

# Communication Policy

## Thomas Keble School



This is a <b>non-statutory policy</b> and supersedes all previous versions of this policy	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2024
Implemented:	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2024
Review date:	September 2027
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## 1.0 Purpose and scope

- To set out the parameters for clear and effective stakeholder communication.
- To cover external and internal communication.
- To manage staff workload and wellbeing regarding expectations around communication.

## 2.0 Related policies and documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- ICT User Policy.
- Data Handling and Protection Policy.
- Complaints Policy.
- Staff Conduct policy.
- The DfE Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.
- Data Handling and protection Policy.
- Social Media Policy

## 3.0 Contacting the school

The school is open from 08:30 to 16:30 during term time, and will aim to respond to external communication within 48 hours when open. This may be in the form of an acknowledgement in the first instance. Parents may perceive that a message to the school elicits no immediate response, and this can be frustrating. However, it is important to be aware that during any school day, there may be no available opportunity for the member of staff concerned to reach a telephone to return a call. Staff will not be available to respond to external contact during weekends, during school holidays or out with the normal working day.

If an issue or query arises, parents should consider who the best person will be in school to address this. The usual points of contact for most queries will be either a child's teacher, tutor, the Senior Pastoral Lead for the year group, the Head of Year or the Subject Leader of a specific subject. Details can be found on our website.

More formal concerns or complaints are made to the Headteacher, either by letter or by using the email address: [admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk)



## 3.1 Contacting the school by phone

The best way to do this is to telephone the main school number 01452 770301. The switchboard is covered between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm Monday to Friday and there is an answerphone service available outside of these hours. Messages are checked every morning and passed to the relevant colleague. When telephoning, callers will hear two options:

- Press 1 to report a student absence.
- Press 3 to be put through to the main reception.

We aim for your call to be answered to enable callers to speak directly with a member of our administrative support whenever a call is made during the school reception hours of 8:00am to 4:30pm. Calls will generally not be transferred to other staff as they are likely teaching or engaged in pre-planned work. A message will be taken and return contact made within 48 hours, or sooner if the matter regards a safeguarding concern.

As a school we welcome contact with parents in helping us to support our students and work with home in a supportive partnership. Most parents communicate with school in a timely and appropriate manner which is appreciated. However, on the rare occasions where staff receive abusive or defamatory calls, the call will be ended, and the matter referred to the Headteacher.

## 3.2 Contacting the school by email or letter

The best way to do this is to contact by email is to use the main school email address [admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk) using the subject bar in your email to identify who the email is intended for. If writing by letter, please mark this for the attention of the relevant member of staff and use the school postal address. Please do not email a member of staff directly, even if you know their email address. Staff can be away from school for several reasons and using the main school email address ensures that all emails are picked up and passed to a member of staff who can assist. If you are unsure who to address your email to, please contact the school reception for assistance. To support a timely response, please include:

- Your child's name;
- Your child's tutor group;
- A suitable contact number.



Emails are most effective when used to convey key information. This is what we would expect emails to be used for most of the time. Messages that contain a lot of emotion can often be misconstrued and we would always recommend that where the subject matter is anything other than information based, a telephone conversation or meeting is preferable.

Please avoid using emails as a way of making a complaint or as a means of venting about an issue. If you feel strongly about an issue, it is often better to talk over the telephone or request a meeting as this allows a discussion to take place. It is often the case that staff can reassure or explain something very quickly in a phone call. A copy of our complaint's procedure can be found on our website if required. Many concerns or worries can be resolved by simple clarification, or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

As is the case with phone calls, most parents communicate with school in a timely and appropriate manner which is appreciated. On the rare occasions where staff receive abusive or defamatory emails, these will be forwarded to the Headteacher. In cases where email communication becomes excessive or vexatious, parents or carers will be directed to the Headteacher.

### 3.3 Visiting the school in person

Please note that teaching staff are often committed to teaching, meeting other parents or other staff throughout the working day, which runs from 8:30am. Parents who arrive at school without an appointment expecting to meet staff will be asked to make an appointment via the usual channels. This helps to avoid disappointment given the demands on time.

### 3.4 Formal contact points across the school year

Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening and Open Mornings held in the October preceding the year of entry to the school. All prospective parents also have access to a copy of the school prospectus and a range of key informative documents via the school website.

Prospective parents are invited to an induction evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented. As part of this process, parents are asked to fill in key contact information including an email address and emergency contact details to assist with



communication. It is important that parents or carers notify the school of any changes so that the school holds up to date contact information.

Parents are invited to a Year 7 tutor evening in Term 1 to review how Year 7 students have settled in.

Parents are invited to a range of themed Parents' Evenings to gain access to information that is relevant to their child at certain points in their school career. These include Options Evenings; Post 16 Evening; Mental Health Awareness and various pastoral support information evenings.

Parents are invited to attend a subject parents' evening once per academic year to review progress in different subject areas. Parents receive information about student progress via an annual report which details performance against expected progress; effort and homework.

Our School Gateway and the Class Charts platform both provide access to information about attendance. It also provides copies of assessment and progress updates as well as a copy of a student's most recent report. A newsletter is published 3 times a year and provides information on a range of issues including key dates for the calendar and term dates. The school will also write out to parents from time to time to share information, to consult on changes at school or to raise awareness. A weekly parent bulletin is sent with key information and dates.

Our school website provides access to all key policies as well as access to information on the curriculum studied in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Staff will use the Class Charts platform to communicate homework tasks.

We also use an electronic "Schoolcomms" messaging service to send electronic communications by email and text. This helps to inform parents about issues such as emergency school closures; bus route delays and helps to ensure we keep parents informed on topical issues such as e-safety alerts.

