



Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation

Parental Communication Policy (includes communication with pupils)

1. Policy aims

1.1 Effective relationships between the Foundation, its pupils, the parents, alumni, and the staff are critical to the Foundation's success; these relationships are founded on clear, accurate, and timely communication. This policy seeks to ensure that all external communication is clear, consistent, positive, and aligned to other policies. The policy will ensure that staff understand the importance of external communication and the public perception of the Foundation. The policy is essential to underpin the achievement of the Foundation's strategic objectives.

2. Policy statements

2.1 This policy relates to external communication regardless of the media and the audience. It covers verbal, written, electronic, pictorial and video communications

2.2 Communications can and will take a variety of forms: verbal, through face-to-face meetings or by telephone; written, through letters, notes in planners, iSAMS, or messages and posts to pupils in Teams; occasionally, a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary. Nevertheless, in the Foundation's communication, the aim is to provide clear information that is consistent with the Foundation's values and which represents the Foundation to the highest standard.

2.3 Timely communication is essential to maintaining the positive relationships the Foundation has with parents; parents understand that telephone calls during the day may not always be practical; nevertheless, alternatives do exist, and it is crucial that staff respond in an appropriately punctual way.

2.4 As a Foundation, we have a duty to ensure that not only is the information we provide clear and accurate, but that all our communications with external parties reflect the high educational standards we aim to deliver as well as the values we hold. Considering this, checks and filters are put in place to ensure that all communication is consistent in terms of register, tone, as well as grammatical accuracy.

2.5 The Foundation commits in this policy to observing the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate on any grounds.

3. Response Times

3.1 As far as is practical, the Foundation aims to acknowledge and respond to all communication in a timely fashion; where it is not practical, however, to provide a full response, a holding reply will be sent within 24 hours.

3.2 A full and detailed reply, either by e-mail, letter, or in person may take longer, but parents will be informed that their request is being managed.

3.3 Unless communication is urgent, and a response is needed to safeguard the welfare of a child, there is no expectation for staff to respond to communications between 18.30 and 07.30, or over a weekend. Any communication received by staff within this period may be dealt with during the next working day or at the earliest convenience, but within three working days.

3.4 There is no expectation for staff to respond to communication received at a weekend which may be answered in the following working week.

3.5 Any communication received outside term time does not fall within the above response times. Teaching staff will have no obligation to respond to communications received outside of term time. Urgent communications outside term time should be sent to Reception/ Administrative staff to deal with.

3.6 Where communication relates to a complaint, separate response times apply as dictated by the Complaints' Policy.

4. Methods of Communication – Parents

All communication with parents is formal; as such, an appropriately formal means of communication must be used: staff may choose from a personal meeting, telephone conversation, prep diary, e-mail, or letter.

4.1 Personal Meetings

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way of communicating over potentially complicated topics; as far as is possible, meetings will be organised in consultation and at mutually convenient times. In advance of any meeting, it may be helpful for the Foundation to be aware of any specific requests for information or questions, and parents are politely asked to communicate these in advance. Meetings may be arranged via the relevant Housemaster/-mistress, the pupil's tutor, or other relevant member of staff.

4.2 Telephone calls

Telephone calls remain preferable to e-mail for anything other than the communication of information; where any communication looks to open discussion, the preferred method is either a telephone conversation or personal meeting. Meetings will be arranged at the earliest, mutually convenient opportunity.

4.2.1 Prep Diary

The prep diary should only be used for communicating brief points of information. Similarly, Teams may also be used to communicate details of prep when such information is clear and readily understandable.

4.2.2 E-mail

Electronic communication has quickly become the normal way of communicating with staff, parents and, increasingly, with pupils outside normal Foundation hours. It is useful for communicating key information; where discussion is required, a personal or telephone meeting is preferred.

4.2.3 Letters

The Foundation continues to use letters for formal communication, but these are increasingly sent out via iSAMS. As such, parents are asked to keep the Foundation up-to-date with changes to postal and e-mail addresses as well as telephone numbers; this may be done via the iSAMS Parent Portal.

4.2.4 Social Networking

Social media is an ideal way to share generic Foundation or Departmental news but is not used to communicate with parents and pupils.

4.2.5 Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a tool for communication between pupils and staff at DCSF. Teams is not intended to be, nor should it be used as, a way for parents to relay or receive information from DCSF. Instead, the methods above should be used.

5. Methods of Communication – Pupils

5.1 Personal Meetings

Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way of communicating with pupils.

5.2 Prep Diary

Given both the restrictions on space and the potential unreliability of carriage, the prep diary should only be used for communicating brief points of information.

5.3 Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams will be used to communicate details of prep (in Assignments), but such information needs to be clear and readily understandable. Resources and links can be attached. Discussion about work or related topics can take place via Teams Chat or posts in class Teams. This is particularly useful out of hours, but pupils should be aware and understand that staff are under no obligation to answer after 18.30 although they may choose to do so.

The register and tone should be as formal as possible when using Teams; in the same good manners and courtesy would be expected in a face-to-face meeting, so it should be expected in a Teams Chat message.

5.4 Email

5.5 Letters

5.6 Social Networking

These sections should be taken as identical to the paragraphs under Communication with parents.

6. Severe Weather and Emergency Closure

In the event of severe weather, the Foundation may need to be closed at short notice; the procedure for this is set out in the Adverse Weather Policy; pupils, parents, and staff will be notified of any such changes via the Foundation website and iSAMS communications.

If the Foundation needs to close for any other reason, such as a pandemic, then all pupils, parents and staff will be notified via email, iSAMS and/or SMS message.

7. Responsibilities

The Principal is responsible for monitoring this policy and will provide reports and recommendations to the SMT and Governors as appropriate.

8. Links to other policies and documents

This policy has no specific links to other policies or documents.

9. Oversight

Oversight of the Parental Communications Policy is undertaken by the Audit Committee. The policy will be reviewed by the Principal annually.

Policy last reviewed by
Mr K McLaughlin, Principal
23 November 2022
November 2023
9 October 2024
Dr M Alderson, Principal
14 January 2026