Home-School Communication Policy

Approved by:	Academy Committee	**Date:** 16th October 2024
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Contents

Introduction and aims

We believe it is important to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for students, staff and parent/carers in our school so that everyone feels a sense of belonging in the school community. We encourage clear, open communication links with parent/carers as we believe it has a positive impact on students' learning. Open communication provides parent/carers with the information they need to support their child's education and it also helps to build a partnership between home and school.

Such communication can be entirely positive and practical for example to seek information, ask a question, clear up a misunderstanding or to draw attention to a matter. Sometimes there is a need to resolve an issue or misunderstanding.

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

We use the term 'parent/carers' in this policy to refer to:

- Anyone with parental responsibility for a student
- Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents, carers, or child-minders)

The term member of staff as referred to in this policy includes:

- Anyone employed by the school
- Anyone training in a professional capacity at the school
- Governors (when acting in this capacity)
- Volunteers at the school (when acting in this capacity)

- Anyone employed through an external agency, who are acting in a professional capacity on the school site

We acknowledge that sometimes there can be situations that can be emotional and challenging for parent/carers and staff to work through. Nonetheless, we expect all our community to show mutual respect. We have clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the staff code of conduct) and students (through our behaviour policy). We also expect parent/carers to engage constructively with school staff and to work together with them in the best interests of our children.

We will only communicate with parent/carers in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent/carer will be declined, as will be requests for information on another child. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers then this will be shared with the school's legal advisers.

If parent/carers are considering making a formal complaint, there is a link here to the complaints policy. However, stage 1 of our policy: suggests that other forms of communication can often help in resolving issues and we encourage parent/carers to use this route. However, this is not compulsory and does not prevent the use of the complaints policy either straight away or after other forms of communication have been tried.

If parents or carers are considering making a formal complaint, we encourage them to first engage in informal communication, as outlined in Stage 1 of our Complaints Policy. In many cases, discussing concerns directly with the relevant member of staff or through the school office can lead to a satisfactory resolution. While we encourage the use of these communication channels, this step is not mandatory and does not prevent parents or carers from proceeding with a formal complaint at any time. For more information, please refer to our Complaints policy.

Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

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

2.2 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 **(08:35 – 14.55)**, 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.

ICT and internet acceptable use policy

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is always respectful
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Responding 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 in line with our parent code of conduct.

Parent/carers should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours **(08:35 - 14:55),** or during school holidays.

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.

3.1 Email

We use email to keep parents informed about a variety of activities including:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests

3.2 Text messages

We will text parents about:

- Attendance queries
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

3.3 School calendar

https://www.thornden.hants.sch.uk/parents/calendar includes a full live, school calendar the academic year.

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform 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.

3.4 Phone calls

If a query or concern is time sensitive and urgent the parent/carer should call the school office, who will liaise as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments.

If the query or concern is not time sensitive and urgent, then parent/carers should email or call the school office, and the relevant member of staff will aim to contact them **within 2 working days.** If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time.

For general enquiries, please call (023 8026 9722) or email the school office.

3.5 Letters and Consents

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Our regular parent/carer newsletter

At the start of each academic year, parental consents are requested through the Arbor Parent App. These consents cover a range of areas, such as permission for school trips, use of photographs, and participation in specific activities. Consent requests are automatically generated and sent to parents or guardians for their review and approval. Parents and guardians have the flexibility to withdraw or change their consent at any time by contacting the school office via email. It is important that these consents are kept up to date to ensure the school can operate in accordance with the preferences of each family.

3.7 Reporting and Parents Meetings

Parents receive reports from the school about their child's learning:

- Termly reports on progress/behaviour for learning at KS3
- Sequenced reports at KS4 on either current working GCSE grades, internal exam results as well as behaviour for learning grades.
- A report on the results of public examinations
- Each year group will have one parents evening per year.

3.7.1 Parents Meetings

During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings outside of parents' evenings 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.

3.8 School website

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
- Important contact information
- Information about before and after-school provision

Parents/carers should check the website before contacting the school.

3.9 Home-school communications app

The school uses Arbor as it's MIS platform and Arbor have a student portal, and a parent/carer app.

The student portal gives student access to their timetable and……

This app can support parents/carers ………

Parent app links:

https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/arbor-parent-app/id1448707412

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.arboreducation.parentapp&hl=en_GB

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.

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within working days.

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

4.2 Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office, and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 2 working days.

Non-urgent matters include general academic queries, routine behaviour or attendance concerns, questions about school events, requests for meetings, or administrative queries.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 2 working days of your request.

For urgent matters, parents should call the school office directly. Urgent issues may include family emergencies, safeguarding or welfare concerns, medical issues, serious behaviour incidents, or sudden changes in school access or pick-up arrangements.

