

Toll Bar Primary School

Policy on Communications

(see also Use of Photographic and Video Images)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 In our school, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.
- 2.2 We have various strategies for communicating with parents. Some of our communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement, while others simply reflect what we believe is important for our school.
- 2.3 We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font, and add pictures wherever appropriate. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

3 Home-school agreement

- 3.1 Our home-school agreement has been in place since September 1999. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents, and what the school expects of the children. We ask parents to sign this agreement when their child starts at our school, and to renew it each year.
- 3.2 The agreement covers the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the school, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework. Our governors review the agreement annually, and publish the details of their review in the governors' annual report to parents.

4 Annual written report to parents: children's achievements

- 4.1 Every year, we provide a written report to each child's parents on the child's progress in the various National Curriculum subjects. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. In our school, we ask the children to comment on their own progress, and we ask parents to make a similar comment. We also give children in Year 2 and Year 6 the details of their performance in the national tests, and details of national comparisons.
- 4.2 As well as receiving the annual written report, parents meet their child's teacher each term for a private consultation. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Parents are able to see their child's work during these meetings. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.
- 4.3 When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents more regularly.

- 4.4 We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

5 School prospectus

- 5.1 The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. We update this for each school year.

6 Public access to documents

- 6.1 The school makes a range of documentation available to parents. We keep a master set in the school office, and we make a copy of this available on request. It contains minutes of governors' meetings, and all school policies, including those that the governing body are required to draw up in relation to the following matters: charging and remissions, sex education, health and safety, curriculum, performance management, admissions, and action planning following an inspection. It also contains a range of national and LA documentation.

7 Home–school communication

- 7.1 We send a newsletter to parents at the end of each half term. It contains general details of school events and activities. Parents expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary.
- 7.2 At the beginning of each term, all teachers write to the parents of the children in their classes with details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming half-term. We invite parents to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home. We also invite parents to take part in any educational visit that is linked to the work.
- 7.3 Children in all classes have a home–school diary. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the home–school diary to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents.
- 7.4 The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers see parents immediately, if at all possible. Where this is not possible, the parent makes an appointment. We allow many parents the opportunity to have a word with the teacher when they bring their children to school, or when they collect them after school.
- 7.5 We hold parents meetings every term after school. We hold a meeting for new parents each July, and a meeting for Year 2 and Year 6 parents each October, concerning the national tests. The residential visits that the children make to Hatfield, Austerfield and Castleton involve a meeting with parents regarding the planning and content of the visit.
- 7.6 If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

8 Communication with other schools and outside agencies

- 8.1 Toward the end of their final term in Year 6, we pass on information about the children to their intended secondary schools. We try to give a view of the whole child, and we include their expected national test results, their strengths and weaknesses, their interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, football captain, school council representative, school newspaper editor, playground buddy, etc.). There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. We may also send on several items of work.

- 8.2 We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units.
- 8.3 We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the headteacher, who may share this information with the social services.
- 8.4 We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.
- 8.5 Parents are invited to SEN reviews every term.

9 Communication within our school

- 9.1 So that we all know what is going on, there is a diary of the week's activities, distributed to all staff weekly, and a whiteboard for the day's messages.
- 9.2 Most procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- 9.3 Written communications are delivered through pigeonholes or by e-mail.
- 9.4 Supply teachers can find additional information in a file in each classroom. This contains important medical information, class lists and a timetable.
- 9.5 Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff.

10 Electronic communication

- 10.1 We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have a school website.
- 10.2 All school members may communicate with others through email. There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our e-safety policy. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.
- 10.3 The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.
- 10.4 Our school website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.
- 10.5 Members of staff, classes as a whole, and individual older children will all have their own school-provided e-mail accounts.
- 10.6 Parents are required to sign permission slips for their child to use the Internet in school. A record of those who do not have permission is held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

11 Use of photographs and names

- 11.1 Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes, including About Me and other displays, records of practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and records of important school events.
- 11.2 We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus, on the school website, or in the governors' report to parents. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at school.
- 11.3 Parental permission must be obtained before using photographs of children or their work as detailed in 12.2 above. Parents will want to know the policy of the press about name disclosure before giving permission for a photo to be used. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held in the school office.
- 11.4 Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable (photos of children in swimwear would be unsuitable, as would individual and close-up shots).
- 11.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names. Even on the school website, only children's first names will be used.

12 Monitoring and review

- 12.1 This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required.

Date of Review: November 2012

Date of Next Review: November 2014

Signed:

Date: