



# Home-school communication policy

**Reviewed by:** Sarah Fox

**Reviewed on:** September 2022

**Next review:** September 2024

**Related Policies:** Data Protection Policy, ICT and internet acceptable use, Remote learning policy, Home visits policy, Parent handbooks, Staff code of conduct, Concerns and Complaints Policy

## Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

**Name:** Joel Chalfen

**Position:** Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joel Chalfen".

**Date:** September 2022

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## 1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

*In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.*

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

### School Administrator and Education Manager

The School Administrator and Education Manager are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

### Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours (8-3:30pm), or their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Our ICT and internet acceptable use policy can be found on the school website, hard copies available at reception.

### Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated seriously, as outlined in our parent handbooks and required withdrawal policy.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (8-3:30pm) or during school holidays.

Our parent handbooks are available on the school website, hard copies can be found at reception.

### 3. How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

#### WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

##### Early Years and Lower School Handbooks

*Purpose: To give existing and prospective parents/carers a wide range of information about the school.*

The school handbooks contain a range of specified information to give parents/carers a full picture of provision at our school. These are usually updated every year at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

##### Termly Community Evenings

*Purpose: To consult and discuss issues, plans and changes involving the whole school.*

Evening meetings are planned termly to facilitate discussion and idea sharing between the school community. The topics may vary from meeting to meeting but include issues such as school development. These meetings also may include information sharing about key issues such as safeguarding. The agenda is set by Trustees and the School Leadership Team and includes an opportunity for parents/carers to raise items they would like to share.

##### Weekly Bulletin

*Purpose: To share important news/update information about school wide issues within a condensed and consistent form*

The weekly bulletin is circulated by email and made available on the school website. It includes:

- Dates for the diary, including term dates
- School news/ updates
- Pictures/brief updates about what children in school have been doing
- Safeguarding information
- Community messages (parents can share a relevant message/ news item in the bulletin, please email reception to make a request – please note: space is limited and it will not always be possible to include all items)

##### Emails from Reception

*Purpose: To share reminders/update information about school wide issues.*

We use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Invitations and reminders about upcoming school events
- Health issues (e.g. headlice, covid-19 updates)
- School surveys or consultations
- Severe weather or emergency closure of the school

The school undertakes not to send emails that are unnecessary or in such a quantity as to constitute a nuisance. The school does not routinely forward emails that are sent from an external third party.

##### Noticeboards

*Purpose: To give further information about the school and other initiatives parents/carers may be interested in.*

These noticeboards are located at the front of the school. Parents/carers should speak to the receptionist if they would like to post a notice on the board.

## Website

*Purpose: To give information to existing and prospective parents/carers about the school.*

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Staffing and important contact information
- Safeguarding information
- Admissions information
- Information about after-school provision

Our school website includes a full school calendar for the half term. Upcoming events/ dates for the diary are also listed in the weekly bulletin.

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including festival days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

Any such event will be included in the school calendar / upcoming events section on the school website homepage.

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

## CLASS TEACHER COMMUNICATION

### Emails

*Purpose: For each Class/Kindergarten Teacher to give information specific to their class.*

Each Class/Kindergarten Teacher will establish and maintain their own preferred style of email communication with parents/carers.

Teachers use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Curriculum information
- Newsletters/ updates about the activities the pupils in their class are doing
- Parents evenings / consultations (see below)
- Class activities, including information about trips or visits / consent forms etc

Email addresses should be Bcc'd to maintain data protection requirements.

Teachers will email parents individually about any incidents, accidents, behaviour issues or other concerns relating to a child's academic or social/emotional wellbeing. This information may also come from reception.

### Letters

*Purpose: To give specific information about exceptional school activities such as Class Trips, Visits, Activities.*

Teachers will occasionally compose letters/consent forms to parents/carers about specific activities as above.

### Phone Calls

*Purpose: To address an urgent need / sharing information*

Teachers will occasionally give a parent a call during the school day to discuss a particular issue that has arisen during the day. This could be to inform parents about an incident or occurrence of a sensitive nature, or to discuss a situation where parents could help provide additional information/ support about an issue relating to their child.

If a child is unwell and needs to be collected from school, either the class teacher or receptionist will telephone parents to make arrangements for this.

## Reports

*Purpose: To give parents/carers a summary of their development over the year*

These are prepared by the Class/Kindergarten Teacher and relevant Subject Teachers. They include information about the curriculum content that has been covered and a summary of the pupil's progress. They are presented at the end of the summer term.

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

## Class Parents Evenings

*Purpose: To share with parents the work pupils are doing. To discuss important aspects of the Class/Kindergarten development. To help build the Class/Kindergarten Community.*

Parents evenings are held at least twice a year and are arranged by each Class/Kindergarten Teacher. At least one parent/carer per family should attend every parent's evening.

We also arrange various meetings and talks for parents/carers throughout the year. These include evenings for parents of the rising Class 1 children as well as meetings focused on specific aspects of child development or the curriculum.

