Effective School Partnership and Communication Policy

To be read in conjunction with the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct

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POLICY CONTROL

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1 Effective School Partnership and Communication Policy

1.1 Introduction

This policy is for parents, carers and families to understand the communication systems used in school and the expectations on staff and parents, carers and families when engaging in home/school communication.

1.2 Purpose

Highbury School recognises that effective communication between home and school is fundamental to achieving the best outcomes for pupils. At Highbury, we value these links with families and accept some of the challenges that are present where children do not have the ability to come home and share their day.

This policy sets out the principles, expectations and communication methods between home and school and does not include details of other internal, school based communication. The policy is in place to ensure communication is professional, respectful, timely and effective. It also seeks to protect positive relationships between families and staff while supporting staff wellbeing.

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Parent and Carer Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy for staff
- Online Safety Policy for staff
- Complaints Policy

School Policies are published on this page of the school website.

2 Communication Principles

All communication between home and school should be:

- Respectful and polite in both content and tone.
- Professional, constructive, open and honest.
- Clear, accurate and accessible.
- Timely and proportionate.
- Focused on securing the best outcomes for pupils.
- Conducted with consideration for staff wellbeing and workload.

The school is committed to maintaining positive partnerships with families and encourages open, honest and solution-focused communication.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring effective communication systems are in place.
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy.
- Addressing concerns relating to communication arrangements.
- Reviewing the policy annually.

3.2 Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Communicating professionally and respectfully at all times.
- Providing information in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Following safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection requirements.
- Ensuring communication is accurate and directed appropriately.
- Adhering to pupil image consent arrangements when sharing photographs, videos or information.

Staff are not expected to:

- Monitor or respond to communications before 8am and after 5pm on school days.
- Monitor communications during evenings, weekends, school holidays or non-working days.
- Respond to messages during teaching time (9am-3.30pm) except where operationally necessary.
- Respond to abusive, offensive, unreasonable or threatening communication.

Any communication that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory or inappropriate may be referred to the Senior Leadership Team and managed in accordance with the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct.

3.3 Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Communicate respectfully with all members of staff.
- Use the appropriate communication route for their enquiry.
- Allow reasonable time for staff to respond.
- Check school communications regularly.
- Keep emergency and contact details up to date.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of all pupils and families.

Parents and carers should not expect staff to respond outside normal working hours.

Where parents and carers with parental responsibility live separately, the school will communicate in accordance with its legal responsibilities, court orders and parental responsibility arrangements.

4 Communication Expectations

4.1 Choosing the Appropriate Communication Method

Purpose	Direct to
Absence, illness or appointments	School Office
Urgent collection changes	School Office
Safeguarding concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Confidential information	School Office or via secure email
Complaints	Complaints policy
Non-urgent pupil matters	Class teacher/lead

Parents and carers should check Class Dojo and the school website before contacting the school, as the information required may already have been provided.

5 Response Times

The school aims to acknowledge or respond to routine enquiries within three school working days.

Where enquiries are complex or require information from other professionals, additional time may be required. The school will endeavour to keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay.

Messages sent outside working hours should not be regarded as urgent and will normally be dealt with during the next working day.

6 Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately by telephone, in person or through the school office.

Safeguarding concerns should not be communicated solely through messaging applications or electronic messages, as these may not be monitored continuously.

7 Confidential Information

Sensitive or confidential information should only be shared through approved communication channels.

Confidential documents should not be shared through Class Dojo.

Where appropriate, information should be shared via secure email, approved school systems or directly through the school office.

8 Photography, Video and Privacy

The school will only use photographs, videos and pupil information in accordance with parental consent arrangements and data protection requirements.

Parents and carers should not share photographs, screenshots, videos or recordings containing images or information about other children obtained through school communications without appropriate consent.

9 Managing Unreasonable Communication

The school is committed to working constructively with families to resolve concerns.

Where communication becomes excessive, repetitive, aggressive, unreasonable or disproportionately impacts staff wellbeing or school operations, the school may implement proportionate communication arrangements.

Persistent communication is defined as communication which is **disproportionate** to the issue and is not reasonable or sustainable. Where the school staff are concerned that despite their best endeavours, parents and carers are not respecting the impact of their persistent communication on the individual to whom it is directed, the senior leadership may agree a more proportionate communication contract. This would be shared with parents and carers by the senior leadership team and would define the mode and frequency of communication.

The school will seek to resolve concerns through normal communication channels wherever possible.

Where necessary, arrangements may include:

- Identifying a single point of contact.
- Agreeing appropriate communication methods.
- Agreeing communication frequency.
- Holding scheduled review meetings.

Any arrangements introduced will be proportionate, reviewed regularly and intended to maintain effective communication whilst protecting staff wellbeing and the efficient operation of the school.

10 Communication Channels

10.1 Class Dojo

Class Dojo is the school's primary communication platform. Only parents/carers or legal guardians will be given access codes to ClassDojo. It is expected that up to two parents will be linked to a child's account; any additional adults will only be accepted in special circumstances.

It is used to:

- Share school news and updates.
- Communicate important information.
- Share class information and reminders.
- Promote events and activities.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that they have access to Class Dojo, have notifications enabled where possible and check the platform regularly.

