

St Helen's Church of England Primary School



Communication Policy

Our curriculum vision at St Helen's CE Primary School

S eeking Achievement for all
H opeful through our Christian values
I nspire through our knowledge rich curriculum
N urturing and preparing for life through Jesus' love
E mbracing equality and diversity



Our LDST Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Let peace, friendship and love grow in our schools.
Send the Holy Spirit to give:
Excellence to our learning,
Love to our actions and
Joy to our worship.
Guide us to help others,
So that we may all
Learn, Love and Achieve, Together with Jesus.
Amen

**"You are the light of the world... Let
your light shine before others."**

Matthew 5:16



Introduction

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

All communications at St. Helen's should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Be clear and easily understood by all (standard font will be used).
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Take account of relevant school policies
- Be compatible with our school values and Christian foundation.
- Written communications with parents and other external contacts must comply with agreed practice.
- Be inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

The school will undertake to ensure that:

- Parents and children have clear lines of communication
- The curriculum is clearly communicated to parents
- Parents are informed of forthcoming events within appropriate timelines
- All communications will be treated as confidential within the school context

Parents will undertake to:

- Read all communications issued by the school
- Raise issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity with the school in the appropriate manner*

- Act on the communication (for example, attending special meetings)
- Comply with the school's 'Social Media Acceptable User Agreement' (found in appendices).

*Issues should be raised with a class teacher in the first instance; these may then be escalated to school's senior leadership team if necessary.

Public Access

The school makes a range of documentation available to parents. We keep a main set in the school office and we make a copy of this available on request. Many policies are now available on the website for parent access.

External Methods of Communication

Iris via Email / Text Messages

This is our main form of instant communication about what is going on in school. Links are sent out with our weekly newsletter every Friday. Text messages are sent out when there is an important notification for parents. Any letters that are sent out via email must be in pdf format.

Newsletter

The school newsletter is sent out via Iris every Friday. The school uses 'Sway' as a means to share the school newsletter as this is accessible and user-friendly for mobile phone and other mobile devices. The newsletter contains important information about upcoming events, individual and class celebrations and achievements and any other relevant information relating to the school, church and community. Any items for the school newsletter must be sent to the admin email by 12.00pm Friday.

Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team

The headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team will be on the gate each morning (from 8.40am to 9.00am) and be available to ask quick questions regarding school events. It is not appropriate to talk about individual children or teachers as this is not a confidential environment. If necessary, parents can request an appointment (via the school office) to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team.

Website

School information e.g. policies, dates, uniform suppliers and topic overviews are all on our school website. Parents are expected to use the website to access information they may need.

Email

We ask parents to use the email address sthelensprimary@ldst.org.uk . For the purposes of administration we require all emails to go to a central email address. However, all emails will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff addressed. Please note all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. We aim to acknowledge emails within 2 working days with a response to the enquiry from the relevant member of staff within 5 working days (during termtime).

Letters

Letters should be passed through to the school office, these include pupil absence letters. As with emails, all letters will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff addressed. Please note all letters should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. Please let the office staff know if the letter contains information about your child which you would like the class teacher to receive urgently. We will aim to respond to letters within 5 working days (during termtime).

Telephone

This would be appropriate where enquiries are deemed more urgent by the parent, such as communicating particular information about the child to the school. We ask parents to phone the school on 0161 775 2935. If the call requires a response from a member of staff, we aim to do this within 2 working days. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call.

Reading records

All children have a reading record. This enables parents and teachers to record a wide range of information about their child's reading and learning. These can sometimes be used to communicate messages between school and home although they are not always checked daily. For more important messages parents must use one of the other forms of communication e.g. telephone, letter or email.

Headteacher Coffee Morning

These are held every term or more frequently if appropriate. This will be an open invite to parents from all classes and is an opportunity to share information about school life and to hear the views of parents. This will help to inform the school so that views feed into the decisions that are made.

Parents' Meetings

We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year e.g. Meet the Teacher. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements. Several meetings for new parents are organised at appropriate times for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school.

