



Communications Policy

Our school is a happy place where everyone is valued, every child can thrive and reach their full potential and where we live out our Christian values celebrating the uniqueness of each individual.

Policy reviewed by:	SEC Feb 2023
Chair of Governing Body:	Caroline Fleming
Headteacher:	Rizelle Crouch
Policy review due:	February 2025

1. Introduction

The aim of this policy is to enable good communication between parents/ carers and all stakeholders within the school community. The school welcomes contact with parents/carers because this fosters mutual understanding and support which has a positive effect on children's performance and their attitudes to learning. Through good communication we build relationships and knowledge that are vital to a thriving school community made up primarily of children, parents, educators and governors. We will succeed by working closely together.

2. Principles/ Objectives

A strong communication strategy ensures that every member of our community feels valued and in turn values the aims and vision of the school.

Therefore our guiding principles for all school communication aim to ensure that communications are:

- clear, accurate, precise and timely
- inclusive of the whole school community
- in line with relevant school policies in particular Equal Opportunities
- compatible with our core values as shown on the school's website www.stnicholasce.org

3. Aims of the Policy

- To detail how the Senior Leadership Team will communicate with parents, pupils and staff members, along with the procedures they should follow.
- To explain when staff are expected to acknowledge and reply to parents and the procedures staff should follow (i.e. within school hours, via school email system). To explain how staff intend to communicate with parents (i.e. via a school diary, letters or email).
- To enable parents to communicate with governors should they need to.

The governors' details are available on the school website. Governors should be contacted via the email (i.e. governors@stnicholasce.org or via 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 appertaining to the management of the school, governors will be unable to respond and will direct them to take their concern to the headteacher.

- To detail parental responsibilities, including absences, signing reading/ homework diaries, ensuring all contact information and other data is up to date, communicating relevant information about their child to appropriate staff.

4. Methods of Communication

4.1 Email

The school will usually contact parents/carers by email using Parentmail to share information about trips and events. The subject in each communication will start with the class name.

Parent to School Emails

For the purpose of administration, we require all emails to be sent to a central email address admin@stnicholasce.org. The school email address will be monitored from Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 3.15pm, during term time (excluding lunch times and INSET days). We aim to acknowledge all emails received to the email address within 48 working hours. 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.

Emails which are sent to personal accounts will automatically be deleted without being read.

Notification of absence

In order to notify St. Nicholas CE School of an absence, parents need to provide written notification of the reasons for absence to the school secretary via admin@stnicholasce.org or by phone if not able to e-mail. This should be done as soon as possible on the first day of absence. If a child has a medical appointment, music exam etc., please notify the office in advance. It is important that you also indicate whether your child will be missing school lunch if they have one. Children need to be collected before 12 or after 1pm as the office is closed at this time.

School to Parent Emails

Parents/ carers must ensure that the school office is informed of any changes to email addresses and/or phone numbers. For parents who are unable to access communications via email, the school will provide hard copies of any relevant information.

If your email requires investigation or is of a complex nature, then an acknowledgement email will be sent. During term time a full response will be issued within 10 working days of the acknowledgement email, allowing time for investigations and to cover sickness, should that be necessary. This may include informing you that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case staff should indicate a timeframe in which a response may be expected.

4.2 Letter

On some occasions, in order to ensure confidentiality and security, it may be appropriate for the school to write a letter to an individual parent/carer. All letters sent to the school must be addressed to the school office (St. Nicholas School, Church Green, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 2TP).

We aim to respond to letters received at this address within 3 working days, term time only (excluding INSET days). If a letter requires investigation or is of a complex nature then an acknowledgement letter will be sent within this timescale. During term time, we aim to respond to letters within 10 working days (allowing time for investigations and to cover sickness, should that be necessary).

4.3 Telephone calls

The school office number is 01582 623620. The office is open from Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 3.30 pm with lunch taken between 12.00pm until 1.00pm. The office answering machine will be checked on a daily basis during term time only. Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer telephone calls.

