Waunfawr Primary School
Ysgol Gynradd Waunfawr

Communication Policy

Introduction

This policy addresses the main ways in which Waunfawr Primary School ensures effective two-way communication with parents/carers, students, and the community.

We believe that effective communications systems promote effective learning, promote the well-being of students and strengthen the quality of our work and the relationships between the school, parents/carers, students and the community.

To ensure that Waunfawr Primary School is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our children, with their Parents and Carers and with other members of the wider community.

Aims

This policy aims to promote the partnership between the school, parents/carers, students and the community through efficient and effective communication. Good communication should allow and encourage all parties and stakeholders to participate in the development and enhancement of the school, and its varied activities.

Good communications, between all members of the school community should be:

- interactive, all parties having opportunities and clear mechanisms for communication with one another;
- timely;
- responsive to all parents', staff and students' needs;
- personal or impersonal, as appropriate;
- correctly targeted at mass or small audiences, or individuals;
- honest and respectful.

Responsibilities

All parties are responsible for communicating in a **considered and courteous manner** regardless of the method of communication.

Below are particular areas of responsibility for the school and its staff, and for parents/carers.

The school:

- Ensuring that the spirit, principles and procedures of this policy are followed, particularly the pastoral, welfare and educational aspects.
- Communicating proactively with parents/carers about student progress and helping parents/carers to support their children's learning.
- Responding to incoming communication in a timely manner using the most appropriate form of response.
- Sharing information about upcoming events in a timely manner.

• Keeping the school website up-to-date with all essential information for students, parents/carers and stakeholders.
• Facilitating feedback from parents/carers and other stakeholders (through questionnaires, publicised meetings and other activities); and acting upon this evidence, as appropriate.
• Where the school identifies that written or verbal communication is a challenge for specific parents/carers, they make efforts to communicate key messages appropriately.
• When necessary and possible, the school will seek to support parents/carers who speak English as an additional language with translation services via Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS).

Parents / Carers

Parents and Carers are responsible for:

• Ensuring that the school is informed immediately in the event that contact information needs to be updated, including when parents/carers no longer reside at the same address, or where there is a request for information to be sent to different homes, to both parents/carers. Parents or guardians registering their child at the school should provide contact details, including names and addresses, of non-resident parents and any important details such as court orders.
• Ensuring that the school is informed of absences of their child(ren) in accordance with the attendance procedures.
• Informing the school of medical conditions or allergies, and supplying the necessary medical documentation.
• Informing the school of any child protection issues, legal matters, or relevant duties, using appropriate documentation.
• Reading, acting on and, if applicable, meeting the deadlines in all communications sent by the school via students and other forms of communication.
• Participating in parent/carer consultations.
• Sharing concerns about progress with class teachers.
• Informing the school if there are challenges regarding understanding written or verbal communication.

Communications with Parents and Carers

Parents and Carers are welcome to visit the school to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, and gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with their child's class teacher first, then other members of staff, e.g. the ALNCo, Deputy Head or Headteacher, as appropriate.

Outside of teaching their designated class all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school. These duties will include care of children, organisation of extra-curricular activities or whole-school coordination of a curriculum subject. We aim to be able to facilitate requests for an immediate meeting, however for the reasons stated above, when this is not possible, staff may not be able to facilitate an immediate, unscheduled appointment but will aim to do so as soon as possible and **within 5 school days**.

Arranging a mutually convenient appointment allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the Parents and Carers and to gather any necessary information prior to the meeting. This process will make the meeting much more conducive.

The following list, whilst not exhaustive, covers the main ways in which we will communicate with Parents and Carers. All response times are indicative and where extensions are needed i.e. for further investigation a holding response will be given to the family along with an updated expected response time.

Whole School Newsletters

A minimum of three newsletters a term are put onto Dojo and the school website and contain updates about what has been going across the school, important reminders, dates and messages. Parents and Carers are strongly encouraged to read these.

ClassDojo

ClassDojo is our primary form of communication between home and school. All teachers make use of ClassDojo story and messages to communicate important updates and share photos and news. Each class is also overseen by Mrs Walkley in the school office and the Headteacher, Mrs Armishaw. This enables parents to contact them when and where appropriate.

ClassDojo is also used through the school to record evidence of children's learning and to support teachers in planning for progression. The amount of work recorded on ClassDojo will naturally reduce as children move through the school and make more use of exercise books and Hwb office tools.

Only those with parental responsibility or those caring for a child who is looked after, will be given access to ClassDojo and it is joined by sharing a QR code. Should parents share the QR code with other friends or family they will be deleted.

Parents and staff are encouraged to be mindful of 'school hours' e.g. 9am-4pm when messaging. Teachers will acknowledge messages **within 24 hrs and respond within 48 hrs,** for messages that require a more urgent response please contact the school office. Concerns or complaints should not be shared through the app. We encourage parents and carers to speak to the class teacher on the school gate, or telephone the office for a convenient time.

