Parent and Carer Communication Policy

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1. Introduction

At Ashton Primary School, we recognise that positive communication between home and school is essential to children's education, wellbeing and development.

We value the important role that parents and carers play in their children's education and aim to maintain open, respectful and constructive relationships with families.

Effective communication is a two-way process. The school will provide parents and carers with appropriate information about their child's education and school life, while parents and carers are encouraged to share relevant information, ask questions and raise concerns with the school.

This policy explains the different ways in which Ashton Primary School communicates with parents and carers and establishes reasonable expectations for communication between home and school.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- promote positive relationships between school and families;
- ensure communication is clear, timely and accessible;
- establish appropriate methods of communication;
- ensure parents and carers know who to contact;
- provide reasonable expectations regarding response times;
- protect appropriate professional boundaries for staff;
- ensure sensitive and confidential information is communicated appropriately;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are dealt with through the correct procedures; and
- provide appropriate routes for parents and carers to raise questions, concerns or complaints.

3. Principles of Communication

Communication between Ashton Primary School and parents and carers should be:

- respectful;
- professional;
- clear;
- appropriate;

- constructive;
- proportionate;
- accessible wherever reasonably possible; and
- focused upon supporting pupils.

The school recognises that parents and carers may sometimes need to raise concerns or disagree with a decision. Families will be listened to respectfully and concerns will be considered appropriately.

In return, the school expects communication from parents and carers to remain respectful towards staff.

Abusive, threatening, discriminatory, intimidating or persistently unreasonable communication will not be accepted.

4. Methods of Communication

Ashton Primary School uses a range of methods to communicate with parents and carers.

These include:

- Class Dojo;
- Tapestry for EYFS and The Burrow;
- telephone calls;
- face-to-face conversations and meetings;
- email;
- letters;
- newsletters;
- the school website;
- the school's official social media accounts;
- parent meetings and consultation evenings;
- workshops and school events; and
- other appropriate communication systems used by the school.

Different methods of communication are appropriate for different purposes.

5. Class Dojo

Class Dojo is the school's main day-to-day digital communication platform between school and parents/carers.

Class Dojo allows the school to:

- send messages and reminders;
- share class and whole-school information;
- promote events and activities;
- celebrate learning and achievement; and
- communicate directly with parents and carers.

Parents and carers can use Class Dojo to message their child's teacher or other appropriate members of staff.

Class Dojo provides a convenient way for parents and staff to communicate; however, it is not an instant messaging service.

Staff may be teaching, supervising pupils, attending meetings or undertaking other professional duties and therefore cannot be expected to read or respond to messages immediately.

6. Class Dojo Response Expectations

Staff will aim to respond to appropriate Class Dojo messages within a reasonable period during the working week.

Parents and carers should not expect responses:

- while staff are teaching;
- while staff are supervising pupils;
- during meetings;
- outside normal working hours;
- during weekends;
- during school holidays; or
- when a member of staff is absent from work.

There is no expectation for staff to monitor or respond to Class Dojo during evenings, weekends or school holidays.

Messages sent outside working hours should be treated as having been received on the next working day.

Where a matter is urgent, parents and carers should contact the school office rather than relying upon Class Dojo.

7. Appropriate Use of Class Dojo

Class Dojo should normally be used for straightforward communication such as:

- providing information relevant to a child's school day;
- asking a brief question;
- informing staff about collection arrangements where appropriate;
- requesting a conversation or meeting;
- asking for clarification about school activities; or
- communicating other routine information.

Class Dojo should not normally be used to conduct lengthy discussions about complex or sensitive matters.

Where an issue requires detailed discussion, staff may suggest a telephone call or face-to-face meeting.

8. Tapestry

Ashton Primary School uses Tapestry within EYFS and The Burrow.

Tapestry provides a secure platform through which school can share photographs and information about children's experiences and learning.

Staff may use Tapestry to:

- share photographs of activities and experiences;
- celebrate children's learning;
- provide families with an insight into school life;
- share significant learning experiences; and
- strengthen links between home and school.

Parents and carers are able to view content available to them and comment on photographs and observations.

Comments should remain positive, appropriate and relevant to the content being shared.

9. Privacy and Tapestry

Although Tapestry is a restricted platform, photographs and information shared through Tapestry must still be treated appropriately.

Parents and carers must respect the privacy of other children.

Photographs or videos obtained through Tapestry that contain other people's children must not be copied and published on public social media or otherwise distributed without appropriate permission.

Parents and carers should not share their Tapestry login details with other people.

Any concerns about access to an account should be reported to the school.

10. Tapestry and Communication

Tapestry is primarily used within EYFS and The Burrow to share children's learning and experiences.

Where parents need to communicate directly with school about routine matters, Class Dojo remains the main communication platform, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed.

Comments on Tapestry should not be used to raise urgent, confidential or safeguarding matters.

11. Telephone Communication

The school may contact parents and carers by telephone (01772 728052) where:

- information needs to be communicated promptly;
- a child is unwell or injured;
- there has been a significant incident;
- staff wish to discuss a child's learning, behaviour or wellbeing;
- a sensitive matter would be better discussed verbally; or
- a parent has requested a telephone conversation.

Parents and carers should ensure that the school has accurate and up-to-date telephone numbers and emergency contact details.

Where the school is unable to make contact, a voicemail may be left where appropriate. Confidential or sensitive information should not normally be included in voicemail messages.

12. Contacting the School Office

The school office should be contacted for matters including:

- urgent messages;
- absence reporting;

- changes to contact information;
- appointments;
- administrative enquiries;
- requests for documents;
- urgent changes to collection arrangements; and
- matters requiring immediate attention during the school day.

Parents should not rely upon Class Dojo for information that must reach a member of staff immediately.

13. Face-to-Face Communication

The school values opportunities for staff and parents to speak face-to-face.

Brief conversations may take place at appropriate points during the school day. However, staff responsible for supervising pupils cannot always engage in lengthy discussions at drop-off or collection times.

Where a matter requires more detailed discussion, an appointment should be arranged.

This ensures that staff can give the parent or carer appropriate time and attention while maintaining safe supervision of pupils.

14. Parent Meetings

Formal opportunities are provided during the year for parents and carers to discuss their child's learning and progress.

Additional meetings may be arranged where required.

Parents do not need to wait until a formal parents' evening if they have a concern about their child. They are encouraged to contact school so that an appropriate conversation can be arranged.

15. Email

Email may be used for formal or administrative communication and for communication with external professionals.

Parents may contact the school's published email address where appropriate.

Staff are not required to provide parents or carers with personal email addresses.

As with Class Dojo, email is not an instant communication method and parents should contact the school office by telephone where a matter requires urgent attention.

16. Letters, Newsletters and General Information

The school will communicate important information to families through appropriate channels.

This may include:

- Class Dojo;
- letters;
- newsletters;
- the school website;
- social media;
- email; and
- printed information where appropriate.

Parents and carers are encouraged to regularly check school communications so that they are aware of important dates, events and arrangements.

17. School Website and Social Media

The school's website and official social media accounts are used to provide general information, celebrate school life and communicate with the wider school community.

They should not normally be used by parents to discuss individual pupils or raise confidential matters.

Any direct messages or public comments concerning an individual child should be moved to an appropriate private communication channel.

The school's Social Media Policy provides further guidance regarding the use of official school social media accounts.

18. Safeguarding Concerns

Class Dojo, Tapestry and social media must not be relied upon to report an urgent safeguarding concern.

Where a parent or carer has an immediate concern about the safety or welfare of a child, they should contact the school directly and make clear that the matter relates to safeguarding.

Where a child is believed to be at immediate risk of significant harm, parents should contact the appropriate emergency services.

Any safeguarding information received through a digital communication platform will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

19. SEND Communication

The school recognises the importance of effective communication with parents and carers of pupils with SEND.

