



Communication Policy

Maple Ridge School

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1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the school, parents/carers, staff and other professionals has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers, staff and other professionals the information they need to support children's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers, staff and other professionals
- Builds trust between home and school, and with other professionals, 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, staff and other professionals
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers and colleagues
- Helping parents/carers and professionals 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 and professionals to include internal staff and external professionals.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

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

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Checking rotas at the start of the school day and email communications at least once each working day.
- Checking rotas again later in the day if a specific instruction to do this has been given on rota in the morning.
- Responding to communication from parents and other professionals 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 and other professionals get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)
- Teachers or lead LSA should ensure the class email is checked on a daily basis

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours 8:30am – 5:00pm, or their working hours if these differ, on their working days. In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be referred to the Headteacher.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (as above) or during school holidays. Class based staff, such as teachers, may be more limited in terms of times when they can respond due to their duties in class.

2.4 Other Professionals

We acknowledge that communications from professionals working for other organisations will be governed by the policies of their employer and as such, this is beyond the jurisdiction of our school policy. We will respect the communication policies and practices of external organisations and professionals. If we have concerns about communications we are receiving, we will raise these in line with the policy of the organisation the communication originated from where this does not contradict our school policies.

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be referred to the Headteacher.

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 Email

We use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests
- Changes in government guidance (for example, in relation to Attendance)

3.2 Text messages

We will text parents about:

- Payments
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

3.3 School calendar

Our school website includes a full school calendar for the term and INSET days for the academic year.

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or 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 calendar.

3.4 Phone calls

Staff members will return calls to parents who have asked to speak with them, where they are the appropriate point of contact. Usually this will be the class teacher, or a member of the school office team.

Teachers will call parents to discuss their child if there is a need for a conversation and information in the home school book would not be sufficient. Teachers may also make arrangements with parents to call regularly because school and home are working together to support an aspect of a child's education or welfare.

If parents provide important information during a phone call that needs to be shared with others, such as a message for the class team for example, a written record will be made of this information and it will be circulated to staff as appropriate.

3.5 Letters

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our weekly class newsletters / half termly school newsletters

These may be sent as hard copy e.g. if we need a signed slip returned to school, or they may be sent electronically through ParentMail.

3.6 Home School Books

All children have a home/school book to support communication. This book is for parents to share any information that they think we need to know about their child's time at home and we will use this book to inform them how their child's day has been and anything additional we believe they need to know. In the home/school books we will try to:

- ensure that any important information is shared by the class team with those adults who need to know
- initial anything in the home/school book if it is not possible to respond in more detail so that parents know it has been read
- ensure the class teacher reads the home/school books and responds if necessary at least once a week

As information is already sent home regarding each child's learning e.g. timetable, group plans, topic overview, the content of the home school book will focus on a child's wellbeing. This may mean we will not be writing about what children have done during the day but how they have been. We will continue to phone/talk directly to you if there is something that parents need to know immediately or that is better discussed in person.

As we believe that communication between home and school is a two-way process, we would ask that parents also try to commit to the following:

- indicate you have read the home/school book even if no time to respond (a 'tick' will do!)

- let school know, by whichever way you feel most comfortable, if there is something that may impact on your child in school e.g. change in home circumstances, bad night's sleep,
- ensure that school always has current contact details and up to date medical information
- let the class teacher know, if you have any concerns or worries

If you would prefer to send an email, you may use the class email address. The class email address is the class name followed by @mapleridge.hants.sch.uk

If you have already communicated with class and would like to speak to someone else, please contact the Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team:

Team 1: Rachael Tomlin

Team 2: Laura Farthing

Team 3: Lucy Wells

3.7 Reports

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

- An end-of-year report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing
- Updated Individual Education Plan each term, around half term
- Termly updated GEPs, with targets for English and Mathematics, at the start of each term

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

3.8 Meetings

We hold a parents' evening per term. 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. One term per year, parents will be invited to attend their child's EHCP Annual Review during the school day, rather than a parents' evening. This is a longer meeting and will focus on progress towards EHCP outcomes and annual targets as well as aspects covered in parents' evenings.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

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

Please check the website in the first instance if you are looking for this kind of information.

3.10 Home-school communications app

At Maple Ridge School we use ParentMail to send mass communications to parents by email or text, depending on the nature of the communication. Parents will benefit most from this technology if they download the app and set up their own account to include all of their relevant contact details.

Most school letters are sent to parents this way, attached to emails.

We may also use this system to send out individual messages where this is the most efficient and appropriate means of communication.

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 are encouraged to email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance, if these are issues that cannot be appropriately communicated through the Home School Book.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 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 5 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 8 school 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
- Notifying the school that your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, such as chicken pox, that could impact on the school's need to advise pregnant staff and visitors of possible contact

Parents who have regular support and advice from our SHIP service may have been provided with direct contact details, such as a work mobile phone number, and may use these contact details to contact their allocated worker as per advice given by that worker.

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.

We try to schedule all meetings within 10 working days of the request.

While teachers may be available at the beginning or end of the school day on the telephone if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

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

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 email alerts and newsletters) available in English.

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

Our school website has the facility to translate into languages other than English. We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

6. Internal Communications

We have a range of methods for communicating internally within our school staff team. These methods include:

- Notice boards
- Letters
- Meetings (some of which are noted, some of which are followed with email summary)
- Email
- MS Teams

The choice of communication method will be determined by the circumstances, taking into consideration who needs to be included, level of urgency and importance and retention requirements.

Meetings come in a variety of forms and could be 1:1 (such as a performance management review) or could include as many people as possible (such as a whole staff briefing). In general, the purpose of routine meetings would be:

- Teacher Twilight – sharing best practice, moderation of assessment and ensuring consistency of practice, training, curriculum development (SLT lead agenda)
- Staff Twilight – training and development, sharing of information that requires demonstration (SLT lead agenda)
- Class Team Meetings – reviewing practice in class, training in relation to specific teaching/support needs, ensuring consistency of practice within class e.g. therapy or behaviour technique, cascading information from Teacher Twilights and applying this to the class context for the team (AHTs lead agenda)
- Team/Supervision meetings – groups of staff meeting together who have school roles with a specific purpose e.g. outreach team, DSL team. Staff may be in one or more of these teams as determined by their school role(s). (Team leaders lead agenda)

7. Monitoring and review

The headteacher and governors monitor the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every two years.

8. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Wellbeing

9. Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy. This is available on our website.

Appendix 1: school contact list

Who should I contact?

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
Safeguarding	Designated Safeguarding Lead – V.Clovis (Headteacher) 01256 323639
Payments	Telephone school office 01256 323639 – Denise Burden
School trips	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
Uniform/lost and found	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01256 323639 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the school office on the number above.
Behaviour	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
School events/the school calendar	School office – enquiries@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Advice about health/medical issues in relation to school, including Covid 19 and common childhood illnesses	School office – enquiries@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk 01256 323639
Transport	Local Authority Transport Team
Therapy	Your child's teacher / Assistant Headteacher for your child's Team
Play at Maple	Natalie Birkin – N.Birkin@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Hiring the school premises	School Business Manager – enquiries@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Friends of Maple Ridge (PTA)	School Business Manager – enquiries@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Governing Body	Clerk to the Governing Body Clerk@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk
Catering/meals	School office – enquiries@mapleridge.hants.sch.uk