families, through the children or by Royal Mail postage service.

Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for a pupil injury or pupil incident. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed. Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message (ascending order as before) or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible.

If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, the school secretary will contact a parent/carer (by telephone if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

Toward the end of their final term in Year 6, we pass on information about the children to their intended secondary schools. We try to give a view of the whole child, and we include their expected national test results, their strengths and weaknesses, their interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, football captain, school council representative etc). There is also a secure electronic transfer of further information about the children, organised by the government. We may also send on several items of work.

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as a speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the designated member of staff, who may share this information with Social Services.

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents and carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1988. Parents and carers have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of agencies to which our information is passed.

Communication within our school

So that we all know what is going on, there is a timetable in the staff room of the week's activities, a weekly briefing meeting for all staff and a whiteboard for the day's messages.

New Islington Free School

All our procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook.

Written communications are delivered through registers or by email.

Supply teachers can find additional information in the staff handbook and via the school office. Classrooms contain important medication information class lists and a timetable.

Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff.

Electronic communication

We use the Internet, text messaging and email, and we have a school website.

All school members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our Safe Use of the Internet policy. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.

The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.

Our school website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.

Members of staff, classes as a whole, and older children will all have their own school-provided email accounts.

Parents and carers are required to sign permission slips for their child to use the Internet in school. A record of those who do not have permission is held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

Use of photographs and names

Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes.

We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents and carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus or on school website. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at school.

Parental permission must be obtained before using photographs of children. Permission for the use of images is sought on pupil entry to the school and recorded on the school's admission form and SIMS system. Parents and carers will want to know the policy of the press about name disclosure before giving permission for a photo to be used. Lists of those children for whom permission has not been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable.

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Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names. Even on the school website, only children's first names will be used.

All communication processes within school are monitored and audited by the Headteacher.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be regularly monitored, and will reviewed in two years, or sooner if deemed necessary.