

# Jennett's Park CE Primary

## Communication Policy



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## Communication Policy from Jennett's Park CE Primary

### Aim

We promise as a staff and community to try to serve the common good with our work as part of the Church of England.

<b>Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills</b>	To help grow resourceful , resilient and reflective children who are equipped with the skills , knowledge and tenacity empower themselves, their learning throughout their lives.
<b>Educating for Hope and Aspiration</b>	To inspire and enrich lives beyond current opportunities and experiences in order to open minds to the potential their future holds
<b>Educating for Community and Living Well Together</b>	To be a multi-cultural, inclusive community of individuals loved by God who feel valued and involved where we create qualities of character to enable people to flourish.
<b>Educating for Dignity and Respect</b>	That children might know how much that they are loved and valued by so that they might show dignity and respect for themselves and others by carefully and safely thinking through their actions.

At Jennett's Park CE Primary School we aim to have clear, effective, high quality communication among staff and with students, parents, governors and members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

### Objectives:

All communications at Jennett's Park CE Primary 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 actioned within a reasonable time
- respect the dignity of the recipient.
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience
- Take account of relevant school policies e.g. Confidentiality, Safeguarding, Equalities
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The following outlines the school policy with regard to communication between home and school.

All emails sent to [secretary@jennetts.bonitas.org.uk](mailto:secretary@jennetts.bonitas.org.uk) who will direct to the most appropriate person.

**At JPCE we communicate outwardly to our community in these ways**

- Website
- Weekly newsletter
- Marvellous Me
- Tapestry
- Seesaw
- Yeargroup curriculum letters x every half term
- End of year expectations
- Printed reports for Autumn and Spring settling in & End of year reports
- FAQ sections on website
- Sways/ video blogs and photo reels
- For those with SEND Individual Education plans and additional meetings
- Team around the Family meetings for those in need of bespoke care & support
- Parent workshops
- Reminders on doors / Parents welcome boards



**Parents can communicate to us by**

- Letters to school
- Emails to secretary@ or familysupport@ addresses
- Responding to questionnaires and surveys
- Attending the two parent teacher meeting and end of year school open evening each year
- Responding to two progress and effort reports, one full report
- EYFS and Year 1 can like and comment on Tapestry
- Hi 5 from Marvellous Me year 2 and above

- Year 2 and above can comment as if the child when submitting pieces
- Joining in parent forum meetings

## **Principles**

Our priority is to teach children. The correct route of concerns is to speak to class teachers (you may book this via the office if the start or end of day is not long enough). If class teachers are unable to resolve issues with you after a few meetings then please make an appointment with your Phase leaders, then SENDCO's/ Acting Deputies or the Family Support Worker. Parents who come to office demanding an immediate appointment may not be accommodated. This would be the same in any school or indeed doctors, lawyers or dental surgeries.

1. Within 48 hours - receipt of an email/ letter will be acknowledged (during term time but not necessarily over a weekend).
2. Within 5 working days - provide a response to the email by telephone or in writing (including an email). This may include informing the sender that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case staff should indicate a timeframe in which a response should be expected.
3. If a member of staff is not able to deal with the email directly then they will pass it on to the most appropriate person and inform the sender that they have done so.
4. Staff will not be expected to monitor or respond to emails out of their normal working hours (including weekends and published school holidays). Whilst parents may compose emails at all sorts of hours to suit their own needs I would ask that emails are not normally sent outside of a member of staff's normal working hours. Mobile phones and other electronic devices that enable staff to access their school emails when away from school can make it difficult to 'ignore' a message from a parent, leading to unnecessary worry and anxiety on the part of the staff.
5. Whilst this is rare, if a member of staff receives an email which is of an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassing, they will refer this to a senior line manager in the school, who will decide if consideration needs to be given to dealing with further communication under the schools 'Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy'.

## **Types of communication**

### **Our website**

To ease communication we will be revamping this over the next year. We have taken the decision to reduce the amount of attachments so that visitors to the site can be monitored.

<https://www.jennettpark.bracknell-forest.sch.uk/>

### **Newsletters & year group letters**

Weekly newsletters are emailed out to parents sharing whole school events, dates, celebrations and requests. They are added as links to sQuid emails so that the number of people reading can be monitored.

Yeargroup newsletters and end of year expectations are shared on the Website.

## **Meet the teacher sessions & workshops**

We offer bespoke sessions throughout the year in terms of workshops. 2018-19 the school ran over 40 different workshops from maths, early English, esafety, behaviour and safeguarding. Last year even prior to covid we ran 25. Dates are published in the newsletter

## **Letters**

Letters are written formally in some circumstances for example to inform parents of serious behaviour or notes of agreed meetings. Staff will endeavour to reply to parents' letters as quickly as possible see above for timeline. Letters must be approved by a member of SLT before posting. Copies of correspondence with parents will be placed on student files.

