

Parent Communication Policy

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1. Aims

Communication is a fundamental aspect of school life and we recognise the role it plays in creating a positive, purposeful environment. The Oakwood Academy is a community of over 750 students, 1,500 parents/carers, 100 staff and governors, and over 50 external agencies. We all have a collective responsibility to communicate in a manner that is respectful, thoughtful and kind. This policy provides guidance to ensure we all communicate effectively with one another. In summary, the policy aims:

- ✦ To maintain effective, proactive communication systems
- ✦ To develop positive working relationships across all stakeholders
- ✦ To support the development of the child.

2. Objectives

All communications with school should:

- ✦ Keep staff, students, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- ✦ Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- ✦ Use jargon-free English and be easily understood by all
- ✦ Be conducted in a timely manner
- ✦ Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience

3. Background and context

This policy aims to promote the essential partnership between the school, parents, staff, students and the wider community through efficient and effective communication. Good communication should allow and encourage all stakeholders to participate in the development of the school and support our overarching aims and goals.

We believe that engaging and working with all stakeholders, particularly our parents, is vital in our role to provide children with an excellent education and a safe learning environment, as well as helping our students become well rounded citizens with a strong set of values. We believe that effective communications underpin our 5 school aims. We remain committed to being an open and approachable school that engages with our community and puts children at the heart of our decision making. As a school,

we also greatly value your support in enabling us to do this in an effective, timely and sustainable manner.

We are very fortunate to have the high levels of engagement and positive interaction from our parent body. However, this level of engagement presents its own challenges. For example, on a typical day we send and receive thousands of emails and make hundreds of phone calls.

This Parent Communication Policy has 3 key features:

- ✦ Communication Statement
- ✦ 'Communication Guide' ✦ 'What do I do if...' guide (See Appendix 2)

4. Communication Statement

We strive to be an open and approachable school that is committed to engaging with all stakeholders. We would like to thank the overwhelming majority of visitors and parents who are consistently pleasant and polite in all their communications with the school. However, it is important to note that we have a duty of care to our staff as well as to our students and we remain wholeheartedly committed to both.

All staff at the school are expected to show respect for everyone that they come into contact with during the course of their duties, by being polite and courteous at all times. They will endeavour to deal effectively with any reasonable request they receive from visitors and callers to the school. The school also expects all those who visit or contact our school to treat our staff respectfully and courteously at all times. The same level of courtesy is expected with email communication. We strongly encourage all those who may wish to communicate with our school to do so in a manner that does not discriminate against any member of our diverse community and consistently adheres to our Communications Policy. In particular, any correspondence should have due regard of the 'Communication Guidance' (Section 6) and the 'What do I do if I have a concern - the 5-step approach' (Appendix 2).

We take any aggressive behaviour or threatening language towards any member of our staff seriously, whether this is during a telephone conversation, email or during a visit to the school. If a caller or visitor's behaviour is deemed discriminatory, rude, abusive or aggressive, they will be advised to stop their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, we will terminate the call or ask the visitor to leave the premises.

Parents and visitors should be aware that a request for an appointment must be made in advance if they wish to see a particular member of staff. We greatly value the support of parents and the wider school community and thank you for adhering to this notice.

5. Communication Guidance for Parents

- I. **Consider which communication method is best for the situation** – some conversations are best face to face, whilst others, given their nature, may be quickly resolved over the phone or via the 'Contact Us' form on our website or via a direct email.
- II. **Our office hours are 08.00-16.30** - staff are not expected to be available in the evenings or at weekends.
- III. **We will respond within 2 working days** - we want our communication to be timely as this is in the best interest of our students and we will endeavour to respond to all appropriate communications. The greatest challenge we face is the high volume of communications. We will prioritise communications based on need but must stress that we cannot operate as an emergency service. There may be times that we are able to respond sooner than this; however, there may also be times when school is exceptionally busy, when this timescale is not achievable.
- IV. **Appointments with staff must be booked in advance** - this is to avoid disappointment. Many of our staff will be teaching or in meetings during the course of a school day. Anyone arriving to reception unannounced will be advised to request a meeting, unless the matter is deemed an emergency.
- V. **All communication should be respectful**

A summary infographic of this guidance can be found in Appendix 2

6. Contacting school

Staff want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so. However, the majority of teachers' time is taken up teaching and preparing for lessons. Teachers' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, and they may be unable to respond to you on the day a query is made. We have also agreed with staff that there is no expectation to respond to queries outside of their working hours.

