



## ***Newhall Primary Academy and Nursery***

***"Aiming high; Reaching higher"***

# Communications Policy

Audience:	Parents School staff Local Governing Bodies
Approved:	May 2018
Other related policies:	Staff and Parent Code of Conducts
Policy owner:	Headteacher
Policy model:	Newhall
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**Honesty**

**Respect**

**Responsibility**

**Resilience**

**Aspiration**

**Reflection**

# **An overview of Communication at Newhall Primary Academy and Nursery**

## **Aim**

To ensure that Newhall Primary Academy and Nursery is a thriving and successful educational setting, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our children, with their parents and carers, and with other members of the wider 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 is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated.
- 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.
- 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 has been carried out.

## **Principles**

All communications at Newhall Primary Academy and Nursery should:

- Keep staff, children, parents and carers, governors 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.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant academy and nursery activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Take account of relevant academy and nursery policies.
- Be compatible with our academy and Trust values.
- Comply with agreed practice for written communications with parents, carers and other external contacts.
- Ensure that consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the academy are inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

## **Responsibilities**

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

### **Senior leadership**

- 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 governors informed of developments and concerns.

#### All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information 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.

#### Parents/Carers

- Read the key communications issued by the academy and nursery, including the weekly newsletter and where a response is required (e.g. school trip letter), reply within the established time-frame.
- Raise issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity with the academy in the appropriate manner.
- Act on the communication (e.g. attending special meetings).
- Communicate with respect and courtesy.
- Follow the Parent Code of Conduct.

## Methods of Communication between Staff

#### Internal

- All staff receive a Staff Handbook, updated annually, providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- A Work Plan of key dates, events and meetings for the coming academic year is published every summer term for the following year, to enable staff to plan accordingly. This then informs the list of dates which are given to parents and carers.
- All formal meetings should be structured and minuted using the agreed academy minute formats (either staff meeting, child discussion, staff discussion or parent discussion or outside agency/visitor discussion form) and where possible, members invited to contribute to the agenda.
- Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through face-to-face discussion, and where necessary, the use of email to follow up with. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Written communications should be sent electronically to reduce printing costs, but where hard copies are necessary, they should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffroom, which staff must check daily or handed to staff personally.
- Where e-mails are used for communication, they should not require specific action to be taken, unless this has already been discussed in a face-to-face situation to clarify any points staff may have about what is expected.

- Leadership (Senior Leadership and/or Middle Leadership) meetings take place on a Monday afternoon – 3.30 to 4.00pm
- School staff professional development meetings/ INSETs take place every week on a Wednesday from 3.30-4.45pm.
- Minutes of meetings are emailed to relevant staff and saved on the main server. 'Dates for diary' is an agenda item for staff to draw attention to upcoming events and actions.
- A 'What's Happening' sheet provides a brief overview of the diary for the following week and is sent out to all staff by email on a Friday afternoon. This briefing document is displayed on the staffroom notice board. It is not a substitute for the school diary.
- The school diary is accessible on line and all members of staff can access it. Events are discussed in advance at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check the diary on a daily basis and draw attention to amendments or future actions and events.
- The whiteboard in the staffroom is used for day to day notices, and contains the main events which are taking place over the following two weeks.
- Each class teacher must produce a weekly celebratory and informative newsletter.
- Every class must have a designated coloured tray in which letters and other materials to go home with the children are placed in by the office.
- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children on the same day.
- Some communication may take place at the end of collective worship/assembly. All staff must be informed of messages given to the children.

## External

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is 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 academy life. This reinforces the important role that parents and carers play in supporting the academy.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents and carers, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents and carers should always be addressed in an appropriate manner, e.g. Mr/Miss/Mrs etc. 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 school.

## Communication between Parents/Carers and the Academy and Nursery

To ensure there are clear lines of communication within the academy and nursery, please find below a range of ways that parents/carers can get in touch so that they know who to approach to ensure their query is dealt with effectively.

