



Thythorn Field
Primary School

Communications Policy

Adopted By School: June 2024

Review Date: June 2027

Governor Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. J. Ryan'.

1. Purpose

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

2. Rationale

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications impact on the school's reputation and effectiveness. Parents and carers, governors and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school's values and reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose, reflecting our values and ethos. Effective communications impact positively on safeguarding young people, supporting good wellbeing and progress for the college community, and building leadership and character together.

3. Principles

3.1 Thythorn Field Primary School uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient.

3.2 Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

3.3 Staff will always seek to establish positive relationships with parents and carers but they will ensure relationships are professional and parents will be addressed in a formal manner. Staff are to avoid developing close relationships with parents and carers. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr., Mrs., Miss., Ms., Dr. etc.

4. Introduction

Thythorn Field Primary School recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents and carers, staff, the local and wider community, outside agencies, etc.), and are committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and pupils and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective two-way communication between home and school. Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child's education. The school will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to creating a shared view of their child's needs.

5. Aims of the Policy

5.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders and that there are robust processes to facilitate this.

5.2 The school recognises that engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our wish is to involve as many parents and carers in their child's education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

- To make the school as welcoming, safe and inclusive as possible, so that all children and young people can succeed.
- All written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly and parents and carers can expect an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- A variety of forms of communication with parents and carers for example, telephone contact, e-mail, post, text, website.
- Parents and carers are contacted to celebrate achievement, to share information around progress and wellbeing, and to discuss issues requiring resolution or investigation.
- Information is given to parents and carers on what pupils will be taught and how they are progressing against their targets and expectations
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective.

Urgent and emergency communication:

If information is urgent or there is an emergency, please contact the school office by phone. In cases where parents and carers have urgent or emergency information that needs to be responded to, and in which the school also deems as important, then the school will contact parents and carers that same day. Examples include:

- Family crisis such as an accident or bereavement
- Alternative arrangements for a pupil's end of day collection due to unforeseen circumstances
 - car breakdown etc
- Safeguarding reports and concerns about a pupil's welfare and safety.

6. Communication with parents and carers

6.1 Correspondence

- Staff will always reply to a letter/email from parents and carers as quickly as possible. A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter/email will be made by telephone, letter or email within 2 working days, within the hours of 9-5pm, normally with a full response in place in five working days, unless the query or issue is complex or falls under GDPR regulations. Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy (copy available on the school website). Any data protection issues or requests should be dealt with in accordance with the school's data protection policy (copy available on the school website).
- Whole school information is included in a regular newsletter and published on the school website. An electronic copy of this is sent to all parents and carers via the school's email service.

Hard copies of the newsletter are available from the school office.

Parents and carers must provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication. Parents and carers should ensure telephone numbers are up to date for texts/calls.

6.2 E-mail

E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating necessary information and is the school's preferred method of communication. Emails received will be treated in the same way as letters: acknowledged within 2 working days and normally responded to within 5 working days, unless complex or falling under the GDPR or complaints policies. Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter.

Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter.

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address.

Emails sent after 5pm will be responded to as point 6.1.

6.3 Telephone Calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call. In a non-emergency a return call will be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem normally being dealt with within 5 working days. Information will be recorded and passed on appropriately.

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own mobile phones

6.4 Texts

Texts are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from members of staff and staff should not respond by text to a text message received from a parent/carer but should respond using an alternative means of communication such as email or telephone if appropriate.

7. Absence

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school by 9am on the morning of the absence by calling the school office, sending a text message or alternatively emailing the office.

8. Meeting with Parents and carers

8.1 Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. This request should be responded to within 2 working days

8.2 Parents and carers should report to the school reception. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them.

8.3 Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of the parents or carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

9. School Social Networking Apps or Pages

9.1 Information may be shared and achievements celebrated on social networking apps or pages by the school, but these enhance normal communication channels instead of being part of them. These are not a communication channel to share key messages or an opportunity for two-way communication, and any comments/posts on these will not normally be responded to by the school.

10. Reports and Progress

10.1 Parents and carers receive a full academic report once a year and snapshot reports each term.

10.2 In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to speak to their child's teachers twice a year at parents evening. Parents and carers are also encouraged to attend a separate EHCP review meeting if their child has an EHCP. Parents and carers should contact the school if issues arise about their child's progress or wellbeing. The first point of contact should be the child's class teacher.

10.3 There is a separate SEND parents' evening to renew support plans.

11. Accessibility

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

12. School Website

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including for example information about curriculum, inclusion, safeguarding, pupil premium, uniform, and term dates. The school website is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

13. Remote Learning

In the event of full or partial school closures, learning will be delivered remotely. Please refer to the school's remote learning policy on the website.

14. Communication between staff

Staff should use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils.

