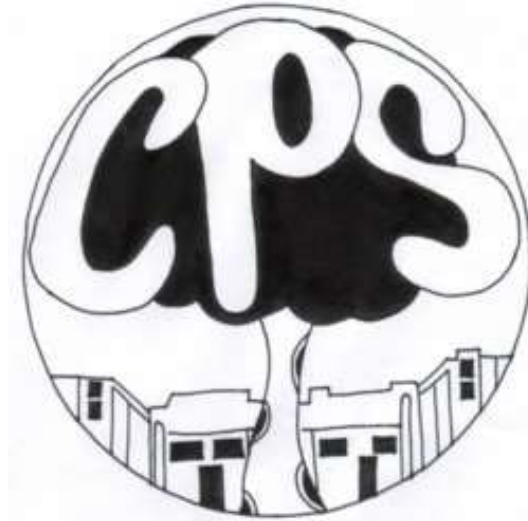


Cottenham Primary School



Communications Policy

Date last reviewed:	Autumn 1 2023
Reviewed by:	Personnel
Next Review date	Autumn 1 2024
Equality Review Checklist	<p>In reviewing this policy due consideration must be given to the impact that changes may have on issues of equality for the protected groups:</p> <p>Age, Disability, Religion or belief, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Sex, Sexual orientation, Gender reassignment Marriage/civil partnerships</p> <p>If the equality of a protected group is likely to be compromised by changes to the policy then please complete an equality risk assessment and tick here:</p> <input type="checkbox"/>

Cottenham Primary School Communications Policy

Please note that this policy may be subject to temporary amendment as a result of any restrictions imposed during the coronavirus pandemic.

1 Definition of Communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated.

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.

2 Principles and Objectives

All communications at Cottenham Primary School 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
 - Be compatible with our Core Values and School Development 100 Day Plan.
- Ensure that written communications with parents and other external contacts comply with agreed practice.
- Ensure that consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the school are inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

3 Aims of the Policy and Responsibilities

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and the Complaints Policy.

3.1 Senior leadership

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

3.2 All staff and governors

- To communicate regularly with each other.
- 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.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

Internal methods of communication

- All staff receive a formal induction, with a member of the Senior Leadership Team, providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school. All Governors receive an induction from the Chair of Governors where relevant information is shared.
- All formal meetings should be structured and be minuted, with members invited to contribute to the agenda (e.g. Team Meetings, Support Staff Meetings, Office Meetings, Business Meetings).

- Time should be put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to senior leaders and curriculum co-ordinators' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.
- For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.
- Meetings may occur in person, or on Zoom or MS Teams where necessary
- 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 be placed in pigeon holes in the staffroom, which staff must check daily; handed to staff personally or emailed.
- Staff meetings take place every week. The theme/purpose of the meeting is detailed on the staff notice board. These may take place in person, on Zoom or MS teams where necessary
- The school diary is accessible online and all members of staff can access it. Events are discussed in advance at Business Meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions. The diary for the coming week is discussed. The Business Meeting may constitute an in person meeting or an emailed set of notices
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This is usually through the external news board 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.
- Communication may take place at any time during the school day. All classroom staff must be informed of messages given to the children.

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. Whilst 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. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Letters: We aim to respond to parents' letters within two working school days. Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Headteacher immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Headteacher before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files.

E mail: The school has an email system it uses to communicate with parents. Any emails from parents should be sent via the school office address in the first instance: office@cottenham.cambs.sch.uk Office staff will then direct the email to the appropriate member of staff (in most cases the class teacher). Office staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Headteacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. All emails which require an answer should be responded to within 2 working school days. In cases where more investigation is required, a holding email should be sent by the member of staff explaining that a full response will be provided within 10 working school days.

Staff will not be expected to respond to emails which contain any of the following:

- Derogatory comments about the member of staff or other members of the school community
- Threatening or abusive language
- Unnecessary capitalisation which could be interpreted as aggressive or threatening

Should an email of this nature be received, it will be sent directly to the Head Teacher or another Senior Leader who will deal with the matter and may issue the sender with a warning about appropriate correspondence

Telephone calls: Staff should be given their telephone messages each day by email. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call. Teaching staff may call parents to relay messages or discuss any issues arising during the school day. Equally parents may request a phone call from a Senior Leader or class teacher. All members of staff reserve the right to end a phone call should they feel that the tone of the conversation has become threatening or inappropriate.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs: Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils directly via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". However, the school does use a closed Twitter Account, where whole school announcements may be posted.

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.

Parent Consultation Meetings: In addition, parents meet their child's teacher twice during the year for a private consultation at Parents' Evening. 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. These meetings may be held in person, or via MS Teams.

