



Christchurch Infant School

Communication Policy

Approved by Board of Governors:	July 2020
Next Review Date:	June 2021
Written by: Date:	Headteacher June 2020

1. Introduction and aims

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

- Gives parents and carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents and carers
- Builds trust between home and school, 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 and carers
- Setting clear standards for responding to communication from parents and carers
- Helping parents and carers 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

1.1 Purpose

To promote partnerships between the school, parents, pupils and the wider community through efficient and effective communication.

1.2 Definition of effective communication

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflect on the school's reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

1.3 Covid-19 School closure

During this period of change brought about by the Government's attempts to reduce the spread of the Covid19 virus, a range of changes will need to be made to our usual forms of communication with parents and children and our usual communication protocols. The closure adds extra vital elements due to safeguarding both for children, families and staff. Communication changes that are specific to the Coronavirus /social isolation situation are identified within this document by red font.

2. Roles and responsibilities

During extreme situations such as: Covid-19 the Headteacher has a key role in ensuring that communication with parents and staff is as smooth as it can be, given the challenging circumstances. The Headteacher will for example, liaise with the key staff from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council where appropriate and this might include responsibilities that will be shared e.g. in the creation of hubs or amalgamation of schools to support childcare provision for children of key workers. Any change to the school provision will be

communicated to all staff and parents once it has been agreed with the Governing Body with whom the Head teacher will liaise with regularly. The normal procedure is for the Headteacher being responsible for the operational aspects and the Governing Body being responsible for the strategic direction, although there will be appropriate delegation. The Head teacher is responsible for ensuring all Government and union guidance is followed accurately and shared as needed with the appropriate stakeholders.

2.1 Governing Body and Head teacher

The Governing Body has the overall responsibility for the reviewing of this policy and the monitoring of the policy with the Head teacher through the Teaching and Learning Committee.

The Head teacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are safe, effective, timely and appropriate for all
- Regularly reviewing and promoting this policy
- Ensuring the website is as up-to-date with information as possible as a direct form of communication.
- Parentmail is well used to keep parents up-to-date
- Ensuring other on line programs and Apps are used appropriately and safely
- Ensure that children and their families are communicated with in a safe and appropriate way
- Ensure that parents can still communicate easily with school through the normal channels.
- Ensure parents get quick responses to their concerns and needs in a timely way
- Consulting with staff as appropriate

The Governing Body should not make direct contact with individual members of staff in order to avoid disrupting their focus on their priorities, unless where contact is desirable (linked to a specific governor role) and with the Headteacher's consent. Matters relating to school governance should be sent via the Chair of governors or addressed, when relevant on the agenda, at the next governors meeting.

Dealing with the media

- The Headteacher is responsible for communication with local news agencies, the TES or a national media outlet in liaison with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and the Governing Body. Any member of staff wanting to communicate with either local or national news agencies, or publish articles must discuss this with the Headteacher to ensure all communications are verified by the school before information is out in the public domain. No emergency information should ever be shared by another member of staff.
- All media enquiries must be directed to the Headteacher who will liaise with the Governing Body and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents 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 get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff **will not** be expected to respond to communications from parents outside of school hours: after 5pm Monday to Friday, or during school holidays.

Please also see Christchurch Infant School's Internet acceptable Use Policy on the school's website.

Between staff, you should not expect a response from a non-urgent email sent before 8am or after 8pm unless they have agreed to do so.

When an email is received from the SLT and or line manager and highlighted as 'important', all efforts should be made to respond within 24 hours. Staff not responding to such communication could be subject to disciplinary actions.

Absence: Notify Mrs Simpson as early as possible in accordance with local school procedures **between 6:30am and 7:30am**. Provide an explanation of the absence on the first day of sickness and, where possible, an indication of a likely return date. **The notification should be repeated everyday before 2:30pm**, where employees continue to be absent due to sickness.

Where an employee becomes ill during the working day and has to go home they must inform the Headteacher / Line manager / Deputy Headteacher prior to leaving the school premises. If an employee fails to notify the Headteacher / line manager of their absence without good reason this may lead to disciplinary action and / or loss of sick pay – see Attendance Management Policy.

2.3 Parents, pupils and staff

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 treated in line with our parent code of conduct.