Class Dojo

We encourage parents to download a link to class dojo. Teachers will regularly update the ClassDojo with pictures and news about what the children have been learning as well as any other important notices. Teachers will aim to update ClassDojo a minimum of twice a week. Parents can also send messages directly to their child's class teacher via ClassDojo. Teachers will aim to respond to the message by the end of the following day. Teachers will not respond to messages outside of working hours 8.00am – 5.00pm.

Appointments

If necessary, parents can visit the school to ask questions, to gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team. Issues should be raised with a class teacher in the first instance; these may then be escalated to school's senior leadership team if necessary. Parents are asked to phone the school office on 0161 775 2935 to make an appointment giving a brief outline of what they wish to discuss. This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents. We will aim to make appointments within 5 working days and are willing to meet either before (from 8.00 am) or after school (3.30–4.30 pm) to fit in with parents. If parents are unable to keep an appointment, they should give adequate notice i.e. ring the school if it is on the same day. Parents should not expect to meet teachers during the school day, unless by prior arrangement.

Parents are asked not to approach teachers to discuss their child if they meet them outside school, as this does not allow for confidential discussions.

Teaching staff are not available 24 hours a day and are instructed not to communicate with parents outside working hours 8.00am – 5.00pm.

Written Reports / Parents Evening

In December and in March, parents receive an interim report with details of their child's attainment and progress in the core subjects and learning behaviour. There is a more in-depth report in the summer, which gives feedback on all areas of the curriculum. Attendance reports are sent home at the end of each term. Parents should check these for any discrepancies and inform the school as soon as possible. In addition, parents meet their child's

teacher twice during the year for parent consultations. To support parents attending, a variety of late afternoon and evening times are offered.

Appointments outside the consultation times will only be arranged in very exceptional circumstances. Where possible, it is more effective for parents to attend the consultation together so that a common approach to supporting the child in their learning can be agreed. If exceptional circumstances mean this is not possible, we will try to arrange separate consultations.

Dates for the Diary

A calendar of school events will be shared with parents on the school newsletter. These will be updated regularly to ensure parents are given as much notice as possible about forthcoming events.

Governors

Governors should be contacted via the school email sthelensprimary@ldst.org.uk or written communications left at the school office, which will be forwarded to the Chair of Governors). As governors support the school in a strategic role, if parents contact them on a matter to do with the management of the school, governors will be unable to respond and will direct parents or carers to take their concern to the school.

Parents' WhatsApp Groups

These are not an official school means of communication and parents are aware of such. These are organised and run by parents, and parents are reminded about the school's Acceptable Use of the Internet Agreement for Parents.

Internal Methods of Communication

Meetings

All formal meetings should be structured and have minutes and members invited to contribute to the agenda. For all other meetings, notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

Emails

Information is communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. The school has an email group for messages. All staff have access to read and write messages. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however, it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required (see separate email guidance).

Weekly Briefings & Staff Meetings

A weekly briefing meeting is held for staff every Friday morning at 8.20am. All staff are encouraged to attend this. If however, they are unable to attend, it is

their responsibility to catch up on the information which was discussed. Staff meetings take place every week on a Wednesday (these will always start at 3.45pm). The main points may be emailed to all staff and also placed on the staff notice board.

School Diary

The school diary is accessible online and all members of staff can access it through their staff email accounts. Events are discussed in advance at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions. The diary for the coming week is discussed during the weekly briefings. Only certain members of staff have permission rights, to edit the school calendar. All dates such as trips, visitors and meetings must be emailed to sthelensprimary@ldst.org.uk and passed on to the school office to be added on to the school diary.

Trip Letters

The school office will produce letters to be sent out regarding special events, trips or residential visits. Teachers must provide the office administration staff with the relevant information e.g. cost, timings, equipment and purpose. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to check the school diary before events are booked to avoid any clashes (whole school events cannot be moved). Trip letters must be sent home with at least three weeks' notice (as much notice as possible for residential trips due to the cost). All letters must be checked for accuracy before being sent out by the headteacher or assistant headteacher.

Individual Classes

Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.

Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day.

Whole School Worship/Assemblies

Some communication may take place at the end of collective worship.

