ST JAMES
C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Home-School Communication Policy

Statement of intent

St James CE Primary School is committed to building positive, respectful and productive relationships with parents and carers. We recognise that effective two-way communication is central to children's safety, wellbeing, attendance, learning and achievement.

Our communication will reflect our Christian vision and values of love, hope, forgiveness, peace, respect and trust. We will aim to be welcoming, clear, timely, inclusive and solution-focused. We want parents and carers to feel listened to, informed and confident in approaching school.

This policy explains how the school communicates with families, how parents and carers can raise questions or concerns, the responsibilities of everyone involved and the steps we will take to ensure communication remains appropriate and constructive.

Aims and principles

- To develop trusting, respectful partnerships between home and school, with the child's best interests at the centre.
- To provide parents and carers with clear information about school life, learning, progress, attendance, wellbeing and important events.
- To make communication accessible and inclusive, taking account of individual family circumstances, language needs, disability and access to technology.
- To encourage timely, proportionate two-way communication and early resolution of concerns.
- To protect the wellbeing and reasonable work–life balance of pupils, families and staff.
- To ensure that sensitive information is shared securely and only with those who need to know.

Scope

This policy applies to communication between St James CE Primary School and parents/carers, including communication by telephone, email, text message, the school's chosen parent communication system, letters, the website, social media and face-to-face meetings. It should be read alongside the school's safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, complaints, data protection and other relevant policies.

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board

- Ensure that the school has clear and effective arrangements for communication with families.
- Review communication arrangements and consider whether they are accessible, effective and understood.

The Headteacher

- Oversee the implementation of this policy and ensure that communication arrangements are clear to staff and families.
- Ensure concerns are directed to the appropriate member of staff and escalated where necessary.
- Lead the response to serious or unresolved concerns, in line with the relevant school procedures.
- Review the effectiveness of communication and make improvements where needed.

Senior leaders and designated staff

- Support staff in responding to concerns and ensure that matters are referred to the appropriate person.
- Provide advice and support in relation to learning, pastoral care, SEND, attendance and safeguarding, according to their responsibilities.
- Keep appropriate records of significant communication and agreed actions.

Class teachers and other staff

- Build positive relationships with parents and carers and communicate relevant information about pupils' learning and wellbeing.
- Respond professionally, calmly and constructively to questions and concerns.

- Pass on matters that are outside their role or require support from a senior leader or specialist colleague.
- Use approved school communication channels and maintain confidentiality.
- Ensure that relevant contact information and communication needs are brought to the attention of the school office.

Parents and carers

- Keep contact details, emergency contacts and collection arrangements up to date.
- Read school communications and respond to requests where necessary.
- Raise concerns with the appropriate member of staff and provide relevant information to help the school respond.
- Communicate respectfully with staff, pupils and other families, including when they disagree with a decision.
- Use the school's agreed communication channels and avoid contacting individual staff through personal social media or private contact details.

How the school communicates with families

The school uses a range of communication methods so that information can be shared in a timely and accessible way. These may include:

- The school website for key information, policies, term dates, calendars and general updates.
- The school newsletter for news, celebrations, reminders, forthcoming events and information about school life.
- ClassDojo & Tapestry, the school's approved parent communication platforms, alongside text messages or email where appropriate, for announcements, reminders and individual updates.
- Telephone calls for matters that are urgent, sensitive or better discussed directly.
- Letters where a formal or paper communication is appropriate.
- Face-to-face meetings, including arranged appointments and parent consultation meetings.
- The school's official social media accounts to celebrate learning, share public information and promote school events.

We will use plain English, explain unfamiliar terms and aim for a warm, welcoming and respectful tone. Where a family needs an alternative format, translation or other reasonable support to access information, they should contact the school office.

ClassDojo / Tapestry are the school's approved communication platforms and will be used as a key channel for routine communication between school and families. It may be used to share whole-school and class announcements, reminders, dates, celebrations, photographs or examples of learning where appropriate permissions are in place, and messages relating to an individual child.

Staff must use the school's authorised ClassDojo / Tapestry accounts and follow the school's expectations for professional communication, confidentiality, safeguarding and data protection. Class or whole-school posts must not include confidential information about an identifiable pupil or family. Individual messages should be used only where the matter is suitable for written communication; sensitive, complex or potentially contentious matters should normally be discussed by telephone or in a meeting and recorded through the appropriate school process.

ClassDojo / Tapestry are not an emergency or safeguarding reporting service. Parents and carers should telephone the school or speak directly to a Designated Safeguarding Officer about an urgent concern. Staff who receive information that may indicate a safeguarding risk must act in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and must not wait for a reply through ClassDojo / Tapestry. Routine ClassDojo / Tapestry messages will be dealt with during normal working hours; staff are not expected to monitor or respond to messages outside their working hours.

Parents and carers should use ClassDojo / Tapestry respectfully and for matters relating to their child and school. It should not be used to discuss another child, raise complaints publicly, or expect an immediate

response. Where a message raises a concern that needs a fuller discussion, staff should arrange an appropriate conversation and follow the communication pathway.