Your query	Who you need to talk to	How to get in touch
Anything to do with <b>your individual child</b> : their progress, behaviour or something that has happened on the school playground.	<b>Your child's Class Teacher/key worker</b> is always the first port of call for any of these queries; they may then involve the Phase Leader or other member of the Senior Leadership team if necessary.	<b>Make an appointment</b> via the school/nursery office or drop them a short note which can be passed to them.  Please note that each teacher/key worker will have different times available due to after school clubs and meetings etc.  <b>Please try to avoid 'catching' your child's teacher in the morning as they need to make a prompt start to the day.</b>
<b>Messages</b> about medical appointments, childcare arrangements, who is collecting your child etc.	<b>School Business Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A short note</b> is best for these matters. The School Business Manager will then ensure Class Teachers know and we have a record in case of any problems.</li> <li>• Telephone Number: 01279 215480</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@newhallacademy.org">office@newhallacademy.org</a></li> </ul>
Anything to do with your child's <b>Special Educational Needs/ Disability (SEND)</b> provision or any concerns you have about possible SEND.	Again, <b>your child's class teacher</b> is the first port of call for any of these queries or conversations as they are teacher responsible and know them best.  They may then involve the <b>Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCo)</b> , if necessary.	<b>Make an appointment</b> via the school office or drop them a short note which can be passed to them.  Those parents wishing to meet with the SENCo need to be aware of her other whole-school responsibilities and so is not available every day in this capacity. <b>Make an appointment</b> via the school office in this instance.
Any queries with <b>administration</b> : pupil	<b>School Business Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• School Telephone Number: 01279 215480</li> </ul>

<b>Your query</b>	<b>Who you need to talk to</b>	<b>How to get in touch</b>
records, contact numbers, admissions etc.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="mailto:Office@newhallacademy.org">Office@newhallacademy.org</a></li> <li>• Office Post Boxes in the main foyer (not cash)</li> </ul>
Any queries with <b>finance</b> : dinner money, music lessons, school trip payments etc.	<b>School Business Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop in, telephone or e-mail.</li> <li>• School Telephone Number: 01279 215480</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:Office@newhallacademy.org">Office@newhallacademy.org</a></li> <li>• Office Post Boxes in the main foyer (not cash)</li> </ul>
Any queries about <b>fundraising in school and the Parent Teacher Association</b> for ideas for events and volunteering to help at events.	<b>PTA Class Reps or PTA Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak to your year-group class rep individually/ or contact them as appropriate.</li> </ul>
Anything to do with whole school issues or ideas for the future or give some feedback.	<b>Headteacher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Make an appointment</b> via the office or write a short note. Please note that if your appointment is regarding your child, the Headteacher will ask that you have already spoken with your child's class teacher in the first instance.</li> <li>• School Telephone Number: 01279 215480</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@newhallacademy.org">office@newhallacademy.org</a></li> </ul>
Any concerns regarding <b>child welfare</b> or family circumstances which we need to be aware of or to discuss <b>serious issues or concerns</b> .	<b>Headteacher</b> <b>Phase Leader for Early Years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an appointment via the office or write a short note.</li> <li>• School Telephone Number: 01279 215480</li> <li>• <a href="mailto:office@newhallacademy.org">office@newhallacademy.org</a></li> </ul>

### **Letters / Notes / Electronic messages via an application (app)**

Parent correspondence will be acknowledged upon receipt and a response provided as soon as possible but within a maximum of 48 hours (2 school days). Parents can send letters or notes in to school via their child to give to his or her class teacher, or it can be handed in at the school office or posted. All correspondence will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Where the correspondence is in relation to a complaint made by the parent/carer, the complaints policy should be followed to ensure that the appropriate procedure is followed.

**Any response (verbal or written) to a formal query/request or complaint provided to parents/carers by the academy must be checked by the Headteacher/Nursery Manager before the response is communicated. Copies of all related discussion or correspondence with individual parents will be placed in pupil files.**

## E mail

The academy and nursery has an electronic mailing system it uses to communicate with parents and carers. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Headteacher/Nursery Manager.