For after-hours emergencies, such as safeguarding concerns, parents should contact the designated safeguarding lead or follow the school's emergency contact procedure.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies

- Safeguarding or welfare issues

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see appendix 1), or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 2 working days of the request.

While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

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

4.4 Home-school communications app

The Arbor Parent App/ Parent Portal is a platform for parents to access important information regarding their child's education. Through the app, parents can view their child's attendance records, behaviour logs, academic progress, and timetables, make payments as well as monitor upcoming school events and permissions for trips or activities.

For a detailed overview of what features are available through the Arbor Parent App, please refer to the following guides:

A quick introduction to Arbor for guardians and parents

Parent Portal and App - Profiles, messages and meetings

Parent Portal and App - Payments, School Shop, Meals, Clubs and Trips

Parents are required to regularly review and update their personal contact details and emergency contacts through the app. Keeping this information accurate is crucial for the school to maintain effective communication and provide appropriate support, particularly in cases of emergency.

Please follow the guide for more information: Updating your own guardian details on the Parent Portal and Parent App

IMPORTANT: Parents can view and update their child's medical details on the Arbor App. However, parents should not write anything in the Medical Field. Instead, they should email the Medical Team with any details that you have not sent in on the Health Information Form; this also applies to any future updates. It is important that parents contact the Medical Team via email to amend/update/add any medical detail rather than updating it themself. This is to ensure that all information is captured, understood, documented and formatted correctly.

Medical information summary is available on the App, however, to see full medical details parents need to log in into the Arbor Parent Portal (browser rather than app).

Accessibility

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

5.1 Parents with additional communication needs

We aim to make communications accessible to all. We have taken the following steps to achieve this:

- All whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) are made available in multiple formats
- All communications are written as clearly and concisely as possible
- Accessibility is considered when designing/updating the school website
- Staff are trained on accessibility and will endeavor to provide information in an accessible format

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- School announcements and communications in accessible formats
- Sign language interpreters for meetings

Please contact the school office to discuss these.

5.2 Parents with English as an additional language (EAL)

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in the following languages:

- English

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.

Monitoring and review

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every 3 years.

The policy will be approved by the governing board.

Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

> ICT and internet acceptable use
> Parent code of conduct
> Staff code of conduct
> Complaints
> Home-school agreement
> Staff wellbeing
> Social media policy

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 or call the school office on 023 8026 9722
Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff in the subject line (for emails)
We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff.
Remember: check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.
We try to respond to all emails within 2 working days.

I have a question about…	Who you need to talk to
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Email info@thornden.hants.sch.uk quoting the students teacher and subject.
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	pastoralsupport@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Payments	finance@thornden.hants.sch.uk
School trips	finance@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Uniform/lost and found	info@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence please use the electronic form online or use the arbor app. If you are unable to do this please call 023 8026 9722 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact info@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Bullying and behaviour	Year 7 hoy7@thornden.hants.sch.uk Year 8 hoy8@thornden.hants.sch.uk Year 9 hoy9@thornden.hants.sch.uk Year 10 hoy10@thornden.hants.sch.uk Year 11 hoy11@thornden.hants.sch.uk
School events/the school calendar	info@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Special educational needs (SEN)	sen@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Before and after-school clubs	info@thornden.hants.sch.uk
Hiring the school premises	info@thornden.hants.sch.uk
PTA	https://www.thornden.hants.sch.uk/parents/friends-of-thornden-school

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy.

Appendix 2: Examples of unacceptable behaviour and communication

If the school is unhappy with the way that a parent or carer is communicating with the school they will ask to meet with them in the first instance. If the issue continues the school has the right to use a raft of measures to protect the wellbeing of its staff and students. These may include putting the parents on a communication plan so that only certain members of staff can communicate with the family or even banning the parent from the school site in more extreme circumstances.

There are some types of behaviour / communication that the school consider unacceptable. These are as follows:

- Any physical aggression e.g., slapping, hitting, punching and kicking.
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, or students e.g., standing very close to her/him.
- The use of aggressive hand gestures including finger pointing towards a member of staff or student.
- Spitting at a member of staff or student.
- Shaking or holding a fist towards a member of staff or student.
- Shouting at members of staff or students (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing).
- Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Threatening or offensive comments about a member of staff or student at the school; this can include verbally, via texts, emails, social media, etc.
- Sending abusive messages to a member of staff, including via text, email or social media
- A large volume of emails in respect of the same matter over a short period of time.
- Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed by the school.
- Posting defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments about the school, its staff, on social media platforms.
- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches).
- Breaching or not conforming to the school's security procedures.
- Covertly recording phone calls or meetings with member of staff.
- Any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening, or offensive.