## Parent Consultations

*Purpose: A meeting between Class Teachers and Parents/Carers to share a picture of an individual pupil's development.*

Parent-teacher consultations take place twice a year, usually in the Autumn and Summer term. This is an opportunity to talk about the curriculum, your child's achievement and progress, wellbeing, or any concerns.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between consultations if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

## Surgery Hours

*Purpose: A designated (usually weekly) time slot offered by class teachers that can be used for adhoc meetings with parents for urgent matters arising*

Parents should make arrangements to book a meeting with their child's class teacher should they wish to meet.

## Home/School Books or Communication Document

*Purpose: To provide daily communication between home and school.*

In some situations, where a pupil may be struggling in some aspect of school life, a home school book or google document will be started. This provides an opportunity for regular communication between Class Teacher and Parents/Carers to help develop a shared understanding of a situation, and to effectively support a pupil through this time.

## Google Classroom

*Purpose: To provide remote learning resources / communication*

Please see our remote learning policy for more details.

## Social Networking Sites/Blogs/WhatsApp etc

The school does not communicate to parents/carers via social media or networking sites. Within individual classes some parents/carers may choose to set up a WhatsApp group to share information about school festivals, playdates etc. The school is not involved in setting these up and does not share any contact details to facilitate this.

**NOTE:** *In line with our Staff Code of Conduct the school acknowledges that staff may wish to make contact with parents over social media. Staff must exercise professional judgement in these circumstances and should*

*not have any contact with pupils' family members via social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity with regard to the children.*

#### 4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Parents should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity.

Through the year there is ongoing communication between school and home. Please note, in the mornings and at pick up, your child's teacher's energy is, and needs to be, concentrated on the children.

If you need to discuss:

- Any concerns you have about your child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, your child's home environment, or their wellbeing

Please email your child's class teacher in the first instance with a brief outline of what you would like to speak about. We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in the appropriate manner within 8 working days. Parents may be referred to a relevant school policy or to a senior colleague for support/ follow up. Safeguarding or welfare concerns will be responded to on the day they are raised, or as soon as practicably possible.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than indicated above, they should call the school.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- or welfare issues

Staff aim to respond to communication during core school hours (8am-3:30pm), or their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing, parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours or during school holidays. Staff may respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Parents/Carers should email reception or telephone the school as needed to inform us about pupil absence, appointments and alternative pick-up arrangements.

The receptionist checks the phone messages each day. Messages will be passed on to the relevant staff member and an initial response can be expected within 3 working days. Urgent issues will be responded to as soon as possible. A telephone log will record the details of any telephone message received. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless in an emergency.

#### 5. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

- School announcements and communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

#### 6. Monitoring and review

The School Administrator and Education Manager monitor the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every 2 years.

The policy will be approved by the board of trustees.

## Appendix 1: school contact list

### Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address or contact the School Administrator or Senior Lead
- Include your child's full name in the subject line

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in the appropriate manner within 8 working days. Parents may be referred to a relevant school policy or to a senior colleague for support/ follow up. Safeguarding or welfare concerns will be responded to on the day they are raised, or as soon as practicably possible.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than indicated above, they should call the school. Office hours: 8am - 3:30pm

School directory:

Buttercups Kindergarten - [buttercups@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:buttercups@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Rosebud Kindergarten - [rosebud@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:rosebud@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Elderflower Kindergarten - [elderflower@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:elderflower@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Oak Tree - [oaktree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:oaktree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Rowan Tree - [rowantree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:rowantree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Pinetrees - [pinetree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:pinetree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Alder Tree - [aldertree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:aldertree@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Upper School - [us@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:us@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)

Senior Lead: [damian@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:damian@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 School Administrator: [macy-jaine@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:macy-jaine@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)  
 Education Manager: [sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk](mailto:sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk)

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher (see directory above) Education Manager
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's class teacher (see directory above) Education Manager Safeguarding Team - <a href="mailto:sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Payments	<a href="mailto:finance@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">finance@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
School trips	Your child's class teacher (see directory above) <a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Uniform/lost and found	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a> Copy in your child's class teacher

Attendance and absence requests	<p>If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01223 882727</p> <p>If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact our Education Manager, or reception in the first instance.</p>
Bullying and behaviour	<p>Your child's class teacher (see directory above)</p> <p>Education Manager</p> <p>Safeguarding Team - <a href="mailto:sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a></p>
School events/the school calendar	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Special educational needs (SEN)	<p>SENDCo:</p> <p><a href="mailto:ann.swain@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">ann.swain@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a></p>
After-school clubs	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Late Afternoon Care	<a href="mailto:lac@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">lac@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Hiring the school premises	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
PTA	<a href="mailto:pta@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">pta@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Board of Trustees	<a href="mailto:trustees@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">trustees@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
School meals	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Parent and Child groups	<a href="mailto:pandc@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">pandc@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>
Kindergarten	<p>Early Years Manager:</p> <p><a href="mailto:kay.blayne@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">kay.blayne@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a></p>
Lower School	<p>Lower School Lead:</p> <p><a href="mailto:sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">sarah.fox@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a></p>
Upper School	<p>Emily Lucas and Tina Hobday:</p> <p><a href="mailto:us@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">us@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a></p>
Maintenance / H&S issues	<a href="mailto:reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk">reception@cambridge-steiner-school.co.uk</a>

## Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy. This can be found on the school website, hard copy available at reception.