



SAINT NORBERT'S CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

Mission Statement: To live, love and learn in the footprints of Jesus.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

As a Rights Respecting School, we acknowledge our role as 'duty bearers' in promoting and protecting children's rights.



1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between school and families is mutually beneficial. We recognise that effective communication gives families the information they need to support learning; facilitates continual school improvement; and develops healthy working relationships.

The aims of this policy are:

- to explain the school's rationale for communication with families;
- to clarify how we aim to respond to communication from parents/carers;
- to ensure that specific queries or concerns are directed to the member of school staff who will be best placed to respond.

We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child or children; requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information about another child. Correspondence of a legal nature, including any received from legal professionals, will be processed in accordance with our GDPR responsibilities.

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

2. Roles and responsibilities

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely, appropriate and considerate of staff directed time;
- regular review of this policy.

Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- communicating with parents in accordance with this policy, the staff Code of Conduct and the school's Acceptable Use policy;
- liaising effectively with other members of staff to ensure that parents receive information in a timely manner (if they are unable to address a query or send the information themselves).

Staff will be expected to respond to communications within their usual working hours and/or at the earliest opportunity; they will not be *expected* to respond during evenings, weekends or school holidays. Members of the Senior Leadership Team may respond outside of their usual working hours in some circumstances; in this case, staff reserve the right to exercise their own professional judgement.

Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that communication with the school is always respectful;
- making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance through the school office;
- responding to communications from the school (such as a request for a face-to-face meeting or permission requests) in a timely manner;
- checking all communications from the school;
- ensuring that the school has the most up-to-date contact and medical information for their child / children, which must be provided in writing by emailing the school office;
- ensuring that the school has been provided with the contact details of both parents if parental responsibility is shared - this also includes details of both parents who live at separate addresses.

3. Communication with the school

Meetings

- I. Face-to-face conversations are the best way of communicating with the school at 'drop off' or 'pick up' times for quick, short messages.
- II. When a member of staff is not able to speak to a parent immediately face-to-face due to other commitments, or a longer conversation is deemed necessary or more appropriate, then a request for an appointment can be made to discuss the matter - either in person or by telephone. Parents should contact the school office to request such an appointment and the school will aim to arrange a meeting within a reasonable time frame.
- III. Should a meeting be requested, any decision regarding which staff member(s) will attend will be made by the Headteacher.
- IV. Staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch times or after school; availability of staff outside of teaching hours should therefore not be assumed.
- V. It is expected that parents attend two formal parent consultation meetings each year, with a further opportunity for them to meet with Class Teachers during the Pentecost Term, should this be desirable. During these meetings, parents are invited to discuss their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum, their child's wellbeing or any other area of concern. We also openly invite parents to speak to their child's Class Teacher at 'drop-off' or 'pick-up' times when required.
- VI. If there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress or wellbeing, the school may contact families to arrange additional meetings between more formal 'parent consultations'.
- VII. Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, will understandably be asked to attend additional consultation meetings.

Email

- I. As a small school, we particularly value good working relationships and – whilst useful – email communications *can* sometimes create ambiguity or may leave room for subjective re-interpretation.

- II. For 'routine' enquiries, our preferred method of communication will always be for parents to speak with Class Teachers at the beginning or end of the day or make a telephone call to the school office (01724 710249). If parents are unable to call or speak with staff, any email communication should be directed to: admin@stnorbertycrowle.co.uk.
- III. Emails will be most helpful if they are concise, explaining enquiries or concerns in a clear way. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.
- IV. The school reserves the right to respond to written communications – including emails – using whichever method is most closely aligned with our ethos and values, whilst also being most time-efficient and considerate of 'Directed Time'.
- V. The school will aim to respond within a 'reasonable' period of time, prioritising enquiries on a case-by-case basis and being mindful of operational and safeguarding considerations (which may introduce unavoidable delays). Should it not be possible to provide a response within what would be defined as a 'reasonable' time frame, which may be to ensure a full and more considered response, then a revised timeline will be provided and communicated accordingly. We ask that parents await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.
- VI. If there is a change in a child's medical needs, this information must always be shared by email through the school office.
- VII. To enable the school to safeguard pupils, we will not accept email communication for a child's absence; this must be communicated via a telephone call or in person.
- VIII. School will provide relevant information via email, such as newsletters and any other appropriate information.

Parents need to ensure that they opt into our email communications. For further information, or should this present a barrier or difficulty, families should please contact the office.

Text Messages

Along with communications via email, the school will occasionally send text messages to the first contact for each child to inform them of anything urgent or emergencies. This kind of communication might also include:

- clubs that are cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances;
- school closures due to weather, for example,
- reminders about newsletters.

Parents need to ensure that they opt into our text messaging service. For further information, or should this present a barrier or difficulty, families should please contact the office.

Telephone Calls:

- I. For general enquiries, please call or email the school office on: 01724 710249.
- II. If a query or concern is time sensitive and/or urgent, parents should call the school office, who will respond as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments; however, our community is important to us and we endeavour to be as flexible as possible when needed.
- III. If the query or concern is not time sensitive and/or urgent, parents should call or email the school office and a member of staff will aim to contact them within a reasonable period of time. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a mutually-convenient time.
- IV. If a member of staff has a query or a concern which needs to be shared, this will be communicated appropriately:
 - with a face-to-face approach;
 - via a telephone call.