As visitors to the school, Parents and Carers are required to adhere to the values outlined in our behaviour policy and to be aware that any threatening behaviour (verbal, physical or digital) directed towards any member of our school community is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Should a member of staff feel that a Parent /Carer is demonstrating threatening or disrespectful behaviour during a Parent Consultation Evening, then they have the right to request the visitor leaves the premises immediately or, in the case of virtual meetings, terminate the conversation. In such cases, the member of staff will report the situation and or request assistance from a senior colleague at the earliest opportunity. The senior colleague will review the context of the situation before taking further action

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: Our school prospectus is available online. It contains a range of specific information to give parents a full picture of provision in our school. Information relevant to particular year groups is updated every year and placed on the school website.

School Website: The school website provides information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

4 Home-School Communication

4.1 The School's Commitment

Time sensitive information is displayed on the whiteboard outside school during drop-off and pick up. Where possible, and appropriate, this may be supplemented by additional

BromCom or text messages i.e. where 'live' information is being received from staff returning with children from a school trip.

The Headteacher's newsletter is sent to parents/carers every three weeks through with paper copies to all parents and a version available electronically via 'BromCom'. In addition, termly newsletters are circulated by the Key Stage Team Leaders. These both contain general details of school events and activities. Other letters of a general nature are sent when necessary.

The school's website is updated regularly, and Team Leaders post fortnightly updates sharing key information, dates, photos and upcoming events.

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. In the first instance, most communication should be directed to the class teacher. If the class teacher feels that the information should be shared with the Team Leader then they will inform the parent that they will be doing this. It may be that, after speaking with Team Leader, parents will be directed to the Assistant Head teacher, Deputy Head teachers or Head teacher.

Homework is circulated on an agreed day of the week. This is communicated to parents at the start of term.

Some parents, especially of the younger children, have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher before or after school but will need to make appointments for issues that need greater attention. Immediately before school, teaching staff are busy preparing resources and getting set up for the day. We therefore respectfully request that communication at this time is limited to specific, time sensitive requests, such as change of pick up arrangements, medical appointments etc. Where these can be sent in note form for the teacher, this would be appreciated. Where a longer discussion is required, teachers will contact parents later the same day to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

In line with Sections 6.65 – 6.71 of the SEN Code of Practice 2015, the school will ensure that the views of parents and children are considered when designing activities and support to support progress. Similarly, where children have additional learning needs, for example medical needs or English as an Additional Language, the school will take into account the views of parents and children when planning for these children.

Various information briefings are arranged for parents throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements. Several meetings for new parents are organised at appropriate times for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school. With the support of the Early Intervention Family Worker, coffee mornings and workshops are held on various topics of interest to the community and encourage particular parents who, in the past, were reluctant to come into school.

4.2 Parent/Carer's Commitment

At Cottenham Primary School, we strive to develop and maintain positive, open, professional relationships with parents and carers within our school community. Effective and appropriate communication is a key to the maintenance of good relationships.

To support this, we request that parents notify the school, at their earliest opportunity of any planned absences. In all cases, requests should be submitted through the school office via a 'Request for Absence' form.

In case of illness, there is a requirement for parents/carers to notify the school via the absence line on the first morning of absence and every subsequent morning until the child returns to school.

Parents and carers will ensure that emergency contact details held by the school are up-to-date and accurate. Any changes to parent/carers telephone numbers should be passed to the school office.

Where there is a home/school journal in place, parents and carers will ensure that any relevant information is communicated to teachers and teaching assistants. Any information that could affect the child's readiness to learn or learning, should be communicated.

Where a child has an injury or condition which prevents them from taking part in a regular school activity e.g. swimming, PE, this should be communicated to the class teacher by the parent/carers either in person or in writing. Where the arrangement is likely to be long term, a meeting should be arranged to discuss alternative arrangements with the class teacher.

It is our expectation that all communication from parents, whether verbal or written is appropriate and never displays threatening or aggressive content.

5 Safeguarding

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm; that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that Cottenham Primary School should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and to help any child needing protection. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Lead for Children Protection, or the Deputy Designated Lead, who may share this information with Social Care.

In addition, the Governors and Senior Leadership Team at Cottenham Primary School are committed to maintaining the safety and dignity of all members of the school community, including volunteers. For this reason, aggressive, offensive, intimidatory or disrespectful communication with our staff will not be tolerated. If a member of staff receives a communication, written or verbal, that they feel contravenes these principles, then they will not respond and bring the communication to the attention of a member of the Senior Leadership Team immediately. The Headteacher will then decide what action should be taken.

Severe Weather and Emergency Closure

Very rarely, to ensure the safety of the school community there will be a need to close the school at short notice. The decision to close is never taken lightly and advice will always be sought from the Local Authority. Once the decision has been taken, our priority will be to pass children into the care of their responsible adult at the earliest opportunity. Notification of the decision to close will be sent via BromCom and text in the first instance. Concurrently, staff will commence telephoning parents and carers who are not registered for the BromCom service. The safety and security of the children will be our priority at all times.