

Communication Policy

More Than Ed | Independent School

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Responsible Person: Karen Holmes

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1. Rationale

Communication with parents and carers, external agencies and commissioners is a strength of our school. It is essential that, in order for our young people to feel safe and build trust in staff, they know that all the people who care for them are communicating regularly about their thoughts, feelings and needs.

2. Aims

Through this policy we aim to:

- ensure that staff, students, parents and other stakeholders are kept well informed;
- provide a clear structure outlining which form of communication is used for each purpose;
- use the method of communication that is most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience;
- be open, honest, ethical and professional; and
- use jargon-free, plain language that is easily understood by all.

3. Personal Contact Details

The school holds emergency contact details for all students, and parents are contacted annually to ensure these are up to date. Families are encouraged to alert the school immediately if their contact information needs to be revised. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practical means to contact a parent or carer.

4. General Communication

All communication is made with the age of the student and the context in mind; for example, staff may vary the amount and level of language they use, as well as the speed, tone and volume of verbal communication. Communication should be concise and focused on its intended purpose. Staff encourage two-way communication, welcome questions from students, and use every opportunity to check understanding, whether of a safety instruction or a concept. All staff communicate with students respectfully, follow agreed procedures, and respect the Safeguarding Policy. No political or religious beliefs are promoted, and comments are kept as balanced and impartial as the context allows.

Communication between staff and students is of great importance in facilitating teaching and learning. The philosophy of our school is one of nurture, developed through positive relationships based on trust and respect, and all interactions are grounded in this approach.

5. Daily Contact

Students are transported to and from school by their tutor. This allows parents and carers to speak to staff daily about their child's care and education. Daily communication provides essential information about curriculum, progress, health, behaviour and self-help needs, and helps to ensure wrap-around care for our young people and their families. These daily conversations build strong, trusting relationships between home and school, and help the student to feel fully supported.

6. Meetings: Annual EHCP Reviews and PEPs

During each student's annual EHCP review, staff, parents and carers, and commissioners have an extended period to focus on the student's progress and to plan together for future needs. In Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and looked-after children reviews, parents and carers, the Virtual School and external agencies discuss the student's progress and requirements and set future targets.

7. Open-Door Policy

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school to discuss any support or information they may require.

8. Telephone Calls

Telephone calls are made where immediate contact with a family member is required, for example for a student injury or incident. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact; where no contact is made, they will call the second named contact. If no live contact can be made, staff will either leave an answerphone message (in the same order) or continue to make repeat calls to the contact numbers where possible.

9. Additional Points

- All communications to parents involving sensitive data should be made face-to-face or, where this is not possible, by telephone.
- Staff should never send a written group communication to parents before it has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team.
- Staff should familiarise themselves with the Data Protection Policy before making external communications.
- Staff should never communicate with parents or students via social media.
- When communicating with students, no political or religious beliefs are promoted, and comments are kept as balanced and impartial as the context allows. If in doubt, staff consult a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Inspection reports are made available to parents, carers and stakeholders.

10. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's other policies, including:

- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety / E-Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy
- Behaviour and Relational Policy
- SEND Policy

11. Legislation and Guidance

In drawing up this policy, the school has had regard to the following:

- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current edition)
- Equality Act 2010