- V. Staff will call families using the contact details provided and in the order of priority requested if their child presents as unwell during the school day.
- VI. Parents are expected to call the school office before 9.00am if their child is due to be absent due to illness.
- VII. We will call parents if their child has had a head injury, even if perceived to be minor (see First Aid Policy). The Headteacher or a staff member with delegated responsibility will call parents if their child is admitted to hospital.

Social Media

- I. The school will not respond to concerns raised via social media such as X (formerly Twitter).
- II. Should the school be made aware of any physical threats or abusive behaviour towards staff members or children on roll at our school on social media, we will consider reporting this to the Police and seeking the removal of this content from the site.

Reports

- I. All parents will receive an end-of-year report covering their child's achievement across the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance.
- II. Parents will also be provided with further information relating to statutory assessment outcomes – i.e. Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 1 Phonics Screening Check, Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check and Year 6 SATs.
- III. We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's Class Teacher(s) about wellbeing, achievement and progress (see below).

School website

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

- school times and term dates;
- curriculum information;
- important policies;
- contact information;
- information about Breakfast Club and Goldstar after-school club.

4. Types of unacceptable behaviour and communication

There are some types of behaviour / communication which the school must always consider unacceptable; for example:

- any intimidation or aggressive behaviour towards a member of staff, or pupils (e.g., standing close to her/him);
- the use of aggressive hand gestures including finger pointing towards a member of staff or pupil;
- shouting at members of staff or pupils (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing);
- swearing, or using offensive language – including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010;
- threatening or offensive comments about a member of staff or pupil of the school; this might be verbal, via text messages, via emails / letters or on social media;
- sending abusive messages to a member of staff;
- large volumes of emails or other such correspondence regarding the same matter over a short period of time;
- continuing to raise the same issue where this has already been addressed by the school and/or the complaints procedure has been exhausted;
- posting defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments about the school and/or its staff on social media platforms;
- disrupting – or threatening to disrupt – school operations (including events within the school grounds and school fixtures taking place elsewhere);

- breaching or not conforming to the school's security procedures;
- covertly recording phone calls or meetings with member of staff;
- any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening, or offensive.

This list is not exhaustive but seeks to illustrate behaviour which can have no place in our school community.

5. Actions which may be taken by the school because of unacceptable behaviour and communication

- In the first instance, (and if the unacceptable behaviour has occurred on site) the school will ask the parent to desist and/or leave the school grounds. If the behaviour is considered to be of a serious nature, then the police will be contacted.
- Thereafter, the school (Headteacher/Member of School Leadership team) will gather information on allegations of unacceptable behaviour. This may include talking to the parties concerned or others as witnesses to the behaviour.
- If unacceptable behaviour is considered to have occurred, one or more of the following action(s) may be taken by the school, depending on the severity/gravity of the incident:
 - o the parent will be told verbally that his / her behaviour is unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action;
 - o the parent will be told in writing that his / her behaviour is unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action;
 - o the parent will be advised that all future meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and will be minuted;
 - o a contact plan will be established to manage any communication between the individual and school – for example (and except in emergencies), communication to the school must be in writing and directed only to a named individual and the school will set out timescales for responses;
 - o there may be an immediate restriction placed on access to the school site;
 - o the Police contacted where behaviour is criminal in nature;
 - o legal advice may be sought.

The school will always seek to respond to incidents in a proportionate way. The final decision for how to respond to unacceptable behaviour and communication will remain with the Headteacher and Multi-Academy Trust as appropriate.

Policy updated and ratified by Governors: October 2024

St Norbert's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Communications Flowchart



Your enquiry or message is for the Class Teacher:

Share messages at the school gate in the morning or on the playground at the end of the day.

Alternatively, contact the school office to pass on a message or speak with Breakfast Club / Goldstar staff if making use of these services.

You wish to have a longer conversation with the Class Teacher:

Arrange a meeting or telephone conversation by contacting the school office. We will aim to respond within a reasonable period of time.

You wish to have a conversation with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), Miss Tonge:

Speak with your child's Class Teacher in the first instance, who will liaise with the SENCO. The SENCO will aim to respond within a reasonable period of time – either directly or through the Class Teacher.

You wish to speak with the Headteacher, Mr Dawson:

Please contact the school office in the first instance. We will respond within a reasonable period of time. Complaints will be managed under the terms of the Trust Complaints Policy.

In the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher – Mr Walker – will respond accordingly.

Outcome:

The response received will depend on the nature of the enquiry and will usually be:

- A personal telephone call
- A face-to-face conversation or meeting

There may also be:

- A formal written response (following a conversation beforehand)
- Involvement of the school SENCO, if appropriate.

Outcome:

The response received will depend on the nature of the enquiry and will usually be:

- A personal telephone call
- A face-to-face conversation or meeting

There may also be:

- A response delegated to another member of staff
- A formal written response (following a conversation beforehand)