Email

- consider whether an email is appropriate when face to face communication may be more conducive
- avoid exclusive email correspondence without requesting or organising a face to face meeting
- avoid send or reply to all unless necessary
- keep emails concise, use Standard English and bullet points if necessary
- Staff to check emails daily
- Use group emails as appropriate
- Address Parents and Carers using their own formal name e.g. Mrs Smith
- Staff and Parents should be mindful that the school respects a work life balance for its employees and there are no expectations for staff to respond to emails outside of school hours.

Meetings with parents and carers

- Staff that arrange meetings should:
 - Chair the meeting and make the outcomes clear
 - Ensure that those present have their views listened to
 - Agree actions moving forwards
 - Summarise the meeting for clarity
 - Ensure that notes of the meeting are taken for school records and shared appropriately

Staff Meetings

Meetings where actions arise must be minuted with the following information:

- Date and time of the meeting
- Attendees, Actions agreed and persons responsible for them
- Completion date for actions
- Minutes are circulated to all relevant parties within 1-week

15. Reasonable and positive communications between staff, parents and carers

- Staff, parents and carers will ensure that all communications are polite and respectful.
- Staff, parents and carers will outline the subject of communication clearly to make sure that queries are directed to the right person.
- Staff, parents and carers will refrain from sending multiple repetitive emails regarding the same query while it is being addressed.

- Staff, parents and carers will limit the number of people copied into an email so that it is clear who the email is for and who needs to take appropriate action.
- If there is an in-person meeting or remote live meeting, everyone must show mutual respect and the meeting should focus on resolving the relevant issues to benefit the pupil concerned.
- No offensive language, insults or personal attacks will be tolerated. If any such incidents occur, the meeting or call can be terminated with immediate effect.
- A staff member, parent, carer or pupil may only record a meeting or conversation with the express permission of all parties to that call or meeting.
- The constraints on school resources make it essential that parents and carers use authorised school procedures in order to avoid diverting time and attention that must be invested directly in pupils' learning and wellbeing.
- Please note that unreasonable, abusive or offensive communication is unacceptable, and the school reserves the right to address any such problems as they feel are appropriate. This can include restricting correspondence to a specified email address, using a single person as a point of contact or using hard copy post and/or by placing restrictions on phone calls. Parents and carers have an implied licence to enter a school site; in cases where behaviour is inappropriate, threatening or argumentative, this licence can be revoked.
- If a response has been given to a query, unless matters change, further responses will not be sent.
- Our aim is to ensure that all communications and discussions about pupils and their families are positive and move matters forward in a mutually respectful manner.

16. Dealing with the media

All media enquiries must be directed to the Headteacher. No other staff should respond to any media contact or questions.

17. Social Media – staff

It is not permitted for any staff member to share any school information on social media platforms as this could potentially bring the school's name and image into disrepute and/or impact adversely on pupils and their families. This includes but is not limited to:

- Assume that everything can be traced back to them personally as well as to the school, their colleagues, pupils and parents;
- Avoid any conflict of interest and ensure that personal social networking sites are set to private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts. An exception to this may be if the child is the employee's own child, relative, or family friend;
- Potentially false, derogatory, offensive or defamatory remarks (direct or indirect) regarding the school, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, the school suppliers and/or partner organisations must not be posted on social media site;
- Employees must not represent their own views/opinions as being those of the school;
- Pupils must not be discussed on social media sites;
- Information must not be posted that would disclose the identity of pupils or could in any way be linked to a pupil. This includes photographs or videos of pupils or their homes;
- Employees must not divulge any information that is confidential to the school or a partner organisation;

- Employees must not post information on sites including photographs and videos that could bring the school or themselves into disrepute;
- When posting on social media sites employees must observe the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and must not use any offensive, obscene, derogatory, discriminatory language which may also cause embarrassment to the school, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, Council suppliers and partner organisations;
- Employees must never impersonate another person;
- Employees must not upload, forward or post a link which is likely to: create any liability for the school (whether criminal or civil), breach copyright law or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person;
- Employees must not engage or communicate with students or parents regarding any school matters via their own personal social media accounts. Only the use of school accounts is permitted for this, and only where there is good reason for doing so;
- Employees must not post content that may breach professional standards or the standard reasonably expected of an employee.

17. Social Media – parents, carers and pupils

Social media is not a communication channel with the school – parents, carers and pupils should raise any concerns or questions directly with the school so that they can be responded to. Pupils, parents and carers should follow acceptable community standards within social media including refraining from abusive comments or unkind behaviour towards pupils, parents, carers or staff.

18. Severe weather and emergency closure

In the event of emergency closure, communication will be made to parents and carers via text message and email. Parents and carers should also check the school website and social media channels where these exist.