Communications Policy

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1. Purpose

To promote partnerships between the school, parents and carers, pupils and the wider community through efficient and effective communication.

2. Definition of communication

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflect on the school's reputation. Parents and carers, trustees and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school's reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

3. Principles

3.1 Fir Bank school uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient.
3.2 Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

4. Introduction

The SLT recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents and carers, staff, trustees, the local and wider community outside agencies, etc.), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and pupils and this Policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective two-way communication between home and school. Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child's education. The school will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to creating a shared view of their child's needs.

5. Aims of the Policy

5.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders and that there are robust processes to facilitate this.

5.2 The school recognises that engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our wish is to involve as many parents and carers in their child's education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

- To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- All written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly and parents and carers can expect an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- A variety of forms of communication with parents and carers for example, telephone contact, e-mail, Class Dojo and Purple Mash.
- Parents and carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Information is given to parents and carers on what pupils will be taught and tips for helping their child will be provided.
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective

Urgent and emergency communication:

In cases where parents and carers have urgent or emergency information that needs to be responded to, and in which the school also deems as important, then the school will make contact with parents and carers that same day. Examples include:

- Family crisis such as an accident or bereavement
- Alternative arrangements for a pupil's end of day collection due to unforeseen circumstances – car breakdown etc
- Safeguarding reports and concerns about a pupil's welfare and safety.

6. Communication with parents and carers

6.1 Correspondence

- Staff will always reply to a letter/email from parents and carers as quickly as possible. A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter/email will be made by telephone, letter or email within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days. Letters to parents/carers must be processed through the school administration team and approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting/emailing. Letters/emails being sent out to all parents/carers should be approved by a member of the senior leadership team. Copies of correspondence with parents and carers will be placed on pupil files. Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy (copy available on the school website).
- Whole school information is included in a termly newsletter, published in December, March and July. A link to an electronic copy of this is sent to all parents and carers via email as well as being published on the school website. Hard copies of the newsletter are available from the school upon request.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication.

6.2 E-mail

- E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating necessary information and is the school's preferred method of communication. Emails received will be treated in the same way as letters: acknowledged within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days. Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter
- Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email address is: info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk

- Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address

6.3 Telephone Calls

- Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be 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 to return a call. In a non-emergency a return call will be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer on CPOMS
- Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own mobile phones

7. Absence

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence by either calling the school office, sending a message via Parent Mail or emailing the school at info@firbank.oldham.sch.uk

8. Meeting with Parents and carers

8.1 Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. This request should be responded to within 2 working days

8.2 Parents and carers should report to the school reception. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them.

8.3 Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of the parents or carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team

9. Social Networking

The School has an Instagram account which is used to provide updates to parents and pupils who wish to subscribe to this. It is not compulsory to do so and therefore any key messages will be relayed through email

10. Reports and Progress

10.1 Parents and carers receive a full academic report once a year.

10.2 In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's subject teachers twice a year at parents evening. Parents and carers are also encouraged to attend a separate EHCP review meeting with their child's tutor. Parents and carers should contact the school if issues arise about their child's progress or wellbeing. The first point of contact should be the child's class teacher

11. Accessibility

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication

12. School Website

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including: Inclusion information, Pupil Premium, Uniform, Timetables and Holiday Dates. The school website is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly

13. Remote Learning

In the event of school closures, home learning tips and suggestions will be sent home. Please refer to the school's remote learning policy.

14, Communication between Fir Bank staff

Staff are to use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils.

Email

- consider whether an email is appropriate when face to face communication may conducive
- avoid exclusive email correspondence without requesting or organising a face to face meeting
- avoid send or reply to all unless necessary
- Ensure line managers are copied in
- keep emails concise, use Standard English and bullet points if necessary
- Staff to check emails daily
- Use group emails as appropriate
- Staff and Parents should be mindful that the school respects a work life balance for its employees and there are no expectations for staff to respond to emails outside of school hours.

Meetings

- When meeting with parents and carers there should be at least two staff in attendance
- Staff that arranged the meeting should:
    - Chair the meeting and make the outcomes clear
    - The order of items to be discussed
    - Ensure parents and carers have their views listened to
    - Agree actions moving forwards
    - Summarise the meeting for clarity
    - Ensure minutes of the meeting are taken for school records

Staff Meetings

Meetings where actions arise must be minuted with the following information:

- Date and time of the meeting
- Attendees, Actions agreed and persons responsible for them
- Completion date for actions
- Minutes are circulated to all relevant parties within 1-week
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15, Dealing with the media

All media enquiries must be directed to the Headteacher

16. Social Media

It is not permitted for any staff member to share any school information on social media platforms as this could potentially bring the school's name and image into disrepute. This includes but is not limited to:

- Posting personal data of pupils and staff such as addresses, phone numbers and names
- Uploading photos, videos or work completed by pupils

17, School trips, visits and activities

The school will send information to parents and carers around proposed trips, visits and activities via email. Parental consent must be given for children to attend school trips and visits.

18, Severe weather and emergency closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via email, Purple Mash and Class Dojo. Parents and carers should also check the school website and social media channels (e.g. Instagram)

19, Prospective parents and carers

Prospective parents and carers are welcome to visit the school for a look around with the Head Teacher, appointments can be made by contacting the school office. Prospective parents and carers are also invited, along with their child, to an induction evening in the summer term where the main channels of communication are outlined, and important information will be shared.

20, Friends of Fir Bank

This is led by a group of parents and their aim is to provide essential funds for school, running events and activities throughout the year. Parents interested in volunteering, should contact one of the PTA members or the school office.

21, Communication with other Schools and outside agencies

Prior to pupils joining Nursery and Reception, where applicable, children are visited in their nursery to get to know your child. We also have induction days where your child can visit our setting and get to know their new teachers, friends and classroom.

Our pupils have diverse needs, and where required we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals including medical services(such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare and the local authority Children's Services Single Point of Access. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment (see the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on the policy page of the school website). We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordancewith the General Data Protection Regulation (for full details see our Data Protection Policy)

22, Investigating incidents

When investigating an incident involving pupils, school members of staff interview all pupils involved and a written account is completed. The school will only share any information that would identify any pupils in accordance with data protection regulations and legislation and our policies.