Any communications received during school holidays and INSET days will be responded to upon the school re-opening and the timescales stated will apply from the first day the children attend school after a school holiday.

If a call requires a response from a member of staff, we aim to do this within 2 working days.

There will be times when the school will contact parents by telephone. This might be to discuss something that needs addressing during the school day or if we've not been able to see you at the start or end of the day; to arrange a meeting; to communicate a more urgent message to, or to inform a parent of an injury/illness. If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent by 9.30am (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

4.4 End of the day

Wherever possible, if there is an issue arising from the day that we need to communicate, we try to do this face to face with parents. Where this is not possible, we may follow up with a telephone call or email. Due to safeguarding procedures, parents are not allowed to walk into the school to find a class teacher or member of the SLT at the end of the day. This ensures safeguarding is maintained for the after school Club. If a parent would like to have a discussion with a member of staff, then the parent needs to request that a member of the School office team check whether the teacher is available for a meeting at that point.

4.5 Head teacher and Parent Forum

When needed, a parent working party is established to discuss specific policies or aspects of school life. This is also an opportunity for the Head teacher to hear the views of parents so these views can feed into the decisions made by the school.

4.6 Website

The school website provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is a platform to promote the school to a wider audience. Most general information parents/carers would seek can be readily found at <http://www.stnicholasce.org/>

Parents/ carers are encouraged to look at the website, particularly the e-bulletin and the calendar, on a regular basis. Google Classroom is the platform that is used for communicating to parents information about class work and class activities.

4.7 Social Networking

We hope that everyone in our community will use social media responsibly and respectfully. Social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) should not be used to discuss individual children, classes of children or members of staff. It should not be used to raise concerns or questions. From experience we have seen that misinformation can spread via social media whereas raising questions, concerns or other matters directly with staff can provide clarity. We also recommend that parents are cautious about raising concerns on any public forum as doing so could compromise safeguarding and child protection or formal complaints procedures. Comments about individual children or members of staff risk damaging relationships. Photos and videos of pupils taken at school events should not be uploaded to social media. If parents wish to upload images of their own children, extreme care must be taken to ensure there are no other pupils in the background for whom there is not permission for school images to be posted on social media. For this reason we would recommend that images at school events are only posted on social media by school staff who have access to the list of permissions.

4.8 School eBulletin

A calendar of school events will be produced at the start of each term and communicated via the school eBulletin and on the website. Each week, the school will send parents an eBulletin with relevant news and information regarding the school community.

4.9 Written Reports

We will provide a mid-year written report and an annual written report to each child's parents/carers on their progress. This report will identify areas of strength and areas for future development. Pupils and parents/carers are also given an opportunity to comment on their child's progress and the report by means of an acknowledgement slip.

4.10 Parent consultation

Parents meet their child's teacher twice during the year for parent consultations. The consultation meeting will be for a maximum of 10 minutes. To support parents attending, a variety of afternoon and evening times are offered. Where possible, it is more effective for both 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 that this is not possible, we will try to arrange separate consultations for parents.

4.11 Severe Weather and Emergency Closure

If school is closed due to very bad weather, parents will be informed by text message. We will also do our best to update the school website as soon as possible.

5. Home / School Agreement

There is a Home / School Agreement which will be sent home at the beginning of the year for parents to read, sign and return.

6. General communication

At the beginning of each term, all teachers write to the parents or carers of the children in their classes with details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming term. We invite parents and carers to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home.

We welcome and value all feedback from parents and carers about our school's policies and practices. We conduct an annual survey to canvas the views of parents and carers about our school and report back on the outcomes.

We arrange regular curriculum meetings for parents and carers. These are evening meetings to explain various areas of the curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning. We hold a meeting for new parents/carers in June and for Year 6 parents and carers in advance of the national tests to discuss ways to support pupils. All residential visits will be preceded by a meeting with parents/carers regarding the planning, the content of the visit and expectations.