## **E-mail**

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. See above for timeline All e-mail should be treated as letters and should be checked carefully. E-mail sent should be written carefully, in the same way as a letter written on school headed paper.

Emails sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays will probably elicit no reply until term-time Under no circumstances should staff contact students, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses.

## **Telephone Calls**

This is a highly effective method of communication but does limit the ability to fully read the reactions of the other person. Staff should take notes about the content of telephone calls, as they would with meetings with parents. Detailed notes from telephone calls, including main points of discussion and action required/taken should be kept on student files.

## **Meetings with parents**

Any parent wishing to meet with a member of staff should contact the school in advance and request a meeting with the member of staff. This request should be responded to within the usual communications protocols and in a timely manner. Parents should not come to the school to talk to a member of staff without an appointment. If a parent comes to the school without a prior appointment, the member of staff may still choose to meet with them, but there is no expectation to do so.

Parents (like all visitors) should report to Reception prior to meeting with a member of staff. If the meeting is due to take place outside office hours, separate arrangements can be made. A member of staff may ask for their line manager to accompany them. If a meeting with a parent is taking place outside normal school hours, the member of staff should try, where possible, to ensure that another colleague is nearby. It is perfectly acceptable to call a meeting to a close in order to allow time for further investigation. Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of the parent becoming angry or abusive. Incident reports will be passed to the Headteacher. The member of staff should report such an incident to their line manager and seek further advice. The line manager should either accompany the member of staff to a further meeting with the parent or hold it without the original member of staff present.

## **Online meetings**

Whether run in a group fashion or 1:1 online meetings have the potential to be truly beneficial to speed ease of communication. Expectations are the same as face to face. Parents should familiarise

themselves with the technology offered – mainly Teams and Zoom. Whilst the school can offer some advice they cannot spend inordinate amounts of time facilitating this with parents. We recognise this may be frustrating as we all settle to new ways of working.

### **SQuid /Marvellous Me / Tapestry and Seesaw**

All of the above named methods are recent additions to aid communication. Whilst we aim to be jargon free our provider(s) have chosen otherwise! Below is a brief summary of what each one does

Name	Purpose	Yeargroup	Expected frequency
<b>SQuid</b>	Sending out weekly newsletter links Communicating emails to parents directly for individual issues Paying monies	All	One newsletter per week, rest bespoke
<b>Marvellous Me</b>	To outwardly share praise to parents telling them about their children's learning and success.	Year 2 and above	2 or more items per week
<b>Tapestry</b>	Tapestry builds a very special record of a child's experiences, development and learning journey through their early years and primary education.	EYFS and Year 1	2 or more items per week
<b>Seesaw</b>	Seesaw creates a powerful learning loop between students, teachers, and families - Students use built-in annotation tools to capture what they know in Seesaw's digital portfolio Teachers deeply understand student thinking and progress — enabling them to teach better	Year 2 and above	Weekly homework and used for online learning

### **Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc**

Staff will not communicate with parents or students via social networking sites or accept them as their “friends”. The exception is networks or blogs set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning.

## **The reason for implementing this policy**

In recent years, communications between home and school have shifted quite dramatically from pen and paper to email; with email becoming the preferred and predominant mode of communication. During COVID we have had to significantly reduce the amount of time meeting people face to face. This is to reduce the chance of spreading the virus. Normally we have an open door policy and parents can linger to unpick shorter issues with teachers.

Email provides us with a quick, cheap and easy means of communication. As a result it is used for such a wide range of communications, it has also become increasingly difficult to distinguish between formal and informal communications. The ease of communication via email has many advantages but these are proving to have ever diminishing returns, as the expectation for almost instantaneous reply, in a well-informed, considered and timely manner appears to be on the increase, with complaints following when this has not been the case.

As a school our first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning. The ability and ease of email communication directly with your child's teacher is a privilege. Many schools would not make this facility available to parents, as frequent requests for updates and information can distract teachers from their primary focus, teaching.

On any one day a teacher will have a plethora of demands on their time including up to five lessons teaching (and pastoral time, lunch duties and activities, and after school practices and clubs). Teachers 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.

The school (and you) expect teachers to be fully prepared, focused and engaged with students and supporting their learning. Whilst administration staff, support staff and senior leaders may be able to access emails more routinely, their primary function is to support teachers and students. Constantly monitoring and responding to email leads to what is commonly referred to in the aviation industry as 'task fixation'. In aircraft terms this leads pilots to be so fixated on the task in the flight deck that they forget to look out of the window. Whilst less dramatic, in a school it leads to staff focusing on the immediate task of responding to an email instead of concentrating on the delivering and supporting teaching and learning.