### **3.5 Formal contact from external agencies**

External agencies will contact the school from time to time, and the best way to do this is to contact by email using the main school email address [admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk) or contact the school via the main switchboard. Requests for information about children or families at the school are covered in our Data Handling and Protection Policy.



## 5.0 Respectful Communication

The principle is that our communication with stakeholders is respectful and professional. Whilst it is recognised that emotions can sometimes run high, there is a clear expectation that all communication with our staff is respectful and that they are treated with dignity. If this is not the case, staff have the right to finish a phone call or end a meeting once a polite warning has been given. We consider such behaviour to include:

- Swearing or making derogatory remarks;
- Inappropriate cultural, racial, political, or religious references;
- Rudeness or shouting;
- Threatening behaviour;
- Emotional abuse or manipulative behaviour.

Threats of physical violence or harassment to any person are unacceptable and will be reported to the police.

Communications may be reconvened. This will be on the understanding that it is done so respectfully, enabling a satisfactory resolution to be found. Further to this, we will not permit conversations to be recorded electronically, if this is attempted, we will end a call/a meeting.

A written record can be kept of any meeting.

It is also generally unhelpful to voice disquiet on social media – it is rarely the best way to achieve a productive resolution. Working in partnership is a keyway to support young people to achieve the best outcomes with an excellent education. In our experience most concerns can be dealt with in partnership through respectful and timely communications. In the event however, that a parent/carer is unhappy with the outcome of a discussion or meeting and matters remain unresolved, please refer to our complaints policy. It is important to note that any complaints directed to external agencies about the school will normally expect you to have used the school's complaint process first.



## 6.0 Unreasonable and Vexatious Communication

We are committed to providing a proportionate amount of time and resources to responding to parent or carer communications. Unreasonable demands and persistence may prevent staff from fulfilling this commitment. We consider such behaviour to include:

- Excessive telephone calls, emails, or letters;
- Sending duplicate correspondence;
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation;
- Continuing to contact Thomas Keble after a decision, about the same or similar matters, without presenting new or relevant information;
- Demanding responses within an unreasonable time scale or irrelevant information;
- Repeatedly contacting or insisting to speak to a member of staff in a way that could be deemed as harassment.

In the very small number of cases where the communication challenges our ability to deliver an effective service to all, as set out above, the member of staff will report this to their Line Manager and make a note on the case record. The Line Manager will consider whether a warning should be given and if it is necessary to provide a copy of this policy. If the behaviour is sufficiently serious, or a warning has already been given, a formal decision will be taken to manage contact. Managing contact may include the following:

- Limiting contact to a particular form, for example, limiting to contacting with the school by email or letter only;
- Limiting telephone calls to specific days and/or times;
- Arranging for a single point of contact for all future correspondence;
- Blocking telephone calls and/or emails being received;
- Advising that correspondence will be read to ensure no new issues are raised but will then be filed or destroyed without acknowledgement.



## 7.0 Contacting Parents or Carers

Class teachers and support staff will reply via email to parents and carers where a request is purely factual information in which case, a short, factual email is appropriate. Requests from a parent or carer for data about a child, beyond the normal school record will come under the Data Handling and Protection Policy, and all requests for data will be passed to the Headteacher in the first instance.

In other cases, an email will be forwarded to the Subject Lead and / or Senior Pastoral Lead or Head of Year, depending on the nature of the email. The Subject Lead or Senior Pastoral Lead should will send an acknowledgement of receipt. Any communication requiring a lengthy response will be communicated via a letter, by telephone or in a face to face meeting called to address any specific issues. Such forms of communication help to support staff, as all letters are checked before sending with copies retained on file for future reference and telephone calls / meetings can take place with witnesses and minutes taken if needed.

Where possible, Staff will use the weekly Parent Bulletin to communicate key information to parent groups. All letters are passed to the Headteacher's PA prior to sending.

Following a telephone conversation with a Parent or Carer, it is recommended that a short summary email is sent as a record of the conversation or any agreement or further action.

## 8.0 Contact between staff and students

Staff will contact students from their school email address only and send only to a student's school email address; this includes contact through school Microsoft TEAMS accounts and ClassCharts which may also be used. Any email will be clear and concise and written in a suitably professional tone. Staff will avoid responding to simple requests as it is important to encourage students to come and talk and not fill up inboxes with questions. Staff will not contact students electronically outside of the school office hours (8 am to 4:30 pm). In particular, staff will not contact students electronically at the weekend or in the evening. It creates an expectation that staff are contactable at these times. The exception to this would be those taking part in activities at this time.

When emailing staff, students should only use staff members' school email addresses. Students should consider whether it is absolutely necessary to email staff or whether it might be more appropriate to speak





to a staff member face to face in a lesson or at a suitable time during the school day. The best use of email is to give simple, factual information. The basic rules of politeness are expected. Email should not be used as a way of avoiding a conversation with a member of staff. It is not permitted to use another student's email account to send emails in school.

## 9.0 Email contact between staff

Think carefully whether you actually need to send an email. Try to avoid using email as a replacement for personal contact. Staff have weekly briefing in person and also Friday Notices to share information. Please do not use 'All staff' unless absolutely necessary. Consider using one of the pre-established distribution groups or set up your own for groups you regularly.

Avoid sending emails after 6pm and at the weekend. Many of us like to work at that time so either save the email in draft form or "schedule send" the email to go during the normal working day. Avoid sending emails to large groups of other staff. This can cause extra work and frustration as it is not then clear who is picking up the content shared. If you need to send emails to more than one person, it is better to send different emails to each recipient to avoid confusion. Try to avoid emailing several people about the same issue to avoid confusion. Avoid using emails as a way of making a complaint or as a means of venting about an issue. If you feel strongly about an issue, it is often better to talk face to face to enable a dialogue to take place.