7. Appointments

If necessary parents can visit the school to ask questions, gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class teacher or the Senior Management Team. Parents are asked to phone the school office on 01582 623620 to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents. We 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. Parents are asked not to approach teachers to discuss their child if they meet them outside of school as this does not allow for confidential discussion.

8. Resolving Concerns




Parents and carers have a right to expect the best for their children and they have a right to express their concerns. At the same time, teachers and children must be allowed to work and learn in a safe and secure environment.

We always aim to work harmoniously with parents/ carers in the best interests of their children and to deal with any issues that may arise in a prompt and professional manner. Most issues can be quickly and easily resolved through effective communication and working in partnership.

Parents are encouraged to liaise with the class teacher initially, outside of teaching hours at a time mutually agreed. Should it be necessary, the next step would be to arrange an informal meeting with the relevant member of The Senior Leadership Team, which can be arranged by contacting the school office.

If parents do raise a concern, an initial response or acknowledgement should usually be provided to parents within two working days in term time. This will then be followed up in whatever manner is appropriate and agreed (which may include arranging an opportunity to find out more details).

Lines of communication

Class teachers	Discuss a matter or concern about your child by talking to the teacher at the end of the day or alternatively make an appointment via the school office.
	
Senior leadership team (Mrs Birss, Mrs Kieran)	If a concern has not been resolved by the class teacher, discuss a possible solution with the SLT by appointment.
	
Headteacher	Arrange an informal meeting to discuss steps taken by staff so far and to identify next steps and time scales.
	
Complaints Procedure Formal Stage 1	Request a formal meeting with the Head teacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks). A copy of the Complaints Procedure can be found on the school website. www.stnicholasce.org/comment-complain

9. Acceptable behaviour

We aim to foster a community where people are treated with respect and courtesy. It is important that parents do not approach a child other than their own about a concern. It is not appropriate for parents to address their concerns directly with other parents where those concerns relate to incidents between children that happened in school.

We are happy to meet parents to discuss and try to resolve concerns. However, raised voices, aggression, unnecessarily accusatory language, swearing or threatening behaviour towards staff, pupils or other parents will result in termination of the meeting. The school may continue to communicate with the parent but will use another form, such as a letter.

In the event of a repetition of unacceptable behaviour, or in serious cases during the first incident, the Head teacher will write to the parent imposing a ban from the school site. The ban will vary in length depending on the severity of the behaviour. Parents will be informed in the letter of their right to appeal, through writing, to the Chair of Governors.

St Nicholas School Communication Pathways

School website www.stnicholasce.org	eBulletin	Playground	Emails via admin@stnicholasce.org	Emails from St Nicholas CE VA Primary School	Google Classroom (Topaz, Emerald, Sapphire and Diamond)	Tapestry (Garnet class only)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Academic Year dates - Calendar provides a list of termly dates -Parents' guide provides general school information - Curriculum information and policies -Ofsted report -Notice of school closure (weather related) on home page - Class pages: class timetables and curriculum overviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Key formation about upcoming events - Share new dates for the half term - Awards and celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Morning: Parents should inform the teacher on duty if their child will be collected by a different adult -Morning: Parents can leave messages for the class teacher with the teacher on duty, e.g. reading records or arranging a meeting with a teacher -End of the day: Teachers will be available briefly in the playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication between teachers and parents - Parents to use this email for all school communication (absence, late, contact teacher, arrange teacher meetings, different pick-up person etc.) -Teachers and the Office share information with individual parents. Note: response within 48 hours (working days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General information is shared via this email address, such as School Trips, Ebulletin, Class Events or Class information - This email system is also used for Google Forms (permission / questionnaires etc) and School Gateway payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Homework shared -Learning log (pinned to the top of google classroom page for the term) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Share information with parents about learning -Parents share achievements at home with teachers

PTA

<https://www.pta-events.co.uk/stnics/#.Yxhj2HbMLyo>

- Parents need to register and sign up to the class by entering password, e.g. TopazPTA1
- All PTA information will be shared here
- Class representatives: Support class teachers in collating rotas for PE or swimming or volunteers

