

# **SUTTON CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**



## **COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**Approved by Governors**

**December 2020**

## **Communications Code**

The aim of this policy is to foster good communications between parents/carers and the school.

### **Introduction**

The school always welcomes contact with parents/carers because this fosters mutual understanding and support which has a positive effect on children's performance and their attitudes to learning.

The school wants to ensure that parents/carers always have an appropriate and helpful response to their communications. However, unlike some businesses and other occupations, the professional duties of staff can make it difficult for them to speak or meet with parents/carers during the school day.

Due to teaching commitments, staff will typically be unavailable between 8.30 am and 3.45 pm each day. There are also other times outside these hours when they attend meetings. The important business of working with and responding to parents/carers must be managed within this context.

Teachers welcome brief messages from parents/carers when they are collecting or bringing in their children from the playground.

### **Principles for responding to parents/carers**

In order to achieve the most effective balance for children, parents/carers and teachers, have always followed the following principles:

- welcoming contact from parents/carers;
- responding as quickly and fully as possible to parents/carers;
- involving parents/carers in our work with children;
- sharing information as often and as fully as possible with parents/carers.

When correspondence is made to an individual parent/carer on an important matter, the letter will be sent by post or handed directly to the parent/carer to ensure confidentiality and security. On some occasions it may be appropriate for the school to contact parents/carers by e-mail. For day to day or routine matters correspondence will be sent via Class Dojo. The school will refer breaches of the communications policy to the Chair of Governors.

## **Guidelines on responding to parents/carers**

It may be helpful for parents/carers to know how they can expect their telephone calls, letters, emails and requests for meetings with the school to be dealt with. The following guidelines show how we aim to respond to parents/carers.

### **Telephone Calls**

- **Messages:** All telephone calls are received through the main office. A message will be taken and sent to the relevant person as soon as possible. Staff will normally take details of the caller's name and telephone number and purpose in calling. The person concerned will try to respond as soon as possible and by the end of the next school day if possible. The school's telephone number is 01353 778351.
- **Urgent calls:** The call will be put through to the most appropriate or available senior member of staff if possible or a message will be taken.
- **Messages for pupils:** Messages for children will be taken by a member of staff and passed on as soon as possible.
- **Busy times:** The office is busy between 8.30 am and 9.30 am in the morning and 3.00 pm and 3.45 pm in the afternoon. At these times and at other times, calls may be recorded on an answer machine. This is checked regularly and if a message is left, it will be passed on.
- **Telephone calls made at arranged times:** If teachers have arranged with parents/carers for them to receive calls at particular times of the school day, those teachers will try to ensure that they are available. Should other commitments or events make this impossible, a staff member will take a message and the person concerned will try to call back the same day.

### **Letters and emails**

- The school will always try to **acknowledge** letters and emails received from parents/carers within two working days during term time. Please bear in mind that some staff work on a part time basis and this could form two of their scheduled working days. The school email is [office@sutton.cambs.sch.uk](mailto:office@sutton.cambs.sch.uk)  
The postal address is Sutton Primary School, The Brook, Sutton, Ely, CB6 2PU

- If more time is required to provide a fuller response or to arrange a meeting, staff will try to include in the acknowledgement details of when these will happen.
- Staff will try to respond to the most pressing concerns of parents/carers as quickly as possible. It is our intention to try to **respond** to any letter or email as soon as we can and within ten working days within term time. If there is likely to be a delay we will let you know the reasons why.

### **Complaints**

We will investigate a complaint and aim to respond with ten working days. If we cannot provide a full response within ten working school days then we will write to the complainant explaining this and giving a date by which we will endeavour to provide a full response. For further information please see our complaints policy.

### **Meetings**

Where situations are more complex, a face-to-face meeting is preferable to a letter or phone call and this will be arranged at the earliest convenience for parents/carers and staff.

### **Meetings with class teachers**

The class teacher is the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. Teachers are not available between 8.45. am and 3.45 pm but mutually agreed appointments can be made outside these times either through the office or directly with the class teacher.

Depending on the nature of the situation, a meeting may include a more senior member of staff.

A record may be kept and notes shared with all parties where appropriate. Parents/carers will only be invited to discuss their own children. Staff will not talk about other children in front of other parents/carers. All meetings and discussions are confidential between the staff involved and the parents/carers and parties should not divulge information to others without the agreement of parents/carers and the school.

## **E- Mails**

The school has a system of sending all standard forms of communication home to parents/carers who have requested it via e-mail. For all other correspondence, hard copies will be provided. Parents/carers must ensure that the school office is informed of any changes to e-mail addresses.

## **Website, school dojo and the school newsletter**

The school seeks to put as much information as possible on its website. Most general information that parents/carers would seek can be readily found at [www.sutton.cambs.sch.uk](http://www.sutton.cambs.sch.uk).

Parents/carers are encouraged look at the website and school dojo on a regular basis. A weekly newsletter also includes communications for parents and carers.

## **Protocol for Communications**

The school undertakes to treat all communications with parents/carers with courtesy. It expects to receive the same in return. Both parties will work towards identifying and resolving problems quickly and efficiently. Where difficulties cannot be resolved, team leaders and/or the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher may be involved. An Education Officer or other agencies will be invited in situations which are particularly complex, and in an effort to move forward.

The school reserves the right to take appropriate action if aggressive behaviour from any party occurs on school premises.

## **Social Media**

### **Rationale**

The widespread availability and use of social media applications bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff at the school.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Protect the school from legal risks
- Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff and governors is protected
- Safeguard all children
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school

Definitions and Scope:

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, Online discussion forums, Collaborative spaces, Media sharing services, 'Microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm, and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper site.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the school's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use Policies.

Within this policy there is a distinction between use of school-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and personal use of social media.

## **Use of Social Media in practice:**

- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the school community in any personal social media whilst in employment.
- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above
- Members of the school staff are strongly advised to set all privacy settings to the highest possible levels on all personal social media accounts
- All email communication between staff and members of the school community on school business must be made from an official school email account
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the school community on school business, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.
- Staff are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the school and members of its community on any social media accounts
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the school in any posts or comments related to the school on any social media accounts
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account

## **School-sanctioned use of social media**

- There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support student learning.
- Courses require the use of blogs for assessment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop students' learning.

- When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:
  - Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.
  - The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate member of the SLT before access is permitted for students
  - The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school.
  - Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents /carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts
  - Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe
  - Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT
  - Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public
  - All social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the About or Info page to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the school website. This will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by the School.