As parents we may feel that it is perfectly reasonable to ask for updates about our child's progress or behaviour. The occasional request might be manageable but if the parent of every child a teacher teaches asks for bespoke feedback just twice a term that would, on average, generate 180 required responses. In a similar vein parents cannot micro manage their child's education via email.

The school works hard to provide parents with timely and informative information concerning their child's progress throughout the year. Currently these are: two progress and effort reports, one full report and two parent teacher meeting and end of year school open evening each year. In addition to this staff may also telephone, write or email a parent to inform them of a serious incident or serious ongoing concerns about a child's behaviour or attitude to learning. They would not be expected to maintain a running dialogue about such matters, unless it has been agreed as part of a Pupil Support Plan.

## **Other things to consider**

When communicating with the school, please bear in mind that a great many staff are putting their heart and soul, and many, many hours into trying to help our students achieve well. We would never wish to discourage parents from communicating with staff, establishing a relationship and working together. Parental communication is essential, we do not always get it right and we need your feedback to help us to continue to improve.

On occasions staff face criticism over an activity which they may be doing entirely out of goodwill, be it running a trip, or a team, or a concert, or a play and an ill crafted email from an upset parent, even when the point is justified, can result in hurt being caused and a reluctance from staff to continue to go the extra mile, that we so much appreciate of them. Likewise, even when a communication is about a core school responsibility, our communications need to be respectful. Couching a point as being 'direct', 'blunt' or 'honest' does not make it any less destructive to a relationship that should be based on trust and mutual

respect. This applies to all communication and as staff we need to be just as careful in how we show we value our students and parents. We do not always get it right but we constantly aim to do so and to improve when this is not the case.

Many of you will be facing the same challenges in your own workplace from an increasing expectation of anytime, anywhere communications. Some readers may be of the view that this is simply the way the world works now. However, the school has a duty of care to staff, as it does to students. This includes a responsibility to ensure that the staffs' workload is manageable and does not unreasonably intrude in to their private life.

### **Finally**

A personal note to thank you for being a superb community. You buoyed us with letting us know we were not going astray as a team when many were criticising a profession we love in the national press. There were times when our strength helped other schools because we could think clearly. There are enough good teachers leaving the profession as a result of not feeling very valued, and there is no need for us to add to this here at Jennett's Park. Indeed the letters and emails of thanks and appreciation that we do receive on a weekly basis are very much appreciated. Your responses to our questionnaires always help us set our minds that we are on the right path. We have an incredibly dedicated team of staff at Jennett's Park and we want to retain them and make them feel valued. It is therefore essential that we respect them and help them to maintain a sustainable workload.

I said it repeatedly last year that the reason we served you so well is because of three things:

**Honest two-way communication** where you can tell us what you need / feel and we can do the same. That is not the same as being blunt or rude. Tell us what you need and we will try to get it done if it is possible. It might not always be possible but if it is then we can send messages. It may not be personal one-to-one responses; we do not have capacity for that. It may be your solution is given in a daily briefing or summed up in FAQ or in the weekly newsletter.

Communication is two-way. Please do your part in communication by sharing and reading what we send out. If anybody you know says they do not receive or bother to read emails, tell them to do so. Tell them to sign up to sQuid. Tell them to read the newsletter. Tell them to look at the website. Tell them to sign up to marvellous me. And Tapestry or Seesaw. Tell them they need to do their part and to be proactive.

**Trust between both sides** - we genuinely want the best education for children and know you do too. I am humbled to say that my staff are dedicated, kind, hard-working and not to boast the best team I've ever worked with in over 20 years' experience. Why is that? They have a lot of trust in me, in our school Governors, the Bonitas Trust, and the future we will have but also in you. We trust research and listen to advice.

**The Rainbow Promise of Values** lift us higher collectively-it is the why we are doing this. Many of you chose us as we are your local school. We serve our community as a Christian school. Our values are laid out clearly to unite us whatever you believe in as the Rainbow Promise. It is that that glues us together and gives us strength. I know you know them but the Rainbow is - Love, Honesty, Respect, Peace, Forgiveness, Patience, Support, Kindness & Joy.

Think again of the opposite words- hate, lying, intolerance, war, punishment, impatience and resistance, hindrance, cold-heartedness and misery. They stick in the mind. Say them or think them. They sound awful. Individually each word is not too bad but if we are honest we have each dabbled in a few at some points. I know I can be at times intolerant of people who say or do unkind things but I stop myself and listen. However, in my opinion those opposite words are collectively evil. We use the symbol of the rainbow to promote good. Help us and we can share and do good things.

Do email in to secretary@ is you have different questions that need answered- we will do our best to get you the information.