

# Watlington Primary School Communication Policy



This policy has been created in collaboration with all schools in the Acer Trust and it is based on the Acer Trust Values:

- **Trust:** We collaborate openly and honestly, prioritising the best interests of all students and staff.
- **Collaboration:** We contribute collectively, sharing responsibility for the Trust's success and ensuring all thrive within it.
- **Big-heartedness:** We are committed to interacting with kindness, warmth and consideration, recognising the value of every individual.
- **Ambition:** We are ambitious for all, guiding students, and staff to discover a world of opportunities, building resilience and pushing their limits to achieve excellence

## Part 1 - Introduction & Purpose

Communication is essential for:

1. developing those positive relationships which form the basis of a successful school,
2. the smooth operation of the school
3. keeping all stakeholders informed.

Ultimately good communication has a positive impact on the learning and personal development of all our students and on the wellbeing of staff, students and parents.

The purpose of this policy is to outline clear expectations for communication within Watlington Primary School and between home and school. Our school is committed to ensuring that communication is effective, timely, professional, and aligned with our school's ethos and values, and those of the Acer Trust.

This policy supports statutory responsibilities including safeguarding, GDPR, and the Equality Act 2010.

## Part 2 - Acer Trust Principles of Effective Communication

Communication should keep staff, students, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed, using the following principles:

- Communication should be clear, accurate, respectful, and professional, meeting expectations clearly set out in our Staff and Parent Codes of Conduct, and in our Behaviour Policy.
- Information should recognise Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, including being accessible.
- Staff will respond within reasonable timeframes and maintain professional boundaries.
- Communication protocols should be mindful of staff wellbeing
- Confidentiality is respected in line with GDPR requirements.
- Communication is consistent across staff and platforms.

### Part 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

- a. **The Headteacher and Leadership Team** will develop effective methods for communication between home and school, ensure that these methods are well-understood and ensure that these methods are inclusive and in line with our commitment to wellbeing. They have a responsibility to ensure that staff, families and external agencies are communicated with in a respectful manner.
- b. **Staff who play a key role in communication between school and home**, such as reception and office staff, are crucial for ensuring effective communication, and will model positive communication.
- c. **Staff** will set aside time regularly for communication, and communicate in line with this policy and our Staff Code of Conduct.
- d. **Parents/carers** will check communications from school regularly and communicate with school in a timely manner, in line with this policy and our Parent Code of Conduct. Parents/carers will ensure the school has the information required to communicate with all who have parental responsibility for one of our students.
- e. **Students** will check communications from school regularly and communicate with staff in a timely manner, in line with this policy and our Behaviour Policy.
- f. **Governors** will communicate effectively with all stakeholders, and oversee that this policy is implemented and upheld.

### Part 4 - Home-School Communication

This section of the policy covers communication between staff and parents/carers, and staff and students. This policy is available on our website and shared with all new families joining our school. The objectives of the policy are to set out:

- i. Methods of communication used
- ii. Protocols and expectations for each method, in particular with a recognition of wellbeing
- iii. The expectation that all communication in any form will be carried out in line with our school values, in particular that of respect. These expectations are clearly set out in our Staff and Parent Codes of Conduct, and in our Behaviour Policy.
- iv. Recognition of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within communication
- v. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the policy, and key linked documents.

#### 4.1 Methods of Communication and their purposes – both individual and group

- a. At Watlington Primary School we use the following methods to communication from school to home:

| <b>Method</b>      | <b>Purpose and Guidance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Website</i>     | <i>Our website contains useful information about the school, how to contact staff and where we celebrate events and achievements. Our website will be kept up to date, be accurate and allow parents and carers, including those joining the school, to have a clear picture of school organisation.</i>                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Email</i>       | <i>This is our main method of communication where the purpose is to give information, both for group and individual communication. This includes newsletters and letters about trips and events. Notification of key events should always be well in advance, ideally at least six weeks, to allow parents/carers to plan to attend. Emails will always comply with our Staff Code of Conduct and will be written as a formal letter.</i> |
| <i>Phone calls</i> | <i>These are used where discussion is essential. They will be made in line with our Staff Code of Conduct</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Letters</i>                                              | <i>Paper letters are not routinely used as we utilise the MCAS communication to parent function to share letters.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Reports</i>                                              | <i>These give information about students' progress, attainment and attitudes to learning; these are made available on our parent portal 'My Child at School'</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Informal communication with parent/carer</i>             | <i>This is often at drop off/pick up. Staff may liaise with parents/carers to celebrate work/behaviour or raise concerns regarding an isolated or on-going issue/incident.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <i>Home-School Communications App: 'My Child at School'</i> | <i>This is a single place where parents/carers can see information specific to their child, such as school reports, attendance information and to check the personal data we have on record</i>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>Meetings</i>                                             | <i>a. Parents' Evenings – these are one-to-one meetings to discuss a student's progress</i><br><i>b. Parents' Information Events – these are information presentations and opportunities to ask questions</i><br><i>c. Individual meetings - these are to address specific issues as they occur; these must be made in advance by appointment – see 4.7 below</i> |

b. Parents and Carers can communicate from Home to School in the following ways:

| <b>Method</b>                                              | <b>Purpose and Guidance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Email</i>                                               | <i>Emails can be sent to a specific member of staff or via <a href="mailto:admin.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk">admin.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:office.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk">office.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk</a> or the class emails. Email is a helpful way of communicating initially, giving the key information. For more significant matters, a phone call or meeting should take place; an initial email can be sent requesting these and outline the matter. All emails should be written in accordance with our Parent Code of Conduct.</i> |
| <i>Phone calls</i>                                         | <i>To contact the school by phone, call via the office on 01491 612 474; it is unlikely that the required member of staff will be free immediately to speak but the office will take a message and ask the staff member to phone back. Communication for absences is covered in our Attendance Policy.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>In-person communication, including meetings</i>         | <i>These are recommended to address more serious matters and should be arranged in advance; parents/carers should not arrive at school and expect an immediate meeting.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>Home-School Communication App: 'My Child at School'</i> | <i>We send emails out via MCAS. We do our best to manage the amount of communications going out to parents, so that communication is effective.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <i>Contacting a student</i>                                | <i>Any urgent messages for students should go via the office, who can communicate this quickly and sensitively.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## 4.2 Communication Standards for Staff

Staff are expected to uphold the Acer Trust Staff Code of Conduct in all communications.

