



COMMUNICATION POLICY

Summer 2024

RENEWAL DATE: Summer 2025

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CHANGES

July 2024 Inception of policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Within our organisation it is important that there are clear methods of communication and the understanding that we share openly with our communities. We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

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

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

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers/ staff
- Setting clear standards and expectations for sending and responding to communications
- 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

All communications in our Trust should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, Governors and other stakeholders well-informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- Be actioned within a reasonable time
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- Consider relevant Trust policies
- Be compatible with our core principles of Inclusive, Democratic, Collaborative and Excelling and Strategic Plan

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Head of School

The head of school is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and 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 core school hours, and no later than 5pm, 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**.

The Trust's Acceptable Use policy for using IT can be found on the Trust website.

2.3 Parents

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
- Responding 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 in our Home / School agreement.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours i.e after 5pm, at the weekends, or during school holidays.

3. 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.

3.1 Email

We use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations

- Weekly newsletters
- Class activities or teacher requests

3.2 Text messages

We will text parents about:

- Payments
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

3.3 School calendar

Our school newsletters include a full school calendar for the term and is updated when things change.

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

Any such event will be included in the school calendar.

3.4 Phone calls

Telephone calls will be made to parents when communication by email or text is not appropriate i.e when the call relates to their individual child.

- Staff should try to use school telephones to make contact, and will not share personal telephone numbers under any circumstances
- The member of staff will introduce themselves, clarify who they are speaking to and explain the reason for their call

3.5 Letters

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our weekly newsletter

3.6 Reports

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

- Their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance

- A report on Key Stage (KS) 1, Phonics (Year 1), Multiplication checks (Year 4) and KS2 SATs tests

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

3.7 Meetings

We hold regular parents' evening(s). During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

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.

3.8 School 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.

3.9 School website

The school may also communicate via Facebook messages with information about events. Activities and courses for parents. This will not be used by the school for communication about individual pupils.

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

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

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within one working day, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within two working days. Emails may be forwarded to other members of staff who are more able to deal with the request but we will advise parents when this is the case.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

4.2 Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office and the relevant member of staff will contact them within one working day.

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 two days of your request.

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.

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see appendix 1), or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within five working days of the request.

While teachers are available at the beginning or 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

5. Accessibility

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

5.1 Parents with additional communication needs

We aim to make communications accessible to all. We have taken the following steps to achieve this:

- All whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) are made available in multiple formats
- All communications are written as clearly and concisely as possible
- Accessibility is considered when designing/updating the school website, such as: providing alt text for images, using text colours that show up clearly against the background colour
- Staff are trained on accessibility and will endeavour to provide information in an accessible format

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- School announcements and communications in accessible formats
- Sign language interpreters for meetings

Please contact the school office to discuss these.

5.2 Parents with English as an additional language (EAL)

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in English.

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.

6. Internal methods of communication

6.1 Meetings

All meetings should be minuted to ensure that staff who cannot be present can be made aware of their content. Any relevant actions are shared and monitored appropriately. These minutes are stored on the Trust's Sharepoint system.

6.2 Email

Information is more commonly shared via email but this does not replace face to face conversations where this is more appropriate. Staff are not expected to respond to emails outside of working hours but time does need to be set aside in order to ensure that they are able to fulfil their professional responsibilities. If a matter is urgent this should be clear in the header of the email.

6.3 Text messaging

This can be used between colleagues within the Trust by mutual consent.

7. Monitoring and review

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

The policy will be approved by the Board.

8. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Parent code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Home-school agreement
- Staff wellbeing
- Social media policy

Appendix I: school contact list

Who should I contact?

If you have questions, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office on
 - Beechwood.office@discoverymat.co.uk 01752 706360
 - Westonmill.office@discoverymat.co.uk 01752 365250
 - Oakwood.office@discoverymat.co.uk 01752775478
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff 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 one working day.

The office working hours are 08:00-14:00

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy which can be found on the school's website.

