

Communication Guidance July 2022



**ORCHARD ACADEMY
TRUST**

Introduction

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated. Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated. Good communication promotes partnership.

Aim

To ensure that Orchard Academy Trust schools are thriving and successful schools, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils and their parents and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all stakeholders is clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Objectives

All communications at Orchard Academy Trust Schools should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors, trustees and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable timescale.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school/trust policies.
- Be compatible with our core values and school development plans.

Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

Trust

- To ensure information is made available to the Executive Headteacher in a timely manner and via appropriate channels.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all stakeholders.
- To keep Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) informed of developments, progress and concerns.
- To support Headteachers/Executive Headteacher when communicating with the press as deemed necessary.
- To consult with parents when developing the Trust.

Executive Headteacher

- To ensure information is made available to the Trust in a timely manner and via the appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To keep the Headteachers and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) informed in a timely manner via appropriate channels and where practicable face to face.
- To support Headteachers in an appropriate and timely manner, particularly with regards communicating with parents and the media as deemed necessary.
- To communicate with parents twice a year to update with each school's progress and priorities and the position of the Trust.

Headteachers and Senior Leadership Team

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep Executive Headteacher and LGB informed of progress, developments and areas of concern.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure that information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

Governors

- To ensure the use of trusted online spaces when communicating between governors or with the school.
- To use a variety of communication methods to promote and explain the work of the LGB.
- To report to the Headteacher any concerns or queries regarding how the school is being discussed or represented in online spaces such as forums.

Internal methods of communication

- All staff receive an induction pack containing important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- An integrated programme of (formal and informal) meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both e.g. teachers' meetings, teaching assistants' meetings, office meetings, Key Stage meetings, whole staff meetings.
- All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda.
- Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information and is used alongside face-to-face meetings and discussions. Staff are not expected to check or respond to emails after 6pm or at the weekend. However emails should be responded to within 48 hours (two working days) of receipt. Emails must be checked every working day.
- Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes in the staffroom, which staff must check daily and clear regularly.
- Teachers' meetings and SLT meetings take place regularly and the minutes are recorded.
- TA meetings and teacher meetings take place regularly. Key Stage meetings are held informally or formally as required.
- The whiteboards in the schools' staffrooms are used for weekly timetables and day to day notices.

- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by class teachers and must be given to children on the same day. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.
- The schools use ParentMail/Class Dojo to communicate with parents by text or email.
- Urgent messages for parents/carers will be sent using ParentMail/email as early as possible.
- A list of all those not subscribing to ParentMail will be kept by the office and hardcopies sent to all those on the list.

External methods of communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, other schools, the community and outside agencies. Our aim is for our schools to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about each school. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting our schools.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner. Staff will not accept friendship requests from parents on social media.

We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible.

We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our schools.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Letters: Staff will respond to parent communication within five school days. Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Headteacher immediately and the Trust's Complaints Policy must be implemented.

Letters to parents must be approved by the Headteacher before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to/from individual parents will be placed in pupil files. A copy of general letters will be placed on file in the office.

Email/Text: The schools have an email system (ParentMail) which it uses to communicate with parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Headteacher. If a parent communicates with the school using email with a complaint or a matter that requires an action, a copy should be stored printed and filed and a notification recorded on CPOMs. It is preferred that parents do not contact the staff by email and parents should not expect staff to respond to calls or emails out of work hours in the evening/weekend. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Headteacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. All emails requiring an answer should be responded to within five school days and will be sent from the office email account. Email communications concerning a child are recorded on CPOMs. Parental comments shared via Class Dojo are retained on the feed for the academic year.

Telephone calls: Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency.

Social Media Sites/Blogs: Staff are advised not to communicate with parents via social networking sites or accept them as “friends”. Staff will not accept pupils or ex-pupils as “friends”. Staff are encouraged to use the schools’ Twitter pages.

Written Reports: Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child’s parents on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress.

Newsletters: The school newsletter is sent to parents at least fortnightly. It contains general details of school events and activities and a copy is forwarded by email as arranged. Other letters of a general nature are sent as necessary.

If a parent has not signed up for ParentMail then a hard copy will be sent out in the child’s book bag/or emailed as requested.

In addition, parents meet their child’s teacher twice a year for a private consultation at a parents’ evening. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child’s progress or wellbeing. When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child’s teacher more regularly. We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at any of our schools, or to receive and understand communication. Parents of children with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) will be invited to an annual review meeting.

School Websites:

Each school’s website provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Home-School Communication:

- Home School Agreements are signed on entry.
- Pre-school visits take place during Term 6 for those joining the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the following September.
- Information is displayed on the notice board outside school.
- The school newsletter is emailed out through ParentMail. Paper copies are sent to parents/carers who are not on the ParentMail list.
- Parents/carers will be contacted if there is an unexpected cancellation of a club or school closure e.g. due to adverse weather.
- Parents are invited to annual Meet the Teacher meetings where they discuss the expectations for homework, behaviour, uniform and the curriculum.
- Once per year a questionnaire is sent out to parents. The results are analysed and used to inform school development plans.
- We recognise that children’s protection is a shared responsibility and that the Trust’s schools should provide a safe and secure environment. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who may share this information with Social Services.
- Our schools will invite parents to comment on different aspects of school development as part of Parent Voice.

This policy is in conjunction with:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Complaints procedure
- Staff code of conduct
- Data Protection

Date policy reviewed: 13th July 2022

Date to review by: July 2026

Adopted by: Trust Board