

Abbey Lane Primary School



Communications Policy

September 2021
M Stafford

School Communications Policy

Introduction

The school recognises that good communication with pupils, their families and the wider community is essential. We love to hear from everyone. Visitors are very welcome.

This policy covers communications in general. You will find details of how the school communicates in relation to specific matters, such as admissions or complaints, in the policies which cover these topics. All of the school's policies, including this one, are available on the school website. Hard copies can be requested from the school office. Communication is a two-way process, so this policy aims to cover not just what the school wants to say but also what it needs to hear.

Communications from the school

The school aims to make sure that all communications are timely, useful and respectful.

Timely communications are issued neither too early nor too late to be useful. The school aims to give families sufficient warning of activities that need some preparation, changes to the normal school timetable and any matters that relate to school business that require a response e.g. School trips, home learning, whole school activities, changes to previously stated arrangements, changes to school procedures.

It is understood that, at times, some communications will have to be done at short notice. School closures due to bad weather are an example of this. In the event of this, the school will aim to communicate using several forums to ensure parents receive the information as quickly as possible.

The school aims to respond in a timely manner to all enquiries. In general, you should expect the following response times:

Phone Calls: as soon as possible, normally within 1 school working day.

Emails: as soon as possible, normally within 2 school working days, unless school is closed for holidays. You will receive an automated "out of office" reply.

Written letter: acknowledge receipt as soon as possible, normally within 3 school working days.

Useful communications contain all the information that is required, expressed in a clear way. Jargon will be avoided. Acronyms and unfamiliar terms will always be explained. If the communication requires pupils or parents to do anything, this will be made clear e.g. permission forms for activities, sign-ups for events, communications about pupil progress and achievement.

Respectful communications take into account that family life is busy, and that children's best interests are always best served if everyone communicates well with each other. The school will always aim to communicate openly, honestly and in a friendly way. This is particularly important in cases where communication might relate to difficult situations or areas of disagreement between the school and other parties e.g. behaviour, unpaid debts, changes to school activities or policies.

Because family life is busy, the school will make every attempt to communicate the same information in multiple ways, so that it is always easy for families to have access to important information. The school aims to keep paper communication to a minimum. Families are encouraged to be proactive and make themselves aware of

the various ways that they can receive information from the school e.g. the website, email, newsletters, playground noticeboards.

Permission forms will normally sent home electronically. Duplicates can be requested from the school office. Printed forms can be printed by the school on request

From time to time, the school will seek to communicate with the wider community around it. This may be in order to publicise school events, to share achievements by the school and its pupils, or something similar. If these communications involve specific pupils and be in line with the school's use of photographs permissions which parents are asked to complete when children first start school.

Examples: newspaper articles, press releases, brochures, marketing emails, social media.

Where the school has received communication from an outside organisation, such as a journalist calling on behalf of a newspaper, website or broadcaster, the school office will field the initial contact, and it will be then be referred to the headteacher or a designated member of the leadership team. The school will ask for all media enquiries to be submitted via email. Replies will be given in the shortest possible time but should not be expected immediately.

Communications to the school

The school welcomes communications from pupils, their families and the wider community. Our commitment is that we will always aim to communicate in a timely, useful and respectful way. We ask that when communicating with the school you adhere to the same broad principles and start from the perspective that the school has your child's best interests at heart.

The school receives many different communications each day. With this in mind, the school will always try to respond to you as soon as possible, as this is usually the quickest route to a resolution. We would ask for your patience if staff are not always as quick as you would like. This is usually to do with their teaching commitment during the day and after-school meetings and commitments.

In the first instance, it is always preferable to start by talking to your child's class teacher, especially if the matter relates to class activities or your child's wellbeing or the academic side of school.

Reporting Absence: The most common reason for contacting the school is to report an absence. This should always be done by calling the main school number 0114 2745054 and following the instructions on the automated message you can hear. This should be done before 08.00, every day that your child is absent. Other requests for absence, should be made in advance and through completion of the leave of absence request form which is available on request.

General enquiries, including enquiries from the media are best addressed to the school office. The office is staffed from 8:00am until 4:00pm Monday-Friday. The enquiries@abbeylane.sheffield.sch.uk address is the best one to use in the first instance.

Telephone calls are also welcome, especially to notify the school of any changes to collection arrangements however we do ask for as much notice as possible to ensure we have time to relay the message.

As the school offers many ways for you to contact us, contacting staff using personal emails, phone numbers, or other non-school means, is strongly discouraged.

Any complaint against the school will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution. Full details of our complaints procedure are available on our website.

Complaints about services provided by contractors or suppliers engaged by the school or who use the school's facilities should be addressed directly to those contractors and suppliers. Their details can be obtained from the school office.

Social Media

In many ways, conversations on social media have replaced the face to face conversations that happen in the playground and before and after school. Recognising that children's best interests are served when there is a strong bond between the home and the school - and given the multiple ways we offer to communicate with us – we kindly request that parents, families and others refrain from using social media to criticise the school. Social media should never be used to criticise individual members of staff. The school's ability to deal with complaints in a timely and effective manner are significantly undermined when they are brought into the public eye on social media. The school reserves the right to request that inappropriate comments relating to individual members of staff are removed without delay.

As we are a primary school, none of our pupils are legally old enough to have a social media account of their own. We strongly discourage parents from granting access to these platforms, sites and apps until children are at the legal age. Please check the restrictions for each provider, as these may change from time to time.

We accept that some older children will have a mobile phone of their own. Y6 children are permitted to bring these phones to school, as they are useful for parents to keep in touch at the beginning and the end of the day. Our policy of asking pupils to switch off their phones and hand them in to the class teacher for the duration of the school day works very well, and we will continue with this for the foreseeable future.

If you need to contact your child for any reason during the school day, please get in touch with the school office on email or on the phone. A message can be passed to them easily and reliably using this method.

The School Website

Our website is the main way for pupils, their families and the wider community to get information about the school. The majority of the information you will need, and all of the statutory information the school is required to show, is easily accessible here, including important contact details, school policies and the calendar.

The school makes every effort to maintain the website on a regular basis. If you spot any errors or omissions, please report them to the school office via email.