



# Overleigh St Mary's CE Primary School

## Communications Policy

Head teacher

Chair of Governors

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## Statement of intent

At Overleigh St Mary's CE Primary School, we understand the importance of the relationship between parents, pupils and the school.

We have a strong inclusive ethos where children 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 appropriately 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.
- Ensure workload and wellbeing of staff is not impeded by communication requirements.

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Data and E-Security Breach Prevention and Management Plan
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct
- Acceptable Use Agreement
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. **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.
- Informing parents of their child's progress.
- Informing parents about the types of data that the school holds concerning pupils, who controls the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent and easily accessible; written in a clear and plain language; and free of charge.
- 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.

**2.2. Staff members are responsible for:**

- Ensuring the principles and procedures of this policy are followed.
- Communicating appropriately with parents about pupil progress and ensuring parents have access to resources with which to support their child's learning.
- Ensuring that relevant information is passed on to supply teachers.

**2.3. 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 for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, school achievements and other useful downloads.
- Reading and acting on communication sent by SCOpay.
- 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.

### **3. Internal and external communications**

- 3.1. Staff are issued with a yearly overview of key dates and events for the year well in advance of the start of the following school year. Staff access on line calendar for week to week events and are responsible for ensuring this is up to date.
- 3.2. All staff members sign for the Staff Handbook, which details a variety of school procedures and conduct matters and is up dated yearly.
- 3.3. Written communications to staff members are delivered via email.
- 3.4. Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies without their consent.
- 3.5. Under no circumstance will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.
- 3.6. Staff members will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites, or accept 'friend' requests.
- 3.7. Parents may be contacted through the following methods:
  - Letters / notes home
  - Text / SCOpay messages

- Phone calls
- See-Saw
- Zoom
- The school website
- School newsletters
- Parent's meetings
- Reading Records

3.8. For general enquiries, parents are required to email the school office on [admin@overleightmarysce.cheshire.sch.uk](mailto:admin@overleightmarysce.cheshire.sch.uk)

3.9. 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**

4.1. Each year teachers outline the learning, routines and demands of the curriculum etc for their child's current year group. In addition through the year the curriculum coverage is updated on the year group pages of the website.

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

- 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.

4.3. Our Learning Platform See-Saw will be used to record homework assignments and as a regular channel for communication with children if there is a requirement for Remote Learning.

4.4. Class teachers will be available to discuss any concerns with parents before the start and end of each school day.

4.5. Where possible meeting will be held by the headteacher for new parents prior to their child's entry to the school.

4.6. 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.

4.7. 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.

#### **5. Email communication**

5.1. Email and internet access will be used in line with the school's and Acceptable Use Agreement.

5.2. All members of staff will have their own email account.

- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. Staff members will not engage in personal correspondence with pupils outside of the school's Learning platform See-Saw. .
- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. Chain emails will not be allowed.
- 5.7. Staff will ensure that the sending of attachments is limited to only work-related emails.
- 5.8. Under no circumstances will adverts be embedded into emails.
- 5.9. As emails can cause high volumes of pressure for staff, parents will email via the school office rather than directly.
- 5.10. Parents will ensure that emails are sent judiciously to avoid overloading staff and focus on essential communication.
- 5.11. Parents will be aware that teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day.
- 5.12. The school will not expect work emails to be checked outside of their school based hours.
- 5.13. The school will aim to respond to all email enquiries within five working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule.

## **6. Meetings**

- 6.1. A programme of all staff meetings will be shared termly.
- 6.2. For all formal meetings, minutes will be taken, action points progressed, and feedback given to staff members.
- 6.3. Parents will be expected to behave in meetings in line with the Parent Code of Conduct.
- 6.4. When parents wish to organise meetings with members of staff, they will first contact their child's classroom teacher or the senior phase leader.
- 6.5. If parents urgently need to have a meeting with a member of staff, they will email the school office and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see parents.
- 6.6. Lessons will not be interrupted to accommodate parents needing to speak to a teacher.

- 6.7. For non-urgent meetings between parents and members of staff, the school will aim to meet parents within five working days.
- 6.8. The school will determine the level of urgency in requests for meetings, which will aid in managing multiple demands.

## **7. Recording meetings**

- 7.1. Parents and/or other individuals will require the school's permission to record any meetings which take place either face-to-face or virtually. Permission should be sought at least 24hours **in advance** of the meeting. The school reserves the right to consider the appropriateness of a request and to refuse permission.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. For virtual meetings and/or face-to-face meetings to be recorded, consent will need to be obtained from all participants.
- 7.4. The final decision to permit any individual and/or parental recording of meetings will reside with the school.
- 7.5. Under no circumstances should parents / carers record staff without their knowledge in either formal or informal conversation in the school grounds or buildings. If this takes place then the school reserves the right to ban the parent from school site and cease all but email conversation.
- 7.6. If parents and/or other individuals fail to obtain the school's permission to record before a meeting begins, and insist on recording without permission, the school will be permitted to suspend the meeting and can consider banning the parent from future meetings and only communicating via email in future.
- 7.7. 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 Policy.

