

CAMBRIDGE HOUSE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Home - School Communication Policy

Communication Policy Statement:

Open and effective communication is vital to the health and wellbeing of the School community. Effective communication encompasses the exchange of ideas, where people feel they have been heard and their opinions valued, and where information is clear and accurate. All communication needs to be timely, relevant, accurate, well targeted, well delivered, clear and concise, open honest and frank, reciprocal and interactive. This policy's implementation enhances the quality of School community through:

- Providing a framework for effective communication;
- Promoting understanding and co-operative teamwork between the School, parents/guardians and pupils;
- Promoting active participation of the whole School community in effective communication;
- Contributing to the best learning outcomes for pupils;
- Ensuring principles of effective communication are displayed by staff in their work in the School;
- Collective understanding that parents/guardians, pupils and staff have a common goal.

Aims of the Policy:

1. To improve the quality of service given to pupils at Cambridge House Grammar School by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, pupils and other stakeholders.
2. To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the school, parents and pupils on key service areas.
3. To be effective, communication must be open on both sides. Staff and parents are encouraged to ensure that all communication remains polite and professional. Where parents/guardians feel that standards of communication fall short of expectation, they are referred to our School Complaints Policy.

1 School Mechanisms for Communication:

- 1:1 Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes in planners, Schoolcomms, Parent App or e-mail). Occasionally a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary.
- 1:2 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be disappointed or frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone or return a call. Our aim will always be to return a telephone call to a parent within 24 hours. All other calls will generally be returned within 48 hours. Return calls may be made by someone other than the person to whom the original call was made, should it be felt that this is more appropriate.
- 1:3 The school has been particularly proactive in encouraging use of modern communications methods including Parent App. All parents/guardians are asked to give an email address for prompt and effective communication. Surveys indicate that the majority of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the two-way communication they have with school.
- 1:4 However, this does not mean that the school always gets things right and this policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively and clearly.

2 Communication between the school and parents operates in the following ways:

- 2:1 Prospective parents and pupils are invited to an Open Day in January preceding the academic year of entry to the school. All prospective parents received a School Prospectus.
- 2:2 Parents and the pupils accepted into the school are invited to an Induction Evening in June where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented.
- 2:3 Parents are invited to a Year 8 Milestone Evening in the Autumn term to meet the pupil's Form Teacher and review how the pupil has settled into the school.
- 2:4 Milestone Evenings are also provided for Transition Year Groups and Exam Year Groups to provide relevant information and reinforce support structures.
- 2:5 Four Tracking Reports are issued each academic year, including a formal comprehensive Annual Report of pupils' academic progress, achievements and social development.

- 2:6 Details about all severe weather/emergency closure events at the school are published via our School Website, Facebook pages, and Twitter feed. Homework for most subjects will be found on Web Sites.
- 2:7 Parents are sent or provided with a letter which outlines the important events at the school.
- 2:8 Consultation between the school, parents, and pupils operates in the following ways:
- Questionnaires are issued to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email). They may also be distributed at specific parental events or via Schoolcomms or Parent App;
 - The consultation process via questionnaires addresses key service areas such as the school curriculum, the framework for parental consultation evenings, homework, the school's reporting system, primary school transition, the quality and accessibility of the school's materials;
 - Parents and visitors to the school may make suggestions for improving the service and are encouraged to leave these with reception;
 - School reports are issued with a reply slip inviting parents to comment on the report they have received;
 - The Pupil Leadership Team is consulted on a range of key issues relating to the school. Meetings take place at least every half term, with additional meetings for specific issues;
 - As part of the school's system of Departmental Self Review, pupils are involved in Pupil Voice feedback to review the teaching and learning within the department and contribute their own thoughts in departmental strengths and areas of development;
 - Pupils are encouraged to be constructive about how the school can improve provision;
 - Consultation between external agencies takes place with a view to improving the service provided by the school;
 - The Special Educational Needs Department works closely with individual pupils, parents/guardians and external experts and meetings held frequently to discuss best practice and provision for individuals and groups.

3 **Communication Systems:**

3:1 **Parents Communicating with Staff**

Parents or Guardians wishing to contact staff about a matter related to school have a number of options: Parents should ring School Reception on 028 25643151.

- If the matter is related to curriculum or class matters, then the request is to the subject teacher. If the teacher is not available and the matter is urgent, contact should be made with the Head of Department;
- If the matter is related to a welfare issue the Head of Year/Head of Key Stage should be contacted. If not available and the matter is urgent, Vice Principal (Pastoral) should be contacted;
- Alternatively, a parent could email the staff member via the school's email system;
- Parents must make clear the nature of the concern during the initial contact with school.

3:2 **Procedures for Staff Communicating with Parents or Guardians**

As a general rule, parents or guardians should be well informed about the academic progress and pastoral wellbeing of their child. The school has many formal and informal communication mechanisms in place which have been outlined in the section of the policy *School Mechanisms for Communication*.

The following points provide guidance for staff when communicating with parents about academic, pastoral and discipline issues outside the more formal mechanisms, such as parent-teacher evenings. In all dealings with parents and guardians, communication should be professional, open and frank. At the same time, it is essential that staff communicate with empathy, understanding and respect for pupils and their parents or guardians. The following procedures have been divided between academic and pastoral communications.

3:3 **Academic Communication Key Stage 4 and 5**

This section relates to communication with parents or guardians about academic progress of a pupil.

Regular communication with parents/guardians will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with.

3:3:1 Minor Academic issues such as missed homework or assignments appropriately begin with a **note in the Student Planner** or in the **Positive Behaviour Conduct Card**. Similarly, the Student Planner may be used to communicate positive work habits, academic progress or improvements in attitude or effort by a pupil.

