Strabane Controlled Primary School

**Policy for Communication**

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# Under the GDPR General Data Protection Regulations require all data to be handled according to the terms of our Privacy Notice. A copy of this can be found on our school website.

# Aim

We endeavour to communicate effectively with all members of the school community. This includes our pupils, parents and with other members of the wider community. We aim to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

# Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is shared, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action planned for. We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school’s reputation. Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility has been carried out.

# Principles

All communications should:

* Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
* Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
* Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
* Be actioned within a reasonable time.
* Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
* Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
* Take account of relevant school policies.
* Written communications with parents and other external contacts must comply with agreed practice.
* Consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the school is inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

# Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

## Senior leadership

* To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
* To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
* To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
* To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

## All staff

* To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
* To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
* To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.
* To adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct.

# Internal methods of communication

* All staff receive a Staff Handbook, updated annually, providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
* An integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. staff meetings, teaching assistant meetings, senior management team meetings, Key stage meetings.
* All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda.
* Time put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject leaders’ reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.
* For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.
* Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
* Written communications should placed in pigeon holes, in the secretary’s office, which staff must check daily, handed to staff personally or emailed.
* During Staff meetings the main points are copied to all relevant staff. The school diary is accessible through the principal and events are written up on a weekly basis on the staffroom noticeboard. Events are discussed in advanced at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions. The diary for the incoming week is written up every Friday.
* Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This may be a news board/news letter or other type of notice board. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.
* Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day.
* A pupil’s teacher should be informed, where possible, of messages given to the child/ren in their class.

# External methods of communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school.

Whist staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner.

We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination.

## Communications with Parents/carers

* **Appointments:** Appointments with class Teachers/Principal should be made, where possible, through the school secretary. Otherwise, the Principal/teacher can arrange an appropriate time for parents and staff to meet.
* **Letters:** Staff will respond to parents’ letters within a reasonable time frame. Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Principal immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Principal before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files.
* **Text Messages:** The school has a text messaging system it uses to communicate with parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Principal.
* **Email:** If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be printed. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Principal and should always do so if the content is a complaint. A hard copy of any email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the Principal’s office. The same applies to all internal mail, email transmissions concerning pupil matters. All emails requiring an answer should be responded to within a reasonable timeframe.
* **Telephone calls:** Staff should check their phone messages each day. A file note will record details of the conversation. Office staff will attempt as far as possible not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call.
* **Social Networking Sites/Blogs:** Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as “friends”.
* **Written Reports:** Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child’s parents on their progress in each area of learning. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas for future development.

In addition, parents meet their child’s teacher once during the year for a Parent Teacher Meeting. Parents of children with Special Educational Needs will meet with their class teacher three times a year to discuss their IEP, in addition to the parent teacher meeting. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child’s successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child’s progress or well-being.

When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child’s teacher more regularly.

We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand communication.

* **School Prospectus:** The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision in our school. This is updated every year and a copy can be obtained from the school.
* **School Website:** The school website provides information about the school life and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

# Home-School Communication

* Parent Information notice board is on display in the school corridor.
* A class newsletter is sent to parents/carers each month from Nursery – P3/4 through paper copies. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary throughout the year.
* Children in all classes have a reading diary/record. This enables parents to record a wide range of information about their child’s reading.
* Each day except on a Friday, children receive homework. The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers will arrange to see parents as soon as possible. Some parents, especially of the younger children, have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher before and after school.
* Appointments with class Teachers/Principal should be made, where possible, through the school secretary. Otherwise, the Principal/teacher can arrange an appropriate time for parents and staff to meet.
* We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year. Parents are invited to meetings such as Paired Reading, AGMs, fundraisers. Information is sent home prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements. Induction meetings for new parents are organised at an appropriate time for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school and for their children to visit.
* Parent questionnaires are distributed for various programmes of work as well as whole school questionnaires.

At Strabane Controlled Primary School our motto is ‘Safe, Secure and Successful’.

Any issues with regard to Health and Safety will follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.