



Platt C of E Primary School

Communications Policy

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Statement of intent

At Platt C of E Primary 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.
- Monitor and evaluate communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parents and members of the school community.

1. 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:

- GDPR and Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Acceptable Use Agreement
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 and providing updates as requested.

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, class dojo and Parentmail 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 or Headteacher.

3. Internal and external communications

A timetable of events is kept in the staff room that outlines weekly activities. Written communications to staff members are delivered via Parentmail or by email.

All staff members are aware of the Staff Handbook, which details a variety of school procedures in relation to communication and expectations. This is reviewed annually and part of September induction annually.

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 sent via Parentmail. (Available on paper if Parent requests)
- Text messages via Parentmail
- Phone calls from a school phone
- The school website
- School newsletters
- Parents' meetings
- Governor drop-in sessions
- Class dojo- home work platform

- Tapestry – (Reception and Y1)
- Parentmail. (All families are invited to join this communication platform as part of induction)
- Twitter

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in an aim to adhere to social distancing guidelines, the school will also contact parents and other individuals through zoom or Microsoft Teams. Each meeting will have a password shared via Dojo or Parentmail

For general enquiries, parents are required to ring the school office, which is open Monday to Friday between 8:15am and 3.25pm, on 01732882596. For non-urgent enquiries, parents are required to email the school using office@platt.kent.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. This will then be on class page on the school website. [Our Curriculum | Platt Church of England Primary School \(follow link\)](#)

The school regularly updates parents of ways in which they can support pupils' development and progress through activities to be completed at home although our expectations are that the majority of learning should happen within school.

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

- Only the headteacher and school office are able to access and use the messaging system.
- Parents are asked to provide their consent and details for the use of the system at the beginning of school journey. These can be updated at request from the office.
- 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 a home-school reading diary which can be utilised by parents to record when a child has read at home. Should a Parent have an enquiry for the teacher directly Class Dojo should be used.

Class teachers will be available to discuss pupils' progress and any concerns with parents by appointment. The start and the end of the day are exceptionally busy and class teachers may not always be available. Class teachers may call you, arrange a virtual or face to face meeting.

A meeting will be held by the headteacher for new parents prior to their child's entry to the school. This will involve a show around and a discussion. The office team will provide all of the school information via email or in a paper pack.

If a pupil is absent from school, and the school has no indication of the reason for the absence, the school will 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.

Parents will be encouraged to communicate with class teachers via Class Dojo or Tapestry. Parents will be encouraged to write messages and enquiries regarding their child's learning here. Should the message be about school processes, absences, collections, uniform, lunches or other operational enquiries these should be made to the office.

5. Email communication

Email and internet access will be used in line with the school's Data and E-Security Breach Prevention and Management Plan 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. This is office@platt.kent.sch.uk
- Office staff will track communication sent to this email address and ensure emails are dealt with promptly and consistently. Records of key information required by class based staff or SLT will also be circulated via CPOMs under 'Parent communications'.
- 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 and a response to sender outlining action and a delay whilst information is found sent.
- Parents will only Class Dojo to contact class staff directly. (Unless HT or SENDCo)

Implementing set emails times

- An email window highlighting specific times staff will respond to emails will be established and communicated to the school community. The expected times of responses are 8:30-4:30 Monday- Friday

- Parents will be made aware that staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day.
- 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.
- Where possible staff are asked to use 'delay' function on emails to ensure that staff are not stressed by additional work pressure in non working 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 .
- Staff members will be advised not to subscribe to any junk type email chains, in order to reduce emails received.

Examples of email content	Email (Y/N)	Action
Lost property	N	Send pupil to check in the lost property area in the student office. Parent advised to check/
Injured student, leaving lessons early	Y	Weekly bulletin which includes; briefing notes, sports fixtures/clubs, pupils injured, pupils on report and events taking place in week. Emailed to all staff.
SEND top tips	Y	Email to teachers and TAs periodically.
Booking for PM meetings	Y	Times and information to be sent
Newsletter	Y	Via Parentmail function- alerting email

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 meetings will be set out in the school calendar and shared termly.

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.

Information from meetings will be shared by Job Share partners and any materials circulated to ensure job share have the current information.

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 on sharepoint, in a clearly marked Meetings 2021-22 folder.

Due to Coronavirus restrictions and to support work life balance some parent meetings will take place virtually via conferencing software.

Parents will be expected to behave in meetings in line with the Online Learning 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. If staff member sees fit a member of SLT may also attend the meeting.

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

7. Recording meetings

If parents and/or other individuals wish to record a virtual and/or face-to-face meeting, they will discuss their intentions beforehand with the school no less than 24 hours before the meeting commences. 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.

Should any form of circulation of school meetings occur without permission school will enforce legal action against families.

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 information

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

- Clubs and activities
- School hours
- School uniform
- Term dates
- Ofsted reports
- Informal communication between teachers and parents

The school website is updated throughout the year to share current procedures, as well as contain information about the most recent activities and successes of the school.

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 text message directing them to a detailed post of Parentmail.

If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or similar problem, an update will be posted via Parentmail at least once a day. The Kent School closure webpage, will broadcast a closure announcement in the event of the school closing due to adverse weather or another emergency situation.

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

9. 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 SARs:

- 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. (Safeguarding records and Child Protection records do not have to be shared)
- 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.

10. 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.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2022.