3:3:2 When a significant academic change is being contemplated, such as a pupil moving to a different academic grouping, a letter will be sent by the Head of Key Stage to parents or guardians **in advance**, and an opportunity provided for discussion about such changes.

- 3:3:3 Failure to submit formal assessment tasks in Years 11 – 14 will result in interviews with the teacher and the Head of Department. The Head of Department will inform the Vice Principal (Curriculum), who will meet with the pupil to explain that parents will be **contacted by phone or email and a warning letter will be sent to parents or guardians**. A copy of these letters will be added physically and electronically to the pupil's file. Those with pastoral responsibilities such as Form Teachers, Head of Year, Head of Key Stage, Vice Principal (Pastoral) should be alerted by email. Failure to submit a formal assessment task ON TIME will be treated similarly, with the exception that the warning letter home will not be necessary.
- 3:4 **Academic Communication Key Stage 3**
- 3:4:1 Minor Academic issues such as missed homework or assignments appropriately begin with a note in **the Student Planner** or in the **Positive Behaviour Conduct Card**. Similarly, the Student Planner may be used to communicate positive work habits, academic progress or improvements in attitude or effort by a pupil.
- 3:4:2 Repeated minor issues or failure to submit formal work, such as homework, will result in discussions with the pupil and telephone contact with the parent(s) or guardian(s). If the telephone contact is made by the subject teacher, it must be discussed with both the Head of Department and a Senior Teacher beforehand. Notes must be kept and entered into the pupil's file. Relevant pastoral staff must be notified by email.
- 3:4:3 When there is concern for the academic progress of a child, such as the need for extra class attention, tasks for follow-up at home or for support parents should be contacted by phone or by organising a meeting seeking their input. These changes should be noted in the pupil's file.
- 3:4:4 Follow-up phone calls or meetings should be held on a regular basis when a child is at risk academically.
- 3:5 **Communication about Pastoral and/or Discipline Issues:**
- This section relates to communication by staff with parents or guardians about pastoral issues and ongoing or serious discipline issues of a student. Early and regular communication with parents/guardians will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with. The School will create opportunities for parents/guardians to meet with or have contact from Key Pastoral Care staff, particularly when families are new to the school.
(Related policies: Pastoral Policy; Behaviour for Learning Policy and Child Protection Policy and Procedures).
- 3:5:1 For less serious one-off classroom discipline issues (disrespect for others, interfering with the learning of others, being unsafe) the classroom teacher would apply normal classroom management strategies; they should record the incident in the pupil's Positive Behaviour Conduct Card. Parents/guardians may be contacted by a note in the Student Planner, phone call or email (depending on parent/guardian preference). Similarly, the Student Planner may be used to communicate improvements in attitude or effort by a pupil.
- 3:5:2 Where a classroom teacher or Head of Department has concerns regarding pastoral issues or ongoing/serious classroom discipline issues relating to a pupil, it would be appropriate to first check for any pastoral or discipline alerts or pupil history. It may be necessary to contact the Head of Year; Head of Key Stage; Vice Principals.
- 3:5:3 For **ongoing classroom discipline issues or serious one-off classroom discipline issues** the classroom teacher should discuss the problems with their Head of Department or Head of Key Stage.
- If a serious problem is identified, **parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible (preferably on the day but no later than 24 hours)** by phone or email, by either Head of Department or Head of Key Stage.
 - **Notes are to be made of any phone contact or face to face interviews** and saved in SIMS/Pupil File for future reference and communication.
 - **A formal letter will be sent by the Head of Department or Head of Key Stage**, to inform the parents/guardians of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied.
 - **Information will be emailed to relevant academic/pastoral staff** so that they are aware of the situation and can access relevant details.
 - **Follow-up** contact with parents/guardians will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe.

3:5:4 **For serious discipline issues outside the classroom:**

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team will **contact parents preferably on the day of the event, but no later than 24 hours**. If an investigation has not been completed, this contact is to inform parents/guardians that the matter is under investigation.
- Notes are to be made and kept of any phone contacts or face to face interviews.
- **A phone call should be made, followed by a formal letter** to inform parents/guardians of the outcomes of any investigation, particularly where sanctions are being applied.
- **Follow-up** contact with parents/guardians will be organised to review the situation within an agreed timeframe.
- When an investigation results in the possibility of serious sanctions being applied, such as a suspension or expulsion, then the matter would be referred to the Principal (refer to Behaviour for Learning Policy). The **initial contact will be a phone call, followed by a formal letter sent by the Principal** to inform the parents/guardians of the outcomes of any investigation and any sanctions imposed.

3:5:5 For **Pastoral issues** where there may be concern for the welfare of a pupil, the matter will initially be referred to either the Head of Key Stage or Vice Principal (Pastoral). The decision to contact parents/guardians would be taken following investigations and consultation with the Pastoral Care team.

- When the pastoral issue is “**reportable**” (refer to Child Protection Policy) the matter must be reported direct to the designated Child Protection Officer, Vice Principal (Pastoral) and Principal. Decisions to contact parents/guardians would be based on the procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

3:6 **Responding to and following up Parent/Guardian Enquiries.**

This section deals with responses to parent/guardian enquiries to teaching staff about pupil related issues.

3:6:1 Where a parent/guardian has contacted a staff member by phone or personal interview, **notes should be taken** and all aspects of the conversation should be clarified.

3:6:2 When the contact is by email or if the staff member was not available to take the initial phone call, the parent/guardian should be **responded to within 24 hours** of the initial contact.

3:6:3 Where some action is agreed on following a meeting or communication, a time-frame should be established to either review progress or resolve the issue.