### **4.3 Communication Standards for Parents/Carers**

Parents and Carers are expected to uphold the Acer Trust Parent and Carer Code of Conduct in all communications.

Parents and Carers may choose to engage in social medial communications with other parents and carers, to aid communication and information sharing. It is expected that these communications will also be within the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct, as people posting messages are identifiable as members of our school community. This includes not maligning the school or any individual at the school. Any concerns regarding our school should be directed to the school (see 4.7 below). Any parent or carer who have concerns about any communication that they witness should inform the school and this will be followed up.

### **4.4 Safeguarding and Sensitive Communication, including during holidays (link to Safeguarding Policy)**

It is everyone's responsibility to pass on any information that may help to safeguard our children, even during the school holidays. Please our website for details of how to do this.

### **4.5 Emergency Communication**

In the event of an emergency, such as an unexpected closure, the school will contact parents and carers, via MCAS.

### **4.6 Consideration of Wellbeing and Response Times**

Watlington Primary School takes the wellbeing of staff very seriously. We expect all communication from school to home to meet our high standards of respect and expect the same standards in communication from home to school. Expectations are set out in our Staff and Parent Codes of Conduct. Any reports of communications not meeting these will be investigated and addressed.

We aim to respond to communications within two working days of the member of staff being contacted. If a member of staff is part-time this will be two working days for that member of staff. It may not be possible to resolve an issue within this time period, but an acknowledgement at least will be given.

When staff are absent, they will set an auto-response email stating who can be contacted as an alternative. Please email the [admin.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:admin.2459@watlington.oxon.sch.uk) if you need to contact a member of staff.

### **4.7 Parent and School Meeting Expectations**

We believe that strong, respectful and open communication between parents and school is essential to achieving the best outcomes for every child. Meetings should be conducted in a spirit of partnership and collaboration, with a shared focus on support, understanding and next steps to support the child.

#### **Arranging Meetings**

- Meetings will be arranged with reasonable notice wherever possible and at a time which is as convenient as possible for both the school and parent.
- The purpose of the meeting should be shared in advance; parents and the school are encouraged to raise any additional items ahead of the meeting so that the school can prepare appropriately.
- If additional people are going to attend the meeting, parties should notify each other prior to the meeting taking place so that this can be agreed.
- The views of the child will be considered as part of discussion so decisions about their attendance or input will be important.

#### **Conduct and Participation**

- Meetings will be conducted respectfully and professionally by all participants.
- All parties will have the opportunity to contribute and be heard.

- The focus will remain on the child and achieving the best possible outcome for them.
- Aggressive, abusive or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated, and the school reserves the right to pause or end the meeting if this occurs.
- Information shared will be treated sensitively and in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements
- The school will not be able to share information relating to other pupils or confidential matters

#### **Recording of meetings**

- Meetings between parents and staff are not recorded electronically, as this can inhibit open and transparent discussion
- Generally notes will be taken to capture key points, actions and agreed next steps which will be shared after the meeting
- On occasions, an additional member of staff may attend to support accurate note-taking
- Both the school and parents will have the opportunity to review the notes
- All parties can confirm that the notes are an accurate reflection of the meeting

### **4.8 Raising concerns**

The [Acer Trust Complaints Policy](#) sets out how parents and carers can contact our school if they have a concern. This includes raising a concern before any formal complaint is made. As with all communication, concerns should be raised in line with the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct.

Even in a situation where there is a concern or complaint, we do wish to work with families to resolve issues. In situations where the concern has arisen from something that a student has told their parent or carer about, we do ask that parents and carers seek to obtain a fuller understanding of the situation before assuming that they have all the information.

### **4.9 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

It is a priority to ensure that everyone is included in communications. All communication between school and home can be adapted to meet any individual requirements. These should be highlighted during the admission process or at any point. If one barrier to communication is access to technology, the school will aim to support overcoming this.

### **4.10 Staff-to-Pupil Communication**

Due to the age of the children, no communication will happen between staff and students, other than when in school.

### **4.11 Communication between Governors and Home**

The principles stated in these policies also apply to communication between Governors and home. In addition:

Governors to Staff / Home: Strategic decisions are communicated to staff/home by the Chair of Governors/governors, in agreement with the Headteacher or CEO of the Acer Trust.

Home to Governors: When parents/carers want to escalate a complaint to the School Governing Body they should ensure that they have first taken the steps outlined in the Acer Trust Complaints Procedure. This includes contacting the Head Teacher before escalating to governors.

### **4.12 Monitoring and Reviewing Home-School Communication**

This policy will be reviewed annually, using the following to monitor its effectiveness:

- i. The annual Parent and Staff Surveys to gather feedback on communication between home and school
- ii. monitoring the number of incidents in breach of our Codes of Conduct

#### Related Policies and Documents

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Parent and Carer Code of Conduct
- Acer Trust Trustee and Governor Code of Conduct
- Acer Trust Complaints Procedure
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Managing Staff Absence Policy