These days, most people are communicating regularly by email and it has become one of the primary routes for establishing communication. That said, except for the office staff, our members of staff on the teaching and learning team are not office or computer based and therefore do not have the same level of access to email. It is not our policy to provide parents with email addresses for teaching staff. This is also one of our strategies for reducing the unnecessary and excessive workload of teachers and we request that parents do not ask teachers for them.

**Teaching staff are asked not to access ANY emails during teaching sessions and to not respond to any e-mails which come directly to them.**

For the purposes of administration, parents and carers are asked to use the main office address for all email correspondence: [office@newhallacademy.org](mailto:office@newhallacademy.org) or the main nursery email address for all nursery correspondence: [nursery@newhallacademy.org](mailto:nursery@newhallacademy.org)

All emails will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. Please note all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. In the first instance, this is usually your child's class teacher. Parents should be aware that any e-mails which are sent to the academy may not be opened immediately, and as such if your message or query is urgent, we ask that you call the school office to ensure that the school receives this timely information. Any e-mail which is sent to school will be acknowledged and responded to within two school days of the date it was delivered. The school office will ensure that your e-mail is directed to the relevant person/persons.

Where necessary, a hard copy of an email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent will be filed on the child's personal file in the school office. The same applies to all internal mail, email transmissions concerning pupil matters. All emails requiring an answer should be responded within 48 hours (two school days).

## Telephone calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school/nursery, where teachers/key workers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with pupils 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.

Telephone calls are appropriate to notify us that your child will be absent from school, to communicate brief information about your child that the school needs to know or in an emergency, such as e.g. to let us know that you will be late collecting your child. We ask parents to telephone the school on 01279 215480 . The school office is open between 8.30am and 4.00pm, Monday - Friday during term-time. At all other times, there is an answering service available to take your message.

Any messages which are for school/nursery staff are taken by the office team and then passed on to the appropriate member of staff. Office staff will take note of the necessary details of the call.

Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer or return a telephone call unless it is a personal emergency relating to the staff member.

Where a parent or carer does call to request a meeting with their child's class teacher/key worker, the office will liaise with the class teacher/key worker to arrange a mutually convenient day and time (usually within two days) for the meeting and either the teacher or the office will confirm with the parent within 24hours.

### **Social Networking Sites/Blogs**

Staff will not communicate individually with parents, carers or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Staff are instructed to report any such requests or interactions to the Headteacher.

The academy uses Twitter and Facebook as a way of posting reminders to parents/carers and sharing and celebrating the pupils' learning at Newhall. Where this method of communication is used, a professional manner will continue to be used at all times, as it would be for any communication within the academy.

### **Written Reports**

Once a year, we provide a comprehensive report to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each area of learning. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas for future development. Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress. There will be two shorter reports at the **end of the Autumn** and **end of the Spring Term**, which will identify attainment and progress in key areas.

### **Learning Reviews**

Parents are invited to meet with their child's class teacher/key worker three times during the year. The first meeting is an informal 'Getting to know my teacher' meeting for all the parents early in the Autumn 1 half term, soon after the children have settled into their new classroom. This meeting will give the teachers an opportunity to share the curriculum overviews and general classroom information with parents. It also provides an opportunity for any general questions parents may have.

At the beginning of the Autumn 2 term (following October Assessments) and then again in the mid Spring 1 term (following end of Autumn Assessments) we have parent-teacher consultations, which we call 'Learning Reviews'. Parents will have the chance to discuss their child's progress with the teacher at these meetings.

You will be advised of the date through an individual letter and asked to sign up for a specific day/time to meet with your child's teacher via our online booking system. If you are unable to use the online system you will be able to telephone or e-mail the school office who will assist you in making an appointment. We would encourage all parents to take up this opportunity. If you are unable to attend on the designated days, you can request to make an alternative arrangement directly with your child's teacher, or via the School Office at a mutually convenient time.

### **SEND Reviews**

Parents of children with SEND will meet with their class teacher three times a year as an extended Pupil Learning Review. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a need for support. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have educational 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 our academy, or to receive and understand communication.

### **Academy and Nursery Prospectus**

The academy and nursery prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at Newhall. This is updated every year and placed on the website.