Timetables

Staff receive timetables at the beginning of the academic year/term or when significant alterations have been made, for:

- Staff Meeting agendas
- Collective Worship rota (i/c themes/content)
- Playground Duty rota
- Hall use / Outside Games – use of playground/field

Supply Teachers

Supply teachers are provided with a 'Supply Teachers Leaflet'. This contains information about the school organisation, management and expectations. Supply Teachers are expected to complete a daily report for the class teacher. It is the responsibility of the office staff to ensure the supply teacher knows where they will be teaching and that they have received the relevant information. In most cases, class teachers should ensure all the relevant information is available to the supply teacher which includes, medical, SEN, behaviour information as well as planning.

Use of Photographs and names

Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes, including displays of pupils' work and achievements, and records of important school events. We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus, on the school website, or in the governors' report to parents. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at school.

Parental permission will be obtained before using photographs of children. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the school office. Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable. Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names.

Communication with the Community

Members of the local community are invited to school functions such as special assemblies, Harvest, Christmas Fairs and school productions. Guest speakers from local churches and businesses, community organisations and charities come into school to speak to the children. We also try to involve parents and governors as much as possible.

Communication with Other Schools

The school regularly communicates with staff and children of other primary schools. Such communication may be by means of personal contact with specific staff or through more formal contact such as cluster groups and by means of sports fixtures and other inter-school events.

The school is a member of the Liverpool Diocese Schools Trust. Communication with the local secondary schools is predominantly for Y6 children. We have particularly close links with Culcheth High School.

Communication with Outside Agencies

Close contacts are maintained with support agencies, including the Warrington Social Services, school health, school admissions, the LCSB (local children safeguarding board), the EWO (education welfare office), early help and the Peripatetic Music Service.

Confidentiality

We hold information on pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. We will be compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

Acceptable use of the internet: agreement for parents and carers

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Name of parent/carer: Name

of child:

Online channels are an important way for parents/carers to communicate with, or about, our school.

The school uses the following channels:

- Our school website <http://www.sthelensprimary.uk>
- Iris (email or text messages)
- Our official twitter feed @sthelensCEPS
- ClassDojo

Parents/carers also set up independent channels to help them stay on top of what's happening in their child's class. For example, class/PTA Facebook groups, email groups, or chats (through apps such as WhatsApp).

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, I will:

- Be respectful towards members of staff, and the school, at all times
- Be respectful of other parents/carers and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

I will not:

- Use private groups (e.g. WhatsApp) or personal social media to complain about or criticise the school or members of staff. This is not constructive and the school can't improve or address issues, if they aren't raised in an appropriate way
- Use private groups or personal social media to complain about, or try to resolve, a behaviour issue involving other pupils. I will contact the school and speak to the appropriate member of staff, if I'm aware of a specific behaviour issue or incident
- Upload or share photos or videos on social media (including WhatsApp) of any child other than my own.
- If a parent notices a comment or sees something they feel is inappropriate, they should inform the school.

Signed:

Date:

E-mail Protocol

To promote effective electronic communication within school and with external agencies.

Introduction

This document has been produced to address the effectiveness and efficiency of our communication and information system. Through the publication of this document, effective training and the commitment of all school staff, electronic communications will prove to enhance communication rather than waste time or over burden colleagues through poor e-mail management. The ability to access an email account at any time and in any place greatly enhances the potential for communicating effectively. LDST has adopted a web-based approach.

Organisation

sthelensprimary@ldst.org.uk This address will receive the majority of the school e-mails. Printing e-mails often adds considerable cost to the school. A printed e-mail will also prevent the reader from using any links that are incorporated within it. Therefore, it is advised that whenever possible, the person responsible for opening up the office e-mail account forwards mail to the required recipients.

There will be occasions when confidential information will need to be sent to the school to be read only by the Headteacher. School publicly advertises the Admin account e.g. on school letter heads and on our website. Each member of staff has an e-mail account; all staff should use their school e-mail address for all school related business.

Sending Emails

Staff should use their own password protected accounts to send and check e-mail. Only send a message to colleagues who need to receive it. If the e-mail address of an individual is unknown, use the subject field to stipulate who the message is for, and then send your message to the school office account.

