



Communications Policy

“You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger”. James 1:19

Aim

To support St Martha’s School as a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with each other, with our students and pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school’s reputation. For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

Objectives:

All communications at St Martha’s School should:

- keep staff, students, 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 time, with parents immediately
- to be present at and use parents evening as a means of positive communication
- use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- take account of relevant school policies in particular Equal Opportunities & Internet Usage Policy
- be compatible with our core values as reflected in our Mission Statement and School Development Plan.

Internal Methods of Communication

Meetings

There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal. The school calendar stipulates the minimum standard of frequency of these.

All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to department’s/section’s reflection on priorities, activities and future plans. For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

Availability of Minutes/Notes of Meetings

The approved minutes of meetings are available on K Drive/Shared Area 20126-2017/ Minutes.

Email

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. To ensure that each member of staff is using email effectively, the following actions should be taken:

- consider a quick telephone call
- do not copy in more individuals than required
- delete mail regularly
- appropriate language is important in the use of email; emails should be proof read in order to check tone and appropriateness
- subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily
- email time should be blocked into your day if possible rather than allowing the received mail trigger to organise your day
- do not use email to avoid face to face contact
- emails should be checked daily and responded to as soon as possible.

Written Communications

These are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room, and staff should check on a daily basis. Phone messages taken by office staff will be emailed to the appropriate person, except in cases of emergency (when the person will be informed immediately). Email messages received by office staff should be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff.

Staff Briefings

Staff briefings take place once a week (10.15 am Monday). The diary for the following week is discussed and information shared. The minutes can be found on K Drive Shared.

Staff Handbook

A copy of the Staff Handbook is saved electronically on K Drive Shared and a hard copy is placed in the staff room. It is updated annually. The handbook contains all school policies and procedures which are reviewed annually with revisions distributed to staff.

Notice Boards

Staff notice boards are located in the staff room and the cover board is located opposite the pigeon holes.

K Drive Shared/School E-Portal:

An increasing amount of information is being placed on both K Drive Shared and Progresso and staff are encouraged to use it and contribute to its development.

Social Gatherings

The School looks favourably on opportunities to develop professional working relationships and encourages informal gatherings within and outside the organisation in order to build on relationships, develop strong teams and encourage communication. The School will organise at least one social event each term to which all members of staff are invited, e.g staff meals at the end of term, governors' reception in the September term.

External Methods of Communication

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. This enables us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. 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 will always be addressed in a formal manner (i.e. Mr/Mrs) and staff will avoid developing close friendships with parents. We try

to make our 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 made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

School

- Letters for events must be sent at least 2 weeks before the event and the letter being received by parents/guardians.
- Important dates will be posted on the school website in the calendar section and in weekly bulletin and the school App.
- Policies will be placed on the school website when they are updated.
- All emails sent to office/administration staff will be dealt with by SRA and the administration team. This should be done by the member of staff receiving the email.
- If there is an urgent concern, the message should be requested by the parent/guardian to be sent to the Personal Tutor as soon as possible. Urgent will be, by definition, something that requires the immediate attention of the pastoral team.
- If the query is about a specific subject, the message should be passed/forwarded to the curriculum leader. The curriculum leader will decide if they or the actual subject teacher will respond to the parent/guardian.
- Any emails forwarded by senior leaders, curriculum leaders or pastoral leaders to staff will have a notification of whether an action is required and by whom.
- All emails, letters, phone calls to be responded to within two working days. (The exception would be when the matter is urgent, i.e. necessitating an immediate response or when it has to be investigated thus giving time for this to be carried out).
- All communication with parents/guardians will be civil and courteous.
- In the event of school closure, due to reasons outside the control of the school (e.g. snow), classwork and homework will be emailed to students in all key stages as soon as is reasonably possible.

Teachers

- Any letter of complaint should be referred to the Headmaster or Deputy Head for advice. Letters to parents must be approved by the Headmaster before posting. Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed on students or pupils file and copies forwarded to MNA and reception.
- Changes to groupings to be clearly communicated to students and parents. Particular care should be taken when this occurs prior to a break from school, e.g. at the end of the summer term.
- All groups for the following year to be decided by an announced time to allow this communication to happen. This is with particular reference to RE, English, Mathematics and Science.
- All emails, letters, phone calls, requests for homework and/or classwork (in the event of pupil absence) to be responded to within two working days. (The exception would be when the matter is urgent, i.e. necessitating an immediate response or if the member of staff has to investigate something more time may be needed).
- A hard copy of any e mail sent to a parent or received by you from a parent should be filed. The same applies to all internal email transmissions concerning pupil matters.
- All phone calls with parents/guardians should be minuted using the Parental Contact form and a copy kept in the tutees file.
- The planner will be signed every week.
- Notes in the "Comments" section should be responded to, in the planner, within 1 day of the teacher seeing the message.
- The language and wording of any notes written in the planner should be appropriate. It is in the interests of the students and pupils that parents/guardians and teachers are not seen to be in conflict.
- Staff should not communicate with parents, students or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". The exception to this rule is networks or blogs used in the safety of the website portal for the purpose of teaching and learning.
- Teachers are advised not to invite students or pupils to their homes to conduct missed lessons.

Parents/Guardians

- If information is available as to the nature of the request then this will allow a quicker response. In cases where this information is not available, the first call will be to establish the nature of the enquiry.
- The Personal Tutor should be the first point of contact in relation to wider matters.
- Office staff will ask parents/ guardians who phone in for an email address. They will email the information to the relevant member of staff or their line manager.
- Parents/guardians should allow time for a response to their query (including any requests for classwork and homework missed due to student/pupil absence).
- Parents/guardians will ensure they keep phone conversations with staff brief during the school day. If a longer conversation is required, an appointment should be made with the relevant member of staff.
- Parents/guardians should check the planner at the end of the week and sign it ready for the Tuesday meeting. Planners should not be signed in advance.
- The language and wording of any notes written in the planner should be appropriate. It is in the interests of the student, pupil that parents/guardians and teachers are not seen to be in conflict.
- Parents/guardians may be contacted by a more senior member of staff if there is contact by parent/guardian that is affecting the member of staffs working time. This will address situations that are not being resolved by the contact between the member of staff and the parent/guardian.
- If parents/guardians wish to make a complaint, they should use the formal complaints procedure.

Students and Pupils

- Students and pupils will make sure all letters given out in their tutor group are logged in their planner and taken home to their parent/guardian.
- Students and pupils will make sure the planner is presented to their parent/guardian so that it can be signed.
- Students and pupils should allow one full working day for a response to any query (including any requests for classwork and homework missed due to pupil absence).

In the event of any unforeseen circumstances, parents, teachers, students and pupils will be advised by the Headmaster accordingly.