Urgent Messages

Parents and Carers are reminded that urgent messages MUST be directed to the school office via 01495270269.

Reporting absences

Parents should communicate with the school office around school attendance not their child's teacher e.g. reasons for absence, leave of absence requests etc. Parents should notify the school office of reasons for any absence before 9:30am. This can be done by phoning 01495 270269 or emailing WaunfawrPrimary@sch.caerphilly.gov.uk

Email

The school subscribes to Teachers2Parents allowing us to email letters to Parents and Carers. Information may be emailed to parents in between newsletters. We urge Parents and Carers to provide us with a valid email address. Replies to emails sent via Teachers2Parents are delivered to the school admin account: WaunfawrPrimary@sch.caerphilly.gov.uk

In addition, key staff emails are listed below:

Shepherdh24@hwbcymru.net (for concerns regarding additional learning needs and pupils in Years N-Year 2)
Evansh231@hwbcymru.net (for concerns regarding pupils in key stage 2, Years 3-6)

The Headteacher's personal email is not shared with parents. Emails to the Headteacher should be sent to WaunfawrPrimary@sch.caerphilly.gov.uk and will be forwarded to her, or to the Deputy Headteacher in her absence. Emails or messages requiring an answer, will be responded to as quickly as possible and staff will endeavour to ensure that, at the very least, an acknowledgement is sent **within 2 school days** if an immediate response to an email requires more time. Staff are not expected to, and are discouraged from, checking and responding to emails outside of their working day. However, staff are encouraged to work flexibly and respond to emails in a way that suits them to balance their working hours. Staff do not expect Parents and Carers to read, respond or action emails outside hours that suit them.

Staff, Parents and Carers are discouraged from entering in-depth discussions about a child's progress or wellbeing via email, although the school acknowledges that this is not always possible for either parents or school. Both staff and parents / carers, may request another adult be present for any meeting or may reserve the right to communicate in writing only if there is a concern that they may be misrepresented in any further communication or if in any previous communication a member of staff has felt intimidated, either by aggressive communication (and this might include, for example, being aware of inappropriate or unpleasant comments to other parents verbally or on social media) or the threat of an allegation.

Email does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. All staff should seek face to face communications in the first instance.

Text

The school has a Text system (Teachers2Parents) which is occasionally used to communicate short messages with Parents and Carers. This is not a reply service. Text messages are sent to the primary emergency contact. Please contact the school office if a second contact is required.

Emergencies, closures and unusual events

Emergency messages to all Parents and Carers are primarily communicated via ClassDojo. In the event of school closure the school also posts on the Caerphilly County Borough Council
https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/schoolclosures

Telephone calls

Inbound

All telephone calls will be answered by staff in the main office. It is our policy that office staff do not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is urgent or an emergency. Messages are taken and passed to the relevant person as soon as the lesson is over.

If the call requires a response from a member of staff Parents and Carers should be mindful that, as is the case with email, teachers may not be available to return a call on the same day. We aim that a return call will be made as quickly as possible and staff will endeavour to ensure that, at the very least, contact will be made, **within 2 working days**, to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Outbound

Emergency calls

Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required e.g. for injuries or accidents. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed. Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact and so forth. If no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message, send a text message requesting a call back (this may be to the primary contact only) or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made if possible.

Non urgent calls

Staff may also make telephone calls to discuss other matters with parents. We understand that parents may not be able to take these calls and are happy to arrange to call again at a mutually convenient time.

Communication with a member of senior leadership team.

You are welcome to request to speak to the Headteacher at any time. If she, or the Deputy Headteacher, is not available the office staff will be able to pass a message or support with arranging a mutually convenient appointment. Office staff will ask what your call is regarding to ensure that Senior Leadership are the most appropriate members of staff to take your call. The Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher in her absence, is the person you should speak to about any Safeguarding concern. If you wish to discuss a complaint, in most instances you should speak to your child's class teacher as a first port of call as it is the Headteacher's role to investigate and respond to formal written complaints, at the second stage of the Complaints Procedure.

Seeking the Views of Parents and Carers
Your views are important to us, and we consult with parents on a range of operational matters as review policy and procedure and plan school improvement activity. This may be done via online surveys. From time to time the school hosts information sessions for parents to help their support their child's learning or wellbeing. For example, how to support your child learning to read or with Numeracy Homework, or updated Internet Safety information. We may also invite parents into school so that they can join their child taking part in activities or as an opportunity to see their work in a 'book look' or at the end of a special project.

The School Website
The school website www.Waunfawrprimary.co.uk provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Social Media
Staff are advised not to communicate with Parents and Carers via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Parents should not contact staff by searching for them, via Facebook, for example and using Messenger.