10.2 Email

Email may be used when:

- Communication involves multiple parties.
- External agencies are involved.
- Confidential information needs to be shared securely.

10.3 Telephone

Telephone communication should be used for:

- Urgent matters.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Health and welfare issues.
- Matters requiring an immediate response.

The school office is staffed from 8.00am until 4.00pm and an answering machine is available outside of these hours. *Please note that on Fridays all staff are expected to attend a whole school briefing from 2.30-3.30pm and so staff are away from the office at this time.

If parents and carers leave a message they should be aware that these are re-played in the office which is not a private space and so should be mindful of leaving confidential/sensitive information.

The office staff will receive all calls and will make a decision whether to pass a call on or take a detailed message. There is an option to select the most appropriate member of staff.

Generally, teachers are not permitted to make or take phone calls during teaching time. The exception to this is when the message is urgent. The office staff will ask for details of your call in order to make this assessment.

Phone calls are an important communication and teachers are expected to phone you if your child has had an accident or injury. They may ask a member of the office staff to contact you if your child is unwell. If your child needs urgent/immediate medical care you will be contacted immediately by the teacher, nurse or member of senior leadership team. For any minor injuries you will be contacted before your child returns home. We will only contact you if your child has had an accident that results in an injury. We will not report everyday trips etc.

Be aware that all classes have their own mobile phone for outgoing calls only so you may not recognise the number calling. Staff will persist and phone again.

10.4 Letters

Letters are rarely used in school now and most communication is electronic. Hard copies of all information are available via the school office should parents/carers require or prefer them.

Staff who send letters are expected to ensure that they are:

- Always on the school's letter head
- Well written and are professional
- Dated and addressed in the appropriate format
- Proofread by a member of the senior leadership team
- Signed with an authorised signature

10.5 Parents Evening

These take place three times a year and provide an opportunity for a face to face meeting with your child's teacher. The arrangement is flexible and teachers can phone families or arrange a zoom call if this is more convenient. Notification of parents evening is via Class Dojo. Where children are co-parented, a separate appointment can be arranged.

10.6 Meetings

Meetings may be arranged where:

- A detailed discussion is required.
- Issues are complex.
- Multi-agency involvement is needed.
- Previous communication methods have not resolved concerns.

10.7 Website

The school website is the primary source of statutory information and contains key information including:

- Policies and procedures.
- Term dates.
- Curriculum information.
- Governance information.
- Contact details and school information.

Parents and carers are encouraged to consult the website regularly.

10.8 Assemblies and Stay and Play Events

Each week families are notified which class will be showcasing their work in the whole school assembly. All families are welcome to attend assembly, regardless of whether their child is sharing their work. *we may be forced to review this policy if numbers become too high to manage.

We ask that when attending the assembly families support the children to focus by refraining from talking to each other whilst assembly is in progress and to turn all mobile devices to silent.

We understand that families may wish to capture special moments. Photographs and videos may only be taken where they **feature your own child and no other pupils**. Please do not share photographs or recordings from the assembly on social media.

11 Social Media

The school's social media accounts are used to celebrate achievements, promote events and share aspects of school life.

All content shared will comply with safeguarding requirements, image consent arrangements and data protection legislation.

The school reserves the right to remove inappropriate content, restrict access where necessary and report content that may be offensive, harmful or unlawful.

12 Communication Methods Not Used by School

Highbury School does not operate parent/carer WhatsApp groups or unofficial parent/carer social media discussion groups.

Where parents or carers choose to participate in independently managed groups, they remain responsible for ensuring that communication is accurate, respectful and consistent with the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct.

Concerns arising from information shared in such groups should be raised directly with a member of the senior leadership team in confidence.

13 Contacting the School Nurse

To contact the school nurse parents and carers should telephone the school and select the nurse option. It is not always possible to speak to the nurse immediately but if this is the case then office staff will take a message and ask the nurse to contact them.

Please be aware that our nursing team cover a large site and work with a large number of pupils. We would ask for patience and understanding when trying to contact them.

The school nurse is managed by Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT)and her manager's details are available on request. In partnership with CHFT our nursing staff work under the guidance of this policy and all references made to effective communication also apply to them. The senior leadership team of the school will act to protect the trust and confidence of the nursing team at all times and will be involved in any concerns or queries raised by families and also raised by our nursing team.

Appendix 1 – Communication Protocol

DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS

	Reason	Method	To/From @ School	To/From @ Home
Individual pupil-specific 	Urgent communication re: pupil (eg illness or incident at school)		Teacher Office	Priority 1 then 2
	Daily information		Teacher	Usually primary carer (priority 1)
	Payments		Office	Carers with an email on the school database can sign up @ www.mychildatschool.com

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

	Reason	Method	From @ School	To @ Home
Class 	Class updates and specific information		Teacher	All registered parents/carers for that class
Whole School 	Important information		Office Senior Leader	All registered parents/carers in the whole school
	Non-urgent information		Office Senior Leader	
	Events		Office Senior Leader	
	Policies, term dates, information on safeguarding, Governors, Friends of Highbury, vacancies, volunteering & curriculum	Website	N/A	Public