Identify yourself in each message, include your name and position at the end of a message. Omit personal details, such as home phone number and addresses. Letter heads, signatures and disclaimer details can be set up automatically to save time and provide a formal style response.

Content

Use the subject field to indicate clearly what the content is about, so that users can prioritise their mail. Do not write in CAPITAL LETTERS as this is the electronic version of shouting. Humour can often be misinterpreted – emotional meaning is often lost in text, keep your wonderful wit for face to face communication.

Do not reply to an email to point out grammatical errors.

Avoid sending unnecessary information – keep emails brief and to the point. It is good practice to focus on one topic per message.

Better to receive 5 separate emails from the same person on different issues, than one with the 5 points made together. Individual issues may be able to be dealt with immediately and other more complex issues can be dealt with separately. Emails which give a link to the required information on a website are very helpful. This allows the reader to download the required information at their own convenience.

Attachments

Careful consideration should be given before sending large attachments, as the receiver may not have the ability or required mailbox size to open them, they may take a long time to download and the receiver may not have the required program on their computer to open them up. Sound and graphics attached to e-mails will reduce the speed of delivery to your recipient. Avoid attaching these items if they are not pertinent to the message sent. The sender should clearly state on the e-mail what the attachment is and the purpose for sending it, to minimise the spread of viruses. Better to provide a link to a web site or shared directory than send the same content through e-mail.

Sensitive Information

E-mails are the electronic equivalent of a postcard. Anyone can read the content along the delivery path. Sensitive information should be sent by post or via a secure transfer system. Child Protection details should not be reported via email. Never email in haste, consider the facts and consequences of the message. Be professional and careful about what you say about others, as e-mail is easily forwarded. Only put in writing what you would say to someone's face. Be aware of copyright and libel issues e.g. when sending scanned text, pictures or information downloaded from the internet. An email can be contractually binding. Therefore, care should be taken when expressing personal views that these cannot be misinterpreted as belonging to school or LDST. If an urgent e-mail is sent, you may want to follow this with a phone call. Never send e-mails that are offensive, threatening, defamatory or illegal. E-mails have been used successfully as evidence in libel cases.

Receiving Emails

E-mails should be read by the intended recipient only. E-mail accounts should be accessed on a regular basis, at least once each day. In the case of absence, an auto-responder can be set up saying how long the person will be absent, and providing an alternative contact. All incoming e-mails requiring a response, should be replied to within 5 working school days; certain e-mails

may need to be prioritised in light of their content. Electronic mail needs to be sorted and organised in the same way as paper mail. E-mails that need to be kept should be stored in electronic folders. This will help to ensure that the mailbox does not fill up quickly. Deleted and sent items should be cleared out regularly to ensure that the mailbox does not exceed 75% full. Important e-mails should be protected from editing or deletion, a regular back-up procedure is advised. Staff will only respond to emails between 8.00am and 5.00pm weekdays. They are not expected to read or respond to emails at weekend, to protect their own wellbeing.

Security

School staff are responsible for the security of their computer, and for protecting any information or data used and/or stored on it. Do not leave a mailbox open and unattended, always keep it password protected. The account holder/s needs to strive to keep their passwords confidential; to prevent other users from accessing and sending emails from their account. Users may need to make their passwords known in the event of absence. It is good practice to change your password on a regular basis, twice a term is recommended. School e-mails will only be monitored by the headteacher in exceptional circumstances. Absent staff are aware that their e-mail account may be opened by another member of staff.

Creating a password

The following advice should be followed with regard to password format. Passwords must not be easily guessable or related to the identity of the user e.g. your own name, that of a family member, your pet's name or your birthday. Passwords should not be words that are found in a standard dictionary. Passwords must be at least 7 characters long. Passwords should contain at least one non-alphabetic character. Passwords should not be written down, unless the paper copy is stored at the appropriate level of security.

Confidentiality

Please remember that e-mails are only as secure as the telephone. Sensitive information should be sent by post or via a secure transfer system.

Training

All staff need to know how to send, open, and forward messages, as well as how to administer basic housekeeping on their accounts. Training will be provided on request. Ongoing support will be available from the school admin team.

This protocol will be circulated to all staff each year in the Autumn Term.