The school will take care not to overwhelm families with repeated messages across several platforms. Important information will be shared through the most appropriate channel, and urgent messages will be prioritised.

Contacting the school

The school office is the main point of contact for general enquiries and will direct messages to the appropriate member of staff. Parents and carers should contact the school using the published telephone number (01204 572587) or official email address (office@st-james-farnworth.bolton.sch.uk). Contact details and office opening times should be checked on the school website and in current school communications.

Parents and carers should not use social media comments or direct messages to raise private concerns about an individual child, member of staff or incident. Such matters will be redirected to an appropriate, confidential school channel so that they can be considered and recorded properly.

Staff are not expected to respond to routine messages outside their normal working hours, during weekends or school holidays. The school will respond as soon as reasonably practicable during working hours. An urgent safeguarding concern should not be left in an email inbox or social media message.

Who to contact: school communication pathway

To help concerns reach the right person and be resolved efficiently, parents and carers should normally follow the steps below. The school may adapt the route where the nature or urgency of a concern makes this necessary.

Query or concern	Who to contact
Friendship issue or incident in school	1. Child's class teacher 2. Pastoral team: Mrs McKinnon or Miss Walton 3. A member of the Senior Leadership Team 4. Headteacher, Mr Booth, or Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Parkinson
Learning, progress or classroom query	1. Child's class teacher 2. A member of the Senior Leadership Team 3. Headteacher, Mr Booth, or Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Parkinson
Mental health or wellbeing	1. Child's class teacher 2. Pastoral team: Mrs McKinnon or Miss Walton 3. A member of the Senior Leadership Team 4. Headteacher, Mr Booth, or Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Parkinson
Special educational needs or additional needs	1. Child's class teacher 2. SENDCO, Miss Thomas 3. Headteacher, Mr Booth, or Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Parkinson
Attendance	1. Child's class teacher 2. Attendance team: Mrs McKinnon or Mrs Parkinson 3. Headteacher, Mr Booth
Transition to secondary school	1. Child's class teacher 2. SENDCO, Miss Thomas (where relevant) 3. Headteacher, Mr Booth, or Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Parkinson

Safeguarding concerns

The safety and welfare of children is paramount. If a parent or carer has a concern that a child may be at risk of harm, they should contact a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) at the school as soon as possible. The school's designated contacts are:

- Mr Booth
- Mrs McKinnon
- Miss Walton
- Mrs Parkinson
- Mrs Nuttall
- Miss Thomas

If the concern is not resolved or needs to be escalated within the school, contact the Headteacher, Mr Booth. If a child is in immediate danger, call 999. If you need to report a safeguarding concern or seek advice from Children's Services, contact the relevant local authority service directly. Do not rely on a message sent through social media or a routine email for an urgent safeguarding matter.

The school will respond to safeguarding information in accordance with its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and statutory procedures. Information will be shared appropriately to protect children; confidentiality cannot be promised where a safeguarding concern requires information to be passed on.

Raising a concern or making a complaint

We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns at an early stage, with the member of staff best placed to help. In most cases, this will be the class teacher in the first instance. The school will listen, seek to understand the concern, consider relevant information and explain any next steps.

If a concern remains unresolved, parents and carers should use the escalation pathway. Where a parent wishes to make a formal complaint, they should follow the school's Complaints Procedure, which is available from the school office or website. A concern raised informally is not automatically treated as a formal complaint.

The school will handle complaints fairly and sensitively, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality and keeping records in line with the relevant procedure.

Expectations for respectful communication

We recognise that parents and carers may sometimes feel worried, frustrated or upset. Staff will seek to remain calm, listen carefully and respond professionally. We ask parents and carers to:

- Speak to staff respectfully and allow them to explain the school's position.
- Raise concerns privately rather than discussing individual pupils or staff in public forums or on social media.
- Avoid aggressive, threatening, discriminatory, abusive or personally insulting language or behaviour.
- Make an appointment where a matter needs a longer or more private discussion, rather than expecting an immediate conversation at the classroom door.
- Respect the privacy and safety of all children and families; staff cannot discuss another child or disclose confidential information about them.

The school will not tolerate abusive, threatening, discriminatory or intimidating behaviour towards staff, pupils, governors or other families. Where communication becomes unacceptable, the Headteacher may take proportionate steps in line with the school's policies and relevant trust procedures. This may include ending a meeting or call, requiring future contact to take place in writing or through a named senior member of staff, or putting other reasonable communication arrangements in place. Any restrictions will be proportionate, explained to the parent/carer and reviewed as appropriate. The school will continue to make arrangements for essential communication about the child.

Where there is a disagreement, all parties should focus on resolving the issue constructively and on what is in the child's best interests.

Response times and meetings

The school aims to acknowledge routine parent/carer enquiries within five working days and to provide a substantive response as soon as reasonably practicable. Some matters require investigation, consultation or information from other agencies and may take longer. Where this is the case, the school will aim to let the parent/carer know who is dealing with the matter and when they can expect an update.

