

Southill Primary School



Home-School Communications Policy

Adopted by the Governing Body on:	10 July 2024
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1. Introduction and aims

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
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- 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

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

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

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

2.2 Teachers and Teaching Assistants

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 communications during core school hours (8.45-3.15) or their working hours (if they work part-time). Because we are committed to promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, they may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are not expected to do so. Parents should however expect a reply within 48 hours of their initial communication.

2.3 Office Staff

The office staff handle the majority of the school's communications and are responsible for:

- Informing all parents of the need to download the School Ping app and helping parents with any difficulties that may arise
- Sending messages via School Ping in a timely and accessible manner.
- Collating responses from messages on behalf of other school staff
- Contacting individual parents via phone, email and School Ping about matters relating to their child.

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Regularly checking all communications from the school
- Responding to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times

Any communication to a member of staff that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will not be answered. The Headteacher will respond to such an email by requesting no further communication be sent.

Parents are asked to remember that school staff will respond at a time that fits within their own working arrangements, and within 48 hours of initial receipt. However, parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (8.45-3.15) 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 School Ping

We use the School Ping app to keep parents informed about a wide range of school issues, including:

- Upcoming school events, including trips visits and parents' evenings
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Clubs, sports events and arrangements
- Class activities or teacher requests
- Short-notice changes to an aspect of the school day
- Newsletters
- Emergencies, such as a lockdown or a school closure
- FOSS events

3.3 School calendar

Our school website includes a school calendar for the year ahead. Events are added to the calendar as planning for them is confirmed through the year.

We try to give parents as much notice as possible of any events, 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 website calendar and reminders sent via School Ping.

3.4 Phone calls

There are many reasons why school staff will phone parents directly, which may include, for example:

- to discover the reason for a child's absence
- to ask parents to collect a child who has become too ill to stay at school
- to discuss an aspect of pupil's performance or conduct (both positive and negative)

3.5 Newsletters

The school sends a lot of information via ping, the website and its social media channels. As such, the need for regular newsletters is reduced and so the Headteacher only writes these on an occasional basis. The newsletters are sent to parents via Ping and are always made available on the website on the same day.

3.7 Reports

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

- For all children, an annual report in March describing their child's achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, their attendance and their attitudes to learning. The timing of this report was chosen after consultation with parents. The general agreement from parents was that a mid-year timing of the report was helpful for indicating areas that parents could help their child with during the remainder of the school year.
- For all children, an end of year summary report describing attainment in the key subjects of Reading, Writing and Maths.
- Details of their achievement in the KS2 SATs tests (Year 6)
- Confirmation as to whether they have passed or failed the Phonics Check (Year 1)
- Their progress against the EYFS Early Learning Goals (Reception)

3.8 Meetings

We hold a parents' evening in the Autumn and Spring terms. 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 maximise the school's support for their children.

3.9 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.

3.10 Social media

The school's official social media channels are as follows:

- › Facebook
- › X
- › Instagram

These accounts are managed by the school.

Posts

The school's posts will include:

- › Alerts about changes (e.g. changes to procedures, severe weather updates, staffing changes)
- › Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- › Advertisements for school events or activities
- › Job vacancies or requests for volunteers
- › Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers

- › Achievements of pupils and staff
- › Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- › Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals

The school **will not** post:

- › Names and photos of individuals (one or the other will be used, but never both together)
- › Harmful or abusive comments
- › Messages to specific people
- › Political statements
- › Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school or part of a fundraising strategy
- › Links to staff members' personal accounts

Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- › Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- › Comments we consider to be spam
- › Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- › Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations (unless the school is the beneficiary of the donation and/or the request is part of a fundraising strategy)

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the school's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the school community.

Use of social media by parents/carers

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils. When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- › Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- › Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils and children
- › Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- › Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- › Complain about the school
- › Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- › Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- › Post images of children other than their own

WhatsApp groups

We ask parents/carers to follow the above social media guidelines when using class WhatsApp groups.

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Parents should use the list in appendix 1 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 and respond to all emails within 2 working days.

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 2 working days.

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 2 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
- Medical problems

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. These meetings are usually called by parents to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

but this is not an exhaustive list. Parents are welcome to request a meeting for any reason.

We try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request.

Teachers find it difficult at the beginning or end of the school day to speak meaningfully with parents, because of the obvious distractions of children who need their attention. Parents are advised not to raise significant issues at this point in the day but to email their concerns along with a request for a face-to-face meeting. The teacher will arrange this as quickly as possible. Meeting with the teacher in this way will allow for a much more satisfactory and productive experience for parents and the teacher.

5. Inclusion

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

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as emails, School Ping messages alerts) and newsletters) available in English and will look to adapt this as necessary for families who need it.

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. Monitoring and review

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every 2 years.

The policy will be approved by the governing board.

7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Home-school agreement
- Staff wellbeing

Appendix 1: school contact list

Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office on 01305 773144 or office@southill.dorset.sch.uk
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) 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 should be posted there.

We try to respond to all emails within 2 working days.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's teacher
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's teacher
Payments	School office office@southill.dorset.sch.uk
School trips	School office
Uniform	School office
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01305 773144 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, please fill in the form available from the school office
Bullying and behaviour	Headteacher cwood@southill.dorset.sch.uk
School events/the school calendar	School office
Special educational needs (SEN)	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator: Dawn Trimmer d.trimmer@southill.dorset.sch.uk
Before and after-school clubs	School office
Hiring the school premises	Finance Officer: Mrs Wallis finance@southill.dorset.sch.uk
FOSS	School office
Governing board	School office (in the first instance)
Catering/meals	School office

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy on our website. Please contact our Complaints Co-ordinator, Sharon Howe, in the school office.