## **8. School website**

- 8.1. The school website will be utilised to communicate information regarding the following:
  - Clubs and activities
  - School hours
  - School uniform
  - Term dates
  - Pupil safety
  - The school calendar
  - Ofsted reports
  - Achievement information

- Pupil Premium Funding

## 9. Emergency communication

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. If a pupil is seriously ill or injured, the school will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contact(s) via telephone.
- 9.3. 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 and post information on the school's website.
- 9.4. If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or similar problem, an update will be posted on the website at least once a day.
- 9.5. In the event of a serious incident, the school will follow its Emergency Plans including Lockdown and Evacuation Policy and communicate with families via SCOpay and the school website.

## 10. Vexatious Communications

10.1 We are committed to professional, timely and courteous communication between the school, parents and carers. Complaints are managed through the **Complaints Policy**, available on the school website. However, a small number of people will communicate with or complain to the school in a way that could reasonably be described as 'obsessive, harassing, repetitious, aggressive or intimidating'. This communication from a very small number of individuals takes a disproportionate amount of school resources and can result in unacceptable stress for staff and or governors.

10.2 Vexatious communication includes conversations (face to face or on the phone), letters or emails that are:

- a. Overly persistent – i.e. continuing to communicate with a colleague even when it has been made clear that they have responded to a complaint and dealt with it. If a complainant is still dissatisfied they have recourse to the next step in the complaints procedure.
- b. Inappropriate in manner – i.e. when pejorative, mean spirited, personal or inappropriate comments are made.
- c. Threatening – i.e. direct or indirect threats about what might be done or they would like to do. This may be threats of a physical nature or to do with what they will say to or about a colleague or the school (this may involve threats of contact with external agencies such as the press). It may also include speaking to colleagues in an unpleasant or bullying manner or using abusive or threatening language.
- d. Prolific – prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.

- e. Person has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints policy
- f. Complaint is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, or repetitive
- g. Person insists on pursuing an unfounded complaint, beyond all reason
- h. Person pursues unrealistic outcomes, beyond all reason
- i. Person pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner
- j. Complaint is designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- k. Person demands a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

10.3 Where communication is deemed vexatious or habitual school will politely but clearly indicate that the communication is becoming vexatious. If this is during a phone or face to face meeting, they will politely end their side of the conversation. A copy of this policy will be sent to the parent, carer or member of the public and they will be asked to refer to it during future communication with school. A record will be made of this. It may also be appropriate for the leadership to decide that any future communication be with a member of the senior leadership team including the Headteacher.

10.4 If a member of staff experiences habitual or vexatious communications and or complaints they should, as soon as possible, report this to the headteacher. In the case of the headteacher this will be reported to Governors.

The Headteacher / Member of SLT / Governors will:

- a. Communicate with the correspondent/complainant expressing his or her concern on the matter and drawing reference to the School's Complaints Policy and the Vexatious Communications Policy.
- b. Invite the correspondent/complainant to cease all vexatious communication with the school.
- c. Propose that the correspondent/complainant should, if appropriate, lodge a complaint in accordance with the Complaints Policy and for that complaint to be dealt with under the laid down procedure.
- d. Inform the correspondent/complainant that if the vexatious communication to the individual does not cease, the matter will be forwarded to the Governing Body / LA/ Diocese.
- e. Inform the Chair of the Governing Body/ LA / Diocese of action taken to date within this case.

Governors should:

- Communicate with the correspondent/complainant expressing the Board's deep concern on the matter and reiterate that the behaviour will not be tolerated.
- If the vexatious behaviour is continuing despite completion of the full complaints process, notify the correspondent/complainant that the Board complaints or vexatious communication, is at an end, and that further contact will be acknowledged but not answered.
- Temporarily suspend, for a period to be specified to the correspondent/complainant, all contact with correspondent/complainant, provided that the school shall not withdraw or fail to provide any services

which the correspondent/complainant or his or her family are entitled to receive.

- has responded fully to the point or points raised, has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. Explain that any form of contact, in whatever medium, in relation to their complaint, will cease.

10.6 If, after completion of the process above, the vexatious and habitual communications / complaints continue then advise will be sought from our LA legal team.

## **11. Accessing information**

11.1. In accordance with an individual's right of access under the GDPR, personal information (such as educational records), confirmation of data processing, and other supplementary information will be shared with individuals who request access.

11.2. The procedure below will be followed in terms of SARs:

- The requests will be made in writing to the headteacher 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.
- 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.

11.3. Under the GDPR, remote access to a secure self-service system will be given to provide individuals with direct access to their personal information.

11.4. 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.

11.5. The procedure below will be followed in terms of FOI requests:

- The requests will be made in writing to the headteacher, 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.

**Please also refer to our Parental Code of Conduct Policy Including Behaviour Towards Staff By Parents, Carers and Visitors.**