Please also see Home School Agreement

2.4 Communication with pupils

Two-way communication between pupils and staff is an important aspect of school life. The school welcomes and encourages pupils to engage in conversation with members of staff within the school. When staff and pupils are communicating they should:

- Be respectful
- Be thoughtful
- Be polite

Staff are never permitted to use personal email accounts or telephones when communicating with pupils (unless in an agreed emergency or through the Head teacher/Deputy). Staff are never permitted to use video meeting technology such as Zoom, FaceTime or WhatsApp with pupils. See below for crisis situations.

Inclusion

In addition, staff and pupils will try to use gesture, calm language when communicating with children who have additional needs.

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/Parent Mail/Tapestry

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

Staff are expected to check their emails regularly.

Email protocol

- Complete the subject line
- Use Mr / Mrs / Ms as a salutation
- Use Standard English
- Avoid abbreviations
- Sign off with polite phrase such as Thank you or Kind Regards

Correspondence is to remain professional at all times.

We will use Parentmail to inform parents about:

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

Staff will not use text messages to communicate with parents about progress, concerns or queries. They will send an email or telephone the parent as a typical form of communication.

3.2 School calendar

Our school website includes a newsletter which has a full school calendar for the current half term.

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.

3.3 Phone calls

On occasions when a member of staff is required to call parents, this should be done from school telephone lines. Staff to give a member of SLT a summary of the key points of any key conversations, either verbally or via email.

During extreme situations/emergencies such as: Coronavirus social isolation as authorised through the Head teacher

- **Staff may need to call parents regarding specific queries and to undertake safeguarding check calls for parents of vulnerable children.**
- **ALL staff to block caller ID. Using a smart phone go to settings and switch to no caller ID or press 141 before dialling.**
- **Head teacher / Deputy Head teacher/Assistant Head teacher - Whole school Safeguarding concern conversations SEND Register children / PP vulnerable families - as appropriate, with concerns updated on Myconcern**
- **Class teachers – children within their class groups / update progress conversations as appropriate / responding to specific concerns from parents (which have not been resolved by email) - as appropriate. Staff to make a written record of the key points of the telephone conversation in an email to the parent following the conversation and copy in one member of the SLT.**
- **Admin staff - The School telephone number will be diverted to the school mobile phone.**

3.4 Letters

All letters must be approved by the Head teacher or Deputy Head Teacher prior to being sent to parents.

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits

➤ Consent forms

➤ Our newsletter

3.5 Homework

We communicate with parents regarding homework timetables and expectations. We upload the homework information onto the website as well as sending letters home to parents regarding homework tasks and homework expectations. At the start of each academic year we have a meeting with parents where we outline homework expectations.

Home schooling Tasks

Staff will communicate home school learning tasks via the website and letters

Tapestry

Tapestry is the way we publish observations about the children in Reception. Both teacher and parents can publish pictures and comments.

Tapestry is not used as a general communication tool between school and home. A child's learning journal is a document recording their learning and development and parents may add comments on observations or contribute photos, videos or information about activities they have been doing at home. Parents may contact the school through the usual channels for any other day-to-day matters, e.g. absence, lost property, etc.

3.6 The 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
- Information about before and after-school provision
- Inclusion information
- Homework
- Uniform List
- Newsletters
- It is used to promote the school and is updated regularly.
- Each class has a blog, which is updated every 2 weeks with aspects of learning.

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

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, and their attendance.

A report on KS1 SATs tests and Phonics

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

Due to coronavirus in the Summer Term of 2020 we will be sending home a pupil report based on the attainment of the pupils up to the point of closure March 20th 2020.

3.8 Meetings

We hold a parents' evening in the Autumn and Spring Terms. 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.

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

Parents of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Please refer to the list in Appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person at Christchurch Infant School to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the school, for the attention of the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

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 you need a response sooner than this, please call the school.

4.2 Phone calls

If you need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, please message on tapestry/email the year group or school office and the relevant member of staff will contact you within 3 working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will get in touch with you to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure you have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 5 days of your request.

If your issue is urgent, please call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

4.3 Meetings

If you would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, please email the appropriate address (see appendix 1), or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request.

While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day if you need to speak to them urgently, we recommend you book appointments to discuss:

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

4.4 Severe weather and emergency closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and careers via Parentmail email and/ or text. Parents should also tune into local radio, and check the school website

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 the following languages:

- English
- Translations can be sourced using Google Translate <https://translate.google.co.uk/>
- 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

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

5.1 Supporting parents of pupils with SEND

The school **recognizes** the importance of positive relationships with parents of all pupils with additional needs. The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and userfriendly information and procedures. We appreciate the additional pressures that these parents often experience and aim to be mindful of the increased stress that these parents experience on a daily basis. All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents.

5.2 Accessibility

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication. Documents using larger font can be requested. If a translation is required, in the first instance parents should access Google Translate <https://translate.google.co.uk/>. Key school information will be translated into community languages where appropriate and possible and where a translator could be sourced to ensure effective communication.

5.3 Communicating with other schools and outside agencies

Prior to pupils joining the school pupils are visited at their home and in their nursery setting to gain more information about them and to help them and support their transition into school. We recognise that children have diverse needs and where support is required we are supported by various agencies such as: Speech and language therapy team, Occupational Therapy team, SEND Team and the Attendance Team. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and we would contact the Attendance team or use the Childrens Services First Response Hub, if we were concerned about a pupil's right to being protected from harm.

We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass on some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordance with GDPR (for full details see out Data protection policy).

6. Investigating, monitoring and review

6.1 Investigating incidents

When investigating incidents involving pupils, school members will interview all pupils involved and ask them to complete a verbal, written or pictorial account (where the pupil is able to). Where they are not able to an adult will scribe for them. Parents will be informed of critical incidents by the end of the day, where possible, either **in person or by telephone**. If a child is being handed over to a family friend, relative, childminder or wrap around care, it is still very necessary that the class teacher telephones the parent the same day. The school will only share any information that would identify any pupils in accordance with data protection regulations and legislation and our policies (a copy of our data protection policy is available on the policy page of the school website).

When reporting to a parent face-to-face, parents must be spoken to in a private location and not with other parents present.

6.2 Monitoring

The Headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and reports on it to the Governing Body. The Parental Engagement Governor will be responsible for monitoring the use of the policy. The Headteacher will review the policy every 3 years. The policy will be approved by the Governing Body.

7. Staff communication including Staff meetings

- Weekly communication meetings will take place for each team to ensure staff are communicating regularly and stay up to date to support staff. These will be timely, with a clear and concise agenda.
- Staff Meeting is Wednesday for Teachers.
- Information Meetings are on a Thursday (10:30 for Teaching Assistants and support staff including IT and Caretaker roles, 10:45 for SEND Teaching Assistants, 12:30 for teachers) all staff working those days must attend at least one of these. It is essential that at least 1 member of the office staff attends the meeting and feeds back to office colleagues. For staff who are not working those days it is imperative that meeting minutes are read and understood. These are held in the staff room. SLT meetings will be held fortnightly, but on occasions they may change and notice will be given.
- Outside of working hours, staff should not be contacted via telephone call, text message or social media regarding work related matters, unless they have given you their permission to do so. This should only be done via email using your work email address. It is important that colleagues personal time and well-being is respected.

8. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints

Appendix 1: school contact list

Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office on 01202 485851 office@christchurchinf.dorset.sch.uk
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff in the subject line (for emails)
- We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff

Remember: check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

We try to respond to all emails within 3 working days.

Home Schooling Covid-19

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address
- Include your child's full name in the subject line

We try to respond to all emails within 3 working days

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's class teacher / Mrs Darch Inclusion Lead and assistant Head Teacher / Mrs Simpson DeputyHeadteacher/ Mr Baxter Headteacher
Payments	School Office
School trips	Your child's class teacher / School Office
Uniform/lost and found	Your child's class teacher
Attendance and absence requests	<p>If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01202 485851</p> <p>If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact Mr Baxter</p>
Bullying and behaviour	<p>Initially the class teacher</p> <p>Head teacher Mr Baxter or Deputy Headteacher Mrs Simpson</p>
I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
School events/the school calendar	School Office
Special Educational Needs	Mrs Darch (SENDCO)
Pastoral Needs	Mrs Chapman (Pastoral)

Before and after-school clubs	Funtastic- Regine
Hiring the school premises	School Office
The PTFA	Chair of the PTFA
The Governing Body	Chair/s of the Governing Body
Catering/meals	Chartwells/School Office

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our Complaints Policy that is on the school's website.