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them. In the first instance, please approach the following members of staff who are responsible for your child in the following order:

- ✦ **Form Tutor or Head of House** - if query is of a more general nature
- ✦ **Classroom Teacher or Curriculum Leader** - if query is relevant to a specific subject

Contact Us form – this form can be found in the Contact Us section on the school website. Filling out this simple form will ensure your query is directed to the right person and help this to be dealt with promptly.

Email - emails can be a useful way of communicating quickly between parents and school. However, as well as having many advantages, this ease of access has also increased the demands made of staff. As a school, our first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning. Staff cannot and are not expected to monitor and manage their inbox during lessons or at other times in the day, when they should be planning and preparing for lessons, assessing student work or carrying out school duties. To help manage the expectations of all, the following points are provided as guidance:

- ✦ We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within 48 hours.
- ✦ Part-time staff may take longer to reply.

Telephone - please use the main reception number to leave a message for a teacher to contact you. Reception staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible. Lessons can never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

School will aim to respond to you within 48 hours. If a call is urgent, please inform the receptionist who will contact your child's Head of House or a senior member of staff to speak to you as soon as possible.

Meetings - these should always be pre-arranged with members of staff. If you urgently need to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone ahead and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see you. For non-urgent meetings, we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

Communication by letter brought in by the child - letters to teachers/form tutors can be an easy way to get a message to a teacher promptly and can be used as everyday communication. The student is responsible for showing the letter to the correct teacher.

See Appendix 1 for summary contact information.

7. Contacting Parents

We recognise the importance of keeping you informed about your child's experience at The Oakwood Academy and how they are progressing. We have timely information sent out to all parents on an annual and more ad-hoc basis. This includes:

Annual contact:

- ✦ Written academic reports
- ✦ Tutor Review meetings
- ✦ Parents' evening
- ✦ Bespoke events depending on year group (e.g. Y7 Meet the Tutor evening, Y9 Options Evening or Y11 Revision Evening)

Other forms of contact:

- ✦ Written Letters and Class Charts announcements
- ✦ School Newsletters
- ✦ Social Media communication

ClassCharts - our preferred method of contacting you is via Class Charts. This allows us to communicate with parents quickly and cost effectively. We are able to send announcements to students or parents on an individual basis, to specific groups or classes or a whole cohort. Parents (and students) can also use the system to view their child's timetable and access their child's behaviour logs/reports.

Telephone calls - will be made by school to parents where immediate contact with a family member is required, e.g. when a student injury of significance has occurred. A staff member 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. In the event that no contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answerphone message or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible.

Other useful places to find out important information

The **School website** holds a wealth of information about the school. On the website, parents can find forthcoming dates, curriculum information, assessment information and other details about school life. Any emergency information will be announced on the school website

Social media - we use our social media channels to share what has been happening in school. Through these channels you can find information and celebrations in respect of student achievements, subject information and generic educational information. You can find these by searching: Twitter (X) handle @TOA_Notts. Note we will not routinely respond to comments or questions posted on any of our social media platforms. Please be respectful at all times when using social media.

No Response - if you have not received a response from the school within two working days, please contact the school by emailing admin@oakwoodacademy.org.uk or by completing the online 'Contact Us Form' and we will chase up your enquiry. If you are unsatisfied with a response, please highlight the email FAO The Senior Leadership Team. Communication with parents is important to us, and we will continue to work with parents to monitor this and our approach to improve the process further.

Appendix 1 – Who Should I Contact?

Why you need to contact school	Who you need to talk to/contact information	Contact details
Safeguarding – for an urgent safeguarding matter. Where school is closed, or a parent cannot make contact, Starting Point is the children's referral service and can be contacted directly by parents and members of the public if they feel a child is at risk.	Mrs L Watson- Designated Safeguarding Lead Nottingham MultiAgency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Email - TOAsafeguarding@oakwoodacademy.org.uk Tel: 0300 500 80 90 www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/childrens-social-care/nottinghamshire-childrenand-families-alliance/pathway-toprovision/multi-agency-safeguarding-hubmash
Special Educational Needs	Mrs L Holt - SENDCo	Email - TOA-SEND@oakwoodacademy.org.uk
Attendance and absence	Attendance Officer	Email - TOA-attendance@oakwoodacademy.org.uk Website information - https://www.oakwoodacademy.org.uk/page/?title=Attendance&pid=85
Admissions	Head's PA	Email - TOA-admissions@oakwoodacademy.org.uk Website information https://www.oakwoodacademy.org.uk/page/?title=Admissions&pid=31
For all other enquires (eg careers, uniform, pastoral matters, curriculum matters, ICT including class charts and Parent Pay please complete the contact us form - https://www.oakwoodacademy.org.uk/form/?pid=89&form=17		