### **Academy and Nursery Website**

The website provides information about the academy and nursery, as well as latest news and information and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

### **Transition visits**

Transition visits to prospective pupils' nursery and/or home take place before they are due to start at the academy/nursery.

Several meetings for new parents are organised at an appropriate time for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school.

### **Newsletter**

The academy weekly newsletter is sent to parents/carers via the electronic mailing system, with paper copies available on request or sent to parents who are not able to access it online. It contains general details of school events and activities, as well as sharing and celebrating the learning throughout the academy in that week. It is published every Friday during term-time. Parents are asked to ensure that the academy has the correct e-mail address on its system for communication. A calendar of forthcoming school events is at the end of each newsletter.

### **Letters and Forms**

We send all other letters of a general nature out on a Tuesday or Wednesday and place copies of all communication (including newsletters) on the academy's website. We limit the communication to particular days so that parents/carers know when to expect letters and are not bombarded with communication each day unless the information is of utmost importance or urgent.

Sometimes we may send out an electronic 'Forms' document if we need to conduct a survey, or if we require parents' preference and/or comments.

## **Reading diaries**

Children in all classes within the academy have a reading diary/record. This enables parents to record a wide range of information about their child's reading.

## **Individual meetings**

Parents are welcome to visit the academy to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, and gain support or talk about their child/home issues with either the child's class staff. Parents are asked to phone school staff to make an appointment. This allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the parents. Our aim is to see the parents as quickly as possible; we try to arrange a meeting within two to five school days.

Your first point of contact in the school is always your child's class teacher and in the nursery this would be the key worker. For all other queries, the school office will direct you to the appropriate member of staff to deal with your query and arrange any appointments for you.

If necessary, parents may have a brief word with a member of academy staff before or after school/nursery. Please be mindful that teachers and key workers have limited time in the mornings as they need to settle the children, register them, take the dinner register and begin the day's learning.

## **Residential Meetings**

Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements.

## **Curriculum Open Afternoon / Evening**

At the end of each term parents and cares are invited to our Open afternoon/evening, when you can look at your child's work with him or her that they have completed during the term.

Other open afternoons take place throughout the year where specific whole-school or year-group events have taken place, e.g. during global diversity week.

## **The academy office**

The office is open between 8.30am and 3.30pm, Monday - Friday during term-time. We would strongly encourage you to use one of the methods detailed above to get in contact with the school, however should you wish to pass on a brief message, you may do so at the school office.

Your message will be written down and given to the appropriate member of staff at the earliest opportunity. We ask you to notify the office if your child will be absent from school by 9.10am at the latest. For nursery children, we ask that you notify the nursery before your child's expected start time. If a child is absent from school/nursery, and we have had no indication of the reason, we will contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

## **How parents/carers can share their views**

### **Annual Survey**

We welcome and value feedback from parents and carers about our academy's policies and practices. We conduct an annual survey during the Summer Term, to canvas the views of parents and carers about our school and report back on the outcomes.

### **Coffee 'Drop-in' Mornings**

We run half termly 'Coffee Drop-in' which parents/carers are invited to attend. The 'Coffee Drop-in' is for everyone and anyone can attend. At the 'Coffee Drop-in' information is made available about local services, community events and PTA events. Special consultations and specific information workshops are sometimes combined with 'Coffee Drop-in' events e.g. Internet Safety and Parent or Phonics Workshops.

### **Parent Forum Meetings – at the start of the academic year and then at the start of every 2<sup>nd</sup> half term**

Parents/carers are invited to Parent Forum meetings to discuss various topics with the Headteacher.

## **Communication with the community**

Members of the local community are invited to academy functions such as Special Assemblies, Harvest, Christmas Fairs, Christmas Carol Services and school productions. Guest speakers from local churches, community organisations and charities come into school to speak to the children. Information about local community events and activities is regularly featured in the weekly Newsletter.

## **Safeguarding**

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm; that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that Newhall should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help any child needing protection. So, when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Children Protection, or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who may share this information with Social Services.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at our school is the headteacher, Charmaine Ward. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are the Assistant HT, Jennifer O'Neill and the Nursery Manager, Stephanie Montgomery.