

Cognita Schools Ltd

Communication Policy

Meoncross School



April 2017

Communication Policy

Meoncross is committed to...

- Academic excellence
- Achievement in a wide range of activities
- Care and respect for the individual
- Creating opportunities for challenge and leadership
- Good discipline and a sense of order
- Service to others – in school and in the community

Introduction

Good communication is the transmission of information in a clear, timely and effective manner that develops understanding, builds trust and ultimately promotes partnership, and where confidentiality is respected and actions coordinated.

Aims

To ensure that Meoncross continues to thrive and be successful, effective communication is essential between our staff, with our pupils and their parents and with members of the wider community. It is our aim that our communications should at all times be clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Objectives

- Keep staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional and compatible with our core values
- Be easily understood by all, through the use of jargon free, plain English
- Be actioned within a reasonable timeframe
- Use the channel of communication most appropriate to the content and the recipient
- Take account of relevant school policies
- Be reviewed and if necessary, updated, no less than once a year to reflect feedback from stakeholders

Internal communication between staff and the school

Engagement with staff is important to the organisation of the school and to the welfare of staff and pupils. The main methods that staff may find and share information are listed below:

Email

All staff are issued with a Meoncross email account to use for school business. Email is the main method of communicating school information amongst the staff. The email protocol is *firstname.surname@meoncross.co.uk*

Staff meetings

There is a termly programme of regular whole staff or department meetings to facilitate the involvement of staff and to ensure the dissemination of information amongst them. Minutes are saved on the academic server and emailed to relevant staff.

Weekly Bulletin

The staff calendar is updated every week and posted to the VLE. It includes staff in and out, trips, birthdays etc. The 'What's On' bulletin listing all activities for the week is also posted in the staff room and on the school gates.

Induction & Staff Handbook

All staff undergo an induction process covering Health & Safety and Safeguarding. A soft copy of the staff handbook, which contains information about the organisation and procedures within the school, is available on the academic server.

Meeting Minutes

All formal meetings are recorded in writing and distributed by email to relevant staff.

Information Resources

Policies, staff handbook, risk assessments, HR forms and letter templates are available to staff in soft copy on the academic server.

VLE

Some staff information including timetables, message alerts and tasks are available on the virtual learning environment together with the staff calendar.

Text Messages

Staff will be informed by text of school closures due to bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

Staff Absence Guidelines can be found in the current staff handbook

Communication with the school by parents

Good communication between home and the school is essential for a strong partnership and we encourage parents to share any matters about their child at the earliest opportunity. In the first instance, communications should be addressed to the child's class teacher/form tutor.

VLE

Parents are given a personal login for the school's virtual learning environment, and may leave a message for a member of staff through the VLE message system. Reports and timetables are also available to view and print off.

Email

All staff are given a Meoncross email address by which means they can be contacted. The email addresses of staff are listed in the Parent Handbook and on the VLE.

Telephone

Parents are welcome to telephone the school office with urgent messages that need to be delivered immediately to staff. Where it is not possible to put parents through to a member of the teaching staff, in such circumstances a message will be taken.

Diary/Planner

Pupils receive a school diary as an important channel of communication with home. It is possible for parents to pass on a message to staff via this means.

Drop Ins and Appointments

We operate an open-door policy where parents are always welcome to see their child's class teacher providing that they are not busy at the time. Pre-arranged appointments may be made with the member of staff and parents should always sign in at the office upon arrival.

If required, an appointment may be made to see the Headmistress or any of her Deputies by contacting the Head's PA.

SchoolComms

We use an online communication application, 'SchoolComms', to distribute emails and texts to parents. Parents may also send messages to the school via this app.

Parents' Evening Online Booking

We use an online booking system to arrange Parents' Evenings. Messages may be left via this system regarding Parents' Evenings only.

Website Enquiry Form

We do not advise that current parents use the enquiry form on the website to raise a concern or to request information regarding their child, as this method is utilised purely for prospective parents wishing to find out more about the school and is not a reliable method of communicating day to day business.

Parent Surveys

Twice a year a survey is sent out to current parents by email to measure customer satisfaction and opinion of the school. The survey is sent out by Cognita Schools, and the results data is collated by them and shared confidentially with the SLT. Parents are given the opportunity to contribute to the survey, which is not compulsory, and to leave specific message alerts requesting a response, should they wish too. All alerts are responded to within 48 hours.

Texts/Social Media

It is preferred that parents do not contact staff either by text message or by social media regarding school matters. Staff have no access to social media during working hours (with the exception of the Marketing & Admissions team) and the use of mobile phones by staff is not permitted on site during the school day.

Communication by the school with parents

The school is committed to an effective two-way communication with parents, and has adopted a clear timeframe within which parents may expect a response and guidance to understand the methods by which all communications are documented.

There are several methods by which the school communicates directly and indirectly with parents:

Letter

Letters by email or post to individual sets of parents sent in response to a communication from the parents, following up a meeting or a phone call, or for other reasons. Teachers must send a copy of any correspondence with parents/pupils to their Line Manager.

Phone call

A verbal conversation with individual sets of parents over the phone made in response to a communication from the parents, following up a meeting or a phone call, or for other reasons.

In person

A face to face meeting with individual sets of parents, either formal or informal, in response to a communication from the parents, following up a meeting or a phone call, or for other reasons.

Letters by SchoolComms

To the whole school community, a year group, class or set regarding a general notice, information about an event, educational/overseas trips, setting information, the announcement of extra-curricular clubs, fixture lists and other school matters.

Text Messages by SchoolComms

To the whole school community, a year group, class or set for announcements, reminders, requests, short notices, match information, first aid and attendance.

Written reports

In accordance with the reporting schedule, pupil reports are available to download from the VLE.

Newsletters

A printable newsletter is published fortnightly and dispatched as a pdf by SchoolComms.

Social Media

Daily news, what's on today, individual success, event announcements, commendations, awards and videos are published on the school facebook, twitter and youtube pages.

Website

School news and stories are published to the school website on the social media and news pages.

Notices

A weekly 'whats on' bulletin is published on the school gates, and printed copies are available in the office and reception areas of the school. The Parents of Meoncross noticeboard outside the infant block promotes upcoming POM events.

Display Boards

There are boards in the reception area, the hall, the senior and juniors blocks which between them promote individual success, commendations, fundraising results, British values, prefects, anti-bullying ambassadors, peer mentors, school councils and the SLT.

Response timeframes

Parents may receive a response to their communications sooner than the published times below, but should be aware that many staff work part-time and do not have access to work emails outside the school day. Some matters may require a meeting with other staff before a response can be sent.

Communications sent at weekends will be actioned during the following working week whilst communications sent during the school holidays will be responded to in term-time.

- Subject Access Requests please refer to guidance in the Data Protection policy
- College reference requests and progress reports within 5 working days
- Notes in a child's Planner/Diary - within 3 working days
- Letters - verbal response within 3 days or written response within 5 working days
- Phone calls - within 3 working days.
- Emails - within 3 working days.

Documenting communication

Staff must produce a record documenting their formal discussions with parents. Records may be in the follow formats: -

- Hand written or typed notes of a telephone conversation
- Hand written or typed meeting notes
- A hand written response in a child's planner
- A print out of an email conversation

A copy of such communication is sent to Line Manager

CP records are retained separately by Designated Safeguarding Lead

Communications with parent about formal matters should not take place in the school grounds or the car park. The parent should be advised to go to the school office to arrange a meeting with the staff member or follow one of the methods listed above to contact their child's teacher.

Storing communications

Records of communications between school and individual sets of parent/pupils are passed to the Admissions team to be uploaded and stored in the relevant pupil files on SIMS.

In specific circumstances additional actions may be required:

Communications with a pupil

- Copy sent to the relevant Deputy Head/Senior Deputy Head/DSL as evidence of contact

Communication with a set of parents

- Copy sent to members of the SLT when required

Communication between the SLT and staff

Communication between the SLT and staff are made through the following methods:

- Verbal in a face to face meeting or over the phone
- Written in a letter or an email, a text message, an alert on the VLE

All records of communications between the SLT and staff are passed to the Head's PA to be uploaded and stored in the relevant staff file on SIMS and a copy passed to the individual or group of staff in question.

Communication between the SLT and parents

Communication between the SLT and parents can take a variety of forms; this may include any of the following.

- Verbal in a face to face meeting or over the phone
- Written in a letter or an email, a bulletin, a text message, an alert on the VLE or website, items on social media

All records of communications between the SLT and individual sets of parents are passed to the Admissions team to be uploaded and stored in the relevant pupil file on SIMS.

Process for general communication with parents

General communication with parents is by soft copy letter or text message sent via SchoolComms. Parents are advised to download the SchoolComms app, as text messages sent via this tool are free to send by the school. In cases where parents would prefer a paper copy of letter +/- or text messages, they should submit a request to the Admissions team who ensure a hard copy of each communication is given to their child.

Consent is not sought for school visits (unless the trip falls outside the normal school hours) as parents sign an annual trip consent form. Slips are not required unless specific written consent is asked of parents.

All letters requiring a response will include a deadline date for parents to reply by.

Copies of all letters can be downloaded from the VLE.

Letters to Parents

- A minimum notice period of two weeks must be given for all letters notifying of trips, events etc.
- Letters must be approved by the HOD, Line Manager, Deputy or Head
- Letters must be in the correct format e.g. trip letter template
- Letters must be on headed paper and sent as a pdf
- Communications are sent to the Admissions team for proofing and dispatch who will send the final version back to the original sender.
- The final version of each letter is sent to the office for information, to be saved on the academic server and uploaded to the VLE
- Any trips or events requiring the collection of monies/slips are collected by the office and a spreadsheet set up to record responses/payments
- Paper copies may be collected from the office by parents; paper copies must be given to pupils whose parents have requested them.

Texts to Parents

- Text messages must be approved by the HOD, Line Manager, Deputy or Head
- Text messages must be no longer than 160 characters in length
- Texts are sent to the Admissions team for proofing and dispatch
- The final version of texts is sent to the office for information and also sent to the original sender

APPENDIX: CONFIRMATION OF RECEIPT

Please complete the form below to confirm receipt of this document, and return the slip promptly to your Line Manager.

I confirm receipt of the Communication Policy. Any queries related to this, or further guidance required, will be directed to my allocated Line Manager or the School Office in the first instance.

EMPLOYEE DETAILS:	Full Name: Job Title:
EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:	
SCHOOL NAME:	
DEPARTMENT:	
DATE OF RECEIPT:	
ALLOCATED LINE MANAGER:	Full Name: Job Title:

