Communication with Parents/Carers Policy

Hampton Lakes Primary School

Policy last reviewed:	July 2024
Next review due:	July 2027
Member of staff responsible:	Mr Robert Graham
Ratified by:	LGB

1. Rationale and Aims

1.1. Hampton Lakes Primary School recognises the importance of maintaining lines of communication with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school. Good communication between all these groups is essential, and Hampton Lakes Primary School is committed to being accessible and open to all who have an interest in the school.

1.2. Children achieve more when everyone works together. Parents, carers, governors and friends of the school can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. Effective communication will improve relationships within the school and promote partnerships with parents and the wider community. Quality communication will enhance the school's reputation.

1.3. This policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective, consistent and coherent external and internal communication.

2. Guidelines

2.1. To make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural and other groups represented in our school and community.

2.2. All communications should:

- Keep staff, students, parents and carers, governors and the wider community well informed
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- Be carried out within an agreed timeframe
- Use the method most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.

2.3. Letters sent out on behalf of the school should use Standard English, using inclusive and accessible language and should be on Hampton Lakes Primary School headed paper. Emails and text messages should also be appropriate in tone. Staff should address parents as Mr, Ms or Mrs rather than using first names. Parents/Carers may request copies of letters in alternative languages.

2.4. If needed to aid communication, the school will provide interpreters, and support for parents or children with disabilities or special needs.

2.5. Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes, including displays, records of practical work and records of important school events. Photographs of children will only be used if they add value to a student's or group's work.

2.6. We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents and the wider community; in newsletters, in the school prospectus, with press releases or on the school website. The local or national press may on occasions publish photographs of children participating in events at school.

2.7. Children who are not allowed to have their photographs taken or who cannot be filmed are marked centrally on Bromcom. The Data and Administration Officer can

run these reports when required.

2.8. Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable before use.

3. Home - School Communications

3.1. Our home–school agreement explains the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents, and what the school expects of the children. We ask parents, students and tutors to sign this agreement at the beginning of each school year in the front of the annual Student Planner.

3.2. The agreement covers our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, policies including uniform, and homework.

3.3. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Keeping parents informed enables the school to share aims and values and reinforces the important role that parents play. Hampton Lakes Primary School recognises that communication is a two-way process and aims to ensure parents are listened to and their concerns dealt with in a professional, timely and appropriate manner.

3.4. Hampton Lakes Primary School has the following service standards to ensure a prompt response for communication requests by parents. Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated 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. The following response times are usually adhered to:

Communication from parents	**Suggested response time** Those sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays will probably elicit no reply until term-time
Phone Calls	Returned within 24 hours of parent/carer call
Email	Email reply within 72 hours of receipt (set up an automated 'out of office reply' when you are away)
Written Letter	Acknowledge receipt of letter within 72 hours

3.5. Staff will contact parents to raise issues by phone, text message, email or letter. Parents may contact the school by any of these methods.

3.6. Email is the simplest form of communication. We encourage all parents to communicate with school via email. All students at Hampton Lakes Primary School will be given an individual email account during his/her time at the school.

3.7. Details such as term times, home-learning timetable, dates for parents' evenings and other school events will be posted on the school website and reminders may be sent by text, email, social media and/or letter.

3.8. Particular achievements and articles about life at Hampton Lakes Primary School may be highlighted on social media, the website and in the school newsletter. The newsletter is sent out to parents via email and is also uploaded onto the school website.

3.9. Communication about pupil achievement takes place through daily uploads to Tapestry. Formal School reports and termly Parent Consultations detail pupil progress and attainment.

3.10. Tapestry is the usual route for routine matters. Tapestry is used as a key vehicle for communication between parents and the school. This is monitored on a weekly basis by both parents and the student's class teacher.

3.11. Parents have a responsibility to ensure the school has up-to-date contact details for all carers, including an email address. In the case of sudden incidents affecting the school, such as a fire or severe weather, parents will be contacted via text message and information will be put on the website and on the Local Authority website. Where possible an announcement will also be made on local radio.

3.12. We will try to contact parents/carers by telephone if their son or daughter is injured or taken seriously ill. Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or text message which may direct them to a special message posted onto the school's website. If the school is closed for more than one day, due to adverse weather or some similar problem, an update will be posted on the website.

3.13. In the unlikely event of a more serious incident, the response will, inevitably, depend on the circumstances. The **first and greatest priority will always be to look after the children**. The second priority will be to give parents the fullest possible account of events as soon as possible; Hampton Lakes Primary School will always tell parents/carers personally if their son or daughter is injured or has suffered some mishap unless the emergency services take this responsibility and instruct otherwise.

3.14. The school cannot get involved in disputes between parents in the event of separation or divorce. All correspondence and information will be sent to all holders of parental responsibility (letters, school reports, calendar, invitations to school events) unless there is a court order to the contrary. We can usually arrange for separate appointments at Parents' Evenings if required. Where a teacher teaches two classes this may not be possible and we would contact you in advance. The interest of the student must always be paramount and it is important that parents agree on decisions to avoid the child or the school being involved in disputes including, for example, participation in school trips, or subject choices.

4. New and Prospective Parents and Students

4.1. The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. This is produced annually. Details are also held on our school website.

4.2. Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening in the autumn where they receive a school prospectus, have a tour of the premises and view presentations. A new intake

process for new reception parents is conducted from April to July every year, including a New Intake evening in June.

4.3. The aim is for the perception of the school by prospective parents, neighbouring primary schools, other schools, outside agencies and the wider community to match the reality. By having clear, consistent and positive communication, Hampton Lakes Primary School will develop a positive public profile that will attract prospective students, increase parental involvement, improve the self-image and morale of the school community, encourage a sense of pride by valuing people and achievements, increase community involvement and help to recruit high quality staff. Establishing and promoting a high quality image will also help to develop business links with potential sponsors, funding providers, educational providers and employers who may be able to provide opportunities for students such as employment and work experience.

4.4. On knowing a student will be joining Hampton Lakes Primary School, we liaise with their previous setting to obtain important information including their curriculum levels and support requirements. There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government.

5. General Marketing, PR and the Local Community

5.1. As well as informing parents about their own child, a co-ordinated approach will convey a positive message about the school to families and to the wider community.

5.2. Clear signage and a welcoming reception area are the starting point for visitors. Good news stories and positive messages will be displayed via the noticeboards around school and on the electronic screens around school.

5.3. Successes will be highlighted throughout the year. Some will be suitable for reporting solely on the school website/newsletter/social media while others may also be turned into press releases for distribution to community and local media.

5.4. When press coverage is achieved, parties who may be interested such as parents, staff, governors and the community will be informed via email, social media, the newsletter and the school website.

5.5. All publications and press releases which include pictures of students will be checked before release/publication to ensure that they do not include any students whose parents have informed us that they do not wish for their child to be photographed.

5.6. An easy-to-use website is crucial for online visitors, as is an up to date and informative one.

5.7. All publications and prospectuses will be mindful of the equal opportunities policy, reflecting and celebrating the diversity of our community and avoiding stereotypes.

6. Running the School

6.1. To keep everyone up to date, there are weekly Staff Briefings and a published weekly briefing bulletin.

6.2. All systems and procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook and are regularly reviewed.

6.3. Written communications are delivered through pigeon holes in the staff room, via email or Microsoft Teams.

6.4. Regular INSET sessions keep staff well informed.

6.5. Supply Teachers are given relevant information to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

7. Hampton Lakes Primary School Website

7.1. Hampton Lakes Primary School website provides a range of information about the school. All parents are provided with details to access the Parents' pages which provide additional material.

7.2. Hampton Lakes Primary School updates its website regularly to inform all members of the school and local community.

7.3. Hampton Lakes Primary School is aware of the statutory requirement for schools to ensure key documents and data are available on the website.

8. Mobile Phones

8.1. Mobile phones are allowed on the understanding that they are not used during lessons or during periods of private study. They should be switched off during the school day.

8.2. Cameras on mobile phones must not be used in such a way as to harass or cause distress to another student or member of staff.

8.3. The school monitors the use of ICT to protect from inappropriate sites, but parents need to be aware that it is not possible for the school to filter or monitor websites accessed by students on personal mobile phones with 3G or 4G internet access.

8.4. In an emergency, parents are advised to contact the School Office, not to contact their child directly. Students should go to the School Office if they need to contact home during the school day.

9. Consultation

9.1. Consultation between the school, parents and students operates in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the consultation.

9.2. Questionnaires are issued to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email). They may be distributed at specific parental events.

9.3. As part of the school's system of Quality Assurance, children are involved in Pupil Voice feedback to review teaching and learning within the school and contribute their own thoughts on areas of strength and areas for development.

9.4. Students are encouraged to be constructive about how the school can improve provision and may be selected as School Councillors to promote, improve and celebrate the work of the school.

9.5. Consultation between external agencies takes place with a view to improving the service provided by the school.

10. Freedom of Information

10.1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities. It does this in two ways:

- public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities;
- members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.

10.2. As well as responding to requests for information, Hampton Lakes Primary School must publish information proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by the scheme.

10.3. The scheme sets out Hampton Lakes Primary Schools commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information.

10.4. Hampton Lakes Primary School had adopted the Model Publication Scheme from the ICO (see appendix 1 or online at https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1153/model-publication-scheme.pdf)

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1. This policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed every three years.

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS:

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SIGNATURE	NAME	DATE

Appendix 1 – ICO Model Publications Scheme

Model publication scheme

Freedom of Information Act

This model publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.
- To publish any dataset held by the authority that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the authority is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under a specified licence. The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act. The terms 'relevant copyright work' and 'specified licence' are defined in section 19(8) of that Act.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do
Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it
Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing
Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions
Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures
Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers
Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer
Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

Charges may also be made for making datasets (or parts of datasets) that are relevant copyright works available for re-use. These charges will be in accordance with either regulations made under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act or other enactments.