Parents and carers should make an appointment for discussions that require privacy or more than a brief exchange. Staff may need to arrange a mutually suitable time rather than discuss a complex matter during teaching, lesson changeovers or pupil collection.

These response times are working expectations, not a guarantee of an immediate resolution. Urgent safeguarding or immediate safety concerns must be raised directly by telephone or in person with an appropriate safeguarding professional.

Confidentiality, data protection and digital communication

Personal information about pupils and families will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements and the school's privacy information.

Staff will use school-approved systems and accounts for professional communication and will not use personal social media accounts to communicate privately with parents or pupils.

Parents and carers should not share confidential information, photographs or identifying details about other children or families in online groups or public forums.

The school may use photographs, videos or examples of children's work in line with its consent arrangements and privacy notices.

Messages containing sensitive information will be directed to an appropriate secure channel or discussed by telephone or in a meeting where suitable.

Communication about attendance

The school will communicate with parents and carers about attendance, punctuality and absence in a supportive, timely and consistent way. We will work with families to understand barriers to attendance and identify appropriate support. Parents and carers must notify the school of absence using the school's published absence reporting arrangements and provide the information requested. Attendance concerns will be managed in line with the school's Attendance Policy and current statutory guidance.

For attendance queries, parents and carers should follow the pathway and contact the class teacher first, followed by the attendance team where necessary.

Communication plan

Method	Purpose / frequency	Audience	Lead responsibility
ClassDojo / Tapestry	Key platforms for class/whole-school announcements, reminders, celebrations and appropriate individual messages. Used during working hours.	Parents/carers and relevant class families	Authorised staff / class teachers / school leaders
School newsletter	Normally weekly; shared digitally and, where appropriate, in paper form.	Parents/carers, pupils and staff	Headteacher / delegated staff
Website updates	Updated when key information, policies,	Parents/carers and wider	School office /

	dates or notices change.	community	designated website lead
Official social media	Used for public celebrations, reminders and promotion of school events; not for confidential casework.	Wider school community	Authorised staff
Letters, emails and app messages	Used for targeted information, consent requests, reminders and individual communication.	Relevant parents/carers	Relevant staff member / school office
Telephone calls	Used for urgent, sensitive or individual matters, including same-day messages where needed.	Relevant parent/carer	School office / relevant staff
Parent consultation meetings	Scheduled opportunities to discuss learning, progress and wellbeing.	Parents/carers and teachers	Class teachers / school leaders
Safeguarding contact	Concerns passed promptly to a DSL and managed under safeguarding procedures.	Relevant safeguarding professionals and family, as appropriate	Designated Safeguarding Officers / Headteacher
Complaints	Managed in accordance with the published Complaints Procedure and its timescales.	Complainant and relevant school leaders/governors	Headteacher / designated complaints lead

Accessibility and inclusion

The school recognises that families have different communication preferences and may face barriers such as limited access to digital devices, language differences, literacy needs, disability or changing personal circumstances. We will make reasonable efforts to provide information in an accessible way and to identify an effective method of contact with each family. Parents and carers should tell the school office if they need information in a different format, support with translation or an alternative way to communicate.

Families who cannot access ClassDojo / Tapestry or prefer not to use it should contact the school office so that an appropriate alternative communication method can be agreed. Essential information will not be withheld because a family does not use the platform.

We will seek to ensure that important information is not available exclusively through a digital channel where this would create a barrier for a family.

Monitoring and review

The Headteacher and Governing Board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through feedback from parents/carers and staff, the handling of concerns and complaints, and review of the communication methods used by the school. The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes to school practice, trust arrangements or statutory guidance make this necessary.

The policy will be made available to parents and carers on the school website and from the school office. Significant changes will be communicated to families and staff.

Appendix 1: Quick guide for parents and carers

Please use the following route so that your question reaches the right person:

If your concern is about…	Please contact…
Friendship or incident	Class teacher → Pastoral team (Mrs McKinnon or Miss Walton) → Senior Leadership Team → Headteacher Mr Booth / Deputy Head Mrs Parkinson
Learning or progress	Class teacher → Senior Leadership Team → Headteacher Mr Booth / Deputy Head Mrs Parkinson
Wellbeing	Class teacher → Pastoral team (Mrs McKinnon or Miss Walton) → Senior Leadership Team → Headteacher Mr Booth / Deputy Head Mrs Parkinson
SEND / additional needs	Class teacher → SENDCO Miss Thomas → Headteacher Mr Booth / Deputy Head Mrs Parkinson
Attendance	Class teacher → Attendance team (Mrs McKinnon or Mrs Parkinson) → Headteacher Mr Booth
Secondary transition	Class teacher → SENDCO Miss Thomas, where relevant → Headteacher Mr Booth / Deputy Head Mrs Parkinson
Safeguarding	Contact a DSO: Mrs McKinnon, Miss Walton, Mrs Parkinson, Mrs Nuttall or Miss Thomas. If unresolved, contact Headteacher Mr Booth. For immediate danger, call 999.

Our shared commitment: respectful communication, strong relationships and the best outcomes for every child.