We are aware that groups of parents may choose to set up social media channels for communication between parents e.g. via What'sApp or Facebook and we understand that this can be hugely beneficial. However, parents should not post anything that could be damaging or cause emotional or reputational hurt to any member of the school community. We would expect parents to heed the advice we give to pupils and keep all communication online positive and to remember that it is never private; negative comments can cause serious damage to relationships. Waunfawr Primary School considers the use of social media websites in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.

In the event that we are alerted to any child, or family member of a child, sharing defamatory comments, whether via social networking or private messaging, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. The school will also expect that any family member or child removes such comments immediately. Regardless of the circumstance, it is important to recognise that this is treated as unacceptable behaviour and will not be accepted. It is important that any staff member who suffers harassment of this nature keeps a timeline of incidents as this will form a key component of any future action taken.

Transition Events
Parents of children about to start Nursery and Reception in September are invited to attend meetings with their child's new teacher at the end of the Summer Term. Parents of children starting as Rising 3s in the Spring and Summer Term meet the teacher on an individual basis on their child's first day and are welcome to attend the meeting for the whole Nursery Class in the Summer Term.

Meetings for parents of children moving to secondary school are organised in the Summer Term by the school that they will be attending.

Parent Consultations

All Parents and Carers are provided with two, 10-minute meetings each academic year. Parents and Carers are asked to sign up for an allocated date and time. Should an appointment day not be suitable, Parents and Carers are asked to contact their child's teacher who will make every effort to arrange a more mutually convenient time. Parents and Carers are encouraged to request additional meetings should they have a concern regarding their child's progress or well-being. Likewise, staff will arrange additional meetings if necessary.

Additional Learning Needs
Parents of children who receive targeted or enhanced support for Additional Learning Needs may need longer appointments to discuss their child's progress. If this is the case, they should contact their child's class teacher to arrange this. They may also be invited into school for a Person-Centred Planning Meeting to create a detailed One Page Profile for their child.

Annual Review Meetings are held for all children with a Statement of Educational Needs or an Independent Development Plan (IDP) and other professionals who are involved with the child are contacted in advance and invited to attend or send a written contribution to the process. It is essential that parents contribute their views in writing in advance and attend Annual Review meetings.

Communication with Non-resident Parents

All parents can also receive information about their child, even though, for day-to-day purposes, the school's main contact is likely to be a parent with whom the child lives on the majority of school days.

Individuals who have parental responsibility for, or care of, a child have the same rights as biological parents. For example, to:

- receive information – such as pupil reports
- participate in statutory activities – such as voting in elections for parent governors
- be asked to give consent - such as to the child taking part in school trips
- be informed about meetings involving the child - such as a governors' meeting on the child's exclusion

The school will treat all parents equally, unless a court order limits a parent's ability to make educational decisions, participate in school life or receive information about their children.

In most cases, we will assume that the resident parent will take responsibility for sharing essential information with the non-resident parent and to provide us with contact details for the non-resident parent.

However, if information is not provided by the resident parent, it is the responsibility of non-resident parents to provide us with contact details and to inform us if they require separate communications (it is not the school's responsibility to establish the whereabouts of the non-resident parent). Proof of Parental Responsibility may be required for us to establish that the person requesting information, is indeed the child's parent.

Schools are not required to seek the consent of the parent with whom the child resides before either recording the contact details of the non-resident parent or sending them their child's prescribed statutory educational information.

If the school has been provided with contact details by a non-resident parent, they will seek permission from both parents if there is a request to withdraw a child from any non-statutory activity.

The school will assume that non-resident parents requesting separate communications will require a copy of the child's written report in the summer term, notice of parents' evenings and events where parents are invited into school e.g. concerts, sports day etc, and the option to purchase school photographs. We will automatically provide these if contact details have been provided.

Where possible, parents are encouraged to attend parents' evening together, but the school will facilitate separate appointments where requested.

The school recognises that non-resident parents vary in how much information they wish to receive.

It is the responsibility of the non-resident parent to request additional communication if this is what they would like to receive. The school will undertake to duplicate all written communication in so far as it can. The school is unable to guarantee this is possible in all situations. The school is mindful to protect the private data of each parent from any other and avoid inadvertent disclosure.

When non-resident parents request additional communication, and paper copies need to be posted, it is the responsibility of the non-resident parent to provide stamped addressed envelopes. Additional communications will only be posted if these have been provided.

The school will avoid becoming involved in any disagreement between parents but might want to suggest that where parents cannot agree they seek independent legal advice about obtaining a court order setting out exactly what decisions each parent can make in respect of the child (a Specific-Issue or Prohibited Steps Order as appropriate).

Linked Policies

All complaints should be managed in line with the Schools Complaints Procedure. We also have a vexatious complaints policy, which can be found here.

Please refer to our Data Protection Policy for copies of children's records, Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests.

Both policies are available from the school office and can be found online.