

RAYLEIGH SCHOOLS TRUST

Communications Policy

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1. Introduction and Aims

The Sweyne Park School (SPS) and Glebe Primary School (“the Schools”) believe that clear, open communication between the Schools and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils and students’ learning, as it:

- Provides parents/carers with the information that they need to support their child’s education;
- Helps the Schools to improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers;
- Builds trust between home and the Schools, which helps the Schools to better support every child’s educational and pastoral needs;

The aim of this Policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the Schools communicate with parents/carers;
- Setting clear standards and expectations for the Schools’ response to communication from parents/carers;
- Helping parents/carers to reach the member of the Schools’ staff, who is best placed to address their specific query or concern, meaning that they receive a response as quickly as possible.

Throughout the remainder of this Policy, the term “parents” refers to both parents and carers.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware and understand this Policy;
- Monitoring the implementation of this Policy;
- Regularly reviewing this Policy.

2.2 Network Manager

The Network Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Satchel/Go4Schools platforms are up-to-date;
- Ensuring that all users at Sweyne Park School (“SPS”) have login details for Satchel/Go4Schools platforms;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of communications software (e.g. Outlook/OneTouch), and ensuring that these are updated and fit-for-purpose;

2.3 Deputy Network Manager

- Updating the Schools’ websites on a timely basis, as appropriate, and as requested.

2.4 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this Policy, and all other relevant Trust policies.
- Working with other members of staff to ensure that parents receive timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves).
- Staff aim to respond to communication during core school hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday) or during their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping all staff to find a suitable work/life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are not expected to do so.

2.5 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all communication with the Schools is respectful;
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff, in the first instance;
- Responding to communications from the Schools, for example, requests for meetings, in a timely manner;
- Reading all communications from the Schools in a timely manner;
- Contacting the Schools for clarification if they are unclear about any communication they have received.

Parents should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school operating hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday), or during school holidays.

3. How the Schools Communicate with Parents

The sections below explain how the Schools keep parents up-to-date with their child's education, and what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to ensure that they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

Please note that, in the event of any local and national crisis, or the Schools closure, the method of communicating with the Schools will be subject to amendment. Online and virtual platforms will be utilised, and person-to-person engagement may be limited according to local and national Government guidance.

3.1 Email/Class Dojo

The Schools use email to keep parents informed about the following (this is not an exhaustive list but may include):

- Important school information and updates
- Upcoming school events;
- Scheduled school closures, for example, for staff training days or strikes
- School surveys or consultations;

In addition to email Glebe may also use Class Dojo to keep parents informed. Teachers and parents will be able to communicate directly through the Class Dojo messaging service between the hours of 8:00 am – 4:00 pm (Monday-Friday.)

Parents should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school operating hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday), or during school holidays.

3.2 Text messages

The Schools text parents about:

- Emergency school matters, e.g. closures, for example, due to bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

3.3 School Calendar

The Schools' websites include a calendar for each half term: <https://www.sweynepark.com/event-calendar/> and <https://www.glebeschool.com/news-information/school-calendar/>. Where possible, the Schools try to provide parents with, at least, two weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including special assemblies or key visitors). Any such event is included in the school calendar.

There may be occasions when, due to unforeseen circumstances, events have to be cancelled, postponed and/or re