



Petersfield Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Code of Communication

September 2020

As a school, our main focus is to deliver high quality teaching and learning for our pupils. The aim of this code of conduct is to foster good communications between parents/carers and the school in order to achieve this focus.

Introduction

The school welcomes contact with parents/carers because this fosters mutual understanding and support which has a positive effect on children's performance and their attitudes to learning. The school wants to ensure that parents/carers have an appropriate and helpful response to their communications. However, unlike some businesses and other occupations, the professional duties of staff can make it difficult for them to speak or meet with parents/carers during the school day. Due to teaching commitments, staff will typically be unavailable between 8.40am and 3.20pm each day. There are also other times outside these hours when they attend meetings. Frequent requests for updates and information, which are provided in a timely manner throughout the school year, can but should not distract school staff from their primary focus, educating our pupils. The important business of working with and responding to parents/carers must be managed within this context.

Teachers welcome informal communication from parents/carers when they are collecting their child/children from the gate. Members of staff, almost always including a member of the Senior Leadership team, are present at the gate when parents/carers are bringing their child to school and welcome messages or questions. In most cases, the matter will be referred to the child's classteacher.

Principles for responding to parents/carers

In order to achieve the most effective balance for children, parents/carers and teachers, we follow the following principles:

- Welcoming contact from parents/carers;
- Responding as quickly and fully as possible to parents/carers;
- Involving parents/carers in our work with children;
- Sharing information as often and as fully as possible with parents/carers;

When correspondence is made to an individual parent/carer on an important matter the letter will be sent by email, post or handed directly to the parent/carer to ensure confidentiality and security. For day to day or routine matters correspondence will be sent via email or the children's book bags and information may be enclosed in a named sealed envelope where appropriate.

Guidelines on responding to parents/carers

It may be helpful for parents/carers to know how they can expect their telephone calls, letters, emails and requests for meeting with the school to be dealt with. The following guidelines show how we aim to respond to parents/carers.

Telephones

- **Messages:** All telephone calls are received through the main office. A message will be taken and sent to the relevant person as soon as possible. Staff will normally take details of the caller's name and telephone number and purpose in calling. The person concerned will try to respond as soon as possible and by the end of their next working day if possible. The school's telephone is 01223 207382.
- **Urgent calls:** The call will be put through to the most appropriate or available senior member of staff if possible or a message will be taken.
- **Messages for pupils:** Whilst this is rare, any urgent message for children will be taken by a member of staff and passed on as soon as possible.
- **Busy times:** The office is busy between 8.45am and 9.15am in the morning and 3.00pm and 3.30pm in the afternoon. At these times and at other times, calls may be recorded on an answer machine. This is checked regularly and if a message is left, it will be passed on.
- **Telephone calls made at arranged times:** if teachers have arranged with parents/carers for them to receive calls at particular times of the school day, those teachers will try to ensure that they are available. Should other commitments or events make this impossible, a staff member will take a message and the person concerned will try to call back the same day.

Letters and emails

Emails to **all staff** should be sent via the office. Emails should not be used for urgent matters; instead parents/carers should contact the school office by phone.

- The school will try to **acknowledge** letters and emails received from parents/carers within five working days during term time. The school email is office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk. The postal address is Petersfield Church of England Aided School, Hurdleditch Road, Orwell. SG8 5QG. The fax number is 01223 208567.

- We do not use email as a forum for discussion, should you wish to discuss your correspondence or any other matter with us, please contact us to talk to us directly.
- If more time is required to provide a fuller response or to arrange a meeting, staff will try to include in the acknowledgement details of when these will happen.

Complaints

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working school days. We will investigate the complaint and will aim to respond to you in writing within ten working school days of receiving your formal complaint. For further information please see our complaints policy.

Meetings

Where situations are more complex, a face-to-face (including virtual) meeting is preferable to a letter or a phone call and this will be arranged at the earliest convenience for parents/carers and staff.

Meetings with class teachers

The class teacher is the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. Teachers are not usually available between 8.45am and 3.20am but mutually agreed appointments can be made outside these times either through the office or directly with the class teachers who are usually at the gate after dismissing their class at the end of the school day.

Depending on the nature of the situation, a meeting may include more senior members of staff:

- Key Stage Leader
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo)
- Deputy Head Teacher
- Headteachers
- Education Officer
- Other agencies e.g. Locality Team, School Nurse, Health worker.

A record may be kept and notes shared with all parties where appropriate. Parents/carers will only be invited to discuss their own children. Staff will not talk about other children in front of other parents/carers. All meetings and discussions are confidential between the staff involved and the parents/carers and parties should not divulge information to others without the agreement of parents/carers **and** the school.

E-mails

The school has a system of sending all standard forms of communication home to parents/carers via e-mail. For all the correspondence, hard copies will be provided if parents/carers do not have access to email. Parents/carers must ensure that the school office is informed of any changes to their e-mail addresses.

Website

The school seeks to put as much information as possible on its website. Most general information that parents/carers would seek can be readily found at: www.petersfield.cambs.sch.uk. Parents/carers are encouraged to look at the website on a regular basis.

Protocol for Communications

The school undertakes to treat all communications with parents/carers with courtesy. It expects to receive the same in return. The following behaviours are unacceptable:

- swearing, spitting, shouting, threatening words or gestures
- physical intimidation and the use of force such as pushing, pulling, poking, prodding etc.
- prejudice, racist, extremist or radicalised, ageist and sexist comments

We expect both parties will work towards identifying and resolving problems quickly and efficiently. Where difficulties cannot be resolved, the senior leadership team and/or Deputy Headteacher or the Headteachers may be involved. An Education Officer or other agencies will be invited in situations which are particularly complex, and in an effort to move forward. The school reserves the right to take appropriate action if inappropriate behaviour from any party occurs on school premises. Please see our Visitor Behaviour Policy, E-Safety Policy and Parent Information Pack for more information.

Social Media

Petersfield Church of England (Aided) Primary School recognises that social media is increasingly used as a form of communication. However, the school does not use social media to communicate with parents/carers. We expect that any concerns are only raised directly with the school to enable resolution. As per our Safeguarding policies, images, film or audio recording should not be made at any time without the intention to record being declaring to the school and without the expressed consent of the staff involved and Headteachers. Images taken on school premises must not be uploaded to Social Media sites.