Communication may take place through:

- Class Dojo;
- telephone conversations;
- meetings;
- reviews;
- written reports;
- Tapestry within The Burrow; and
- communication with the SENCo and other professionals where appropriate.

Complex SEND matters should normally be discussed through an arranged conversation or meeting rather than through lengthy Class Dojo exchanges.

The school will work in partnership with families and seek to ensure that parents' views contribute meaningfully to decisions about their child's provision.

20. Separated Parents and Parental Responsibility

The school will communicate with individuals who have parental responsibility in accordance with relevant legal requirements and the information available to the school.

Parents and carers are responsible for informing the school of relevant changes to family circumstances, contact information or legal arrangements.

Where court orders or other legal restrictions are in place, copies should be provided to the school where relevant.

The school will not become involved in disputes between separated parents and will remain focused on the welfare and education of the child.

21. Translation and Accessibility

The school will seek to make important communication accessible to families.

Where reasonably possible, the school may provide additional support for parents and carers who:

- speak English as an additional language;
- have literacy difficulties;

- have disabilities;
- require information in an alternative format; or
- otherwise experience barriers to accessing school communication.

Parents and carers are encouraged to inform the school where they require support accessing information.

22. Staff Professional Boundaries

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries when communicating with parents and carers.

Staff should not:

- communicate with parents through personal social media accounts;
- provide personal telephone numbers unless specifically authorised for a professional purpose;
- feel required to respond to messages outside working hours;
- engage in arguments through digital messaging;
- discuss other pupils or families;
- disclose confidential information inappropriately; or
- continue a digital conversation where a telephone call or meeting would be more appropriate.

Where communication becomes difficult or inappropriate, staff should seek support from a senior leader.

23. Respectful Communication

Ashton Primary School understands that parents and carers may sometimes be upset, worried or frustrated when contacting school.

The school will listen to concerns and seek to resolve matters constructively.

However, staff have the right to carry out their work without being subjected to abuse, threats, intimidation or harassment.

Communication must not include:

- abusive or threatening language;
- personal insults;
- discriminatory comments;

- aggressive or intimidating behaviour;
- harassment;
- inappropriate allegations about staff, pupils or families; or
- excessive or persistent communication that unreasonably interferes with the work of the school.

Where communication becomes inappropriate, a member of the Senior Leadership Team may become involved and reasonable boundaries may be established regarding future communication.

24. Raising a Concern

Where a parent or carer has a concern relating to their child, the first point of contact should normally be the child's class teacher.

Where the matter cannot be resolved at class level, or where it would not be appropriate to approach the class teacher, the matter may be referred to an appropriate senior leader.

For concerns relating specifically to SEND, parents may contact the SENCo.

Safeguarding concerns should be directed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

25. Complaints

Where a parent or carer remains dissatisfied after attempting to resolve a concern through normal communication with the school, they may use the school's Complaints Procedure.

Class Dojo, Tapestry or social media should not be used to conduct formal complaints.

The school will ensure that parents and carers are directed to the appropriate procedure where required.

26. Confidentiality and Data Protection

The school will handle communication in accordance with its data protection responsibilities.

Staff must take care when communicating information about pupils and must ensure that confidential information is only shared with appropriate individuals.

Parents and carers must also respect the privacy of other pupils, families and members of staff.

School communication platforms must not be used to request or share confidential information about another child.

27. Responsibilities

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring effective communication between the school and its community.

Senior leaders are responsible for supporting staff and families where communication requires further intervention.

Teachers and other staff are responsible for communicating professionally and appropriately with families.

Office staff support effective communication and ensure that urgent information is directed appropriately.

Parents and carers are responsible for maintaining up-to-date contact information, checking school communications and communicating respectfully with staff.

28. Monitoring and Review

The school will periodically review its communication methods to ensure that they remain effective, accessible and appropriate.

This policy will normally be reviewed **annually**, or sooner where there are significant changes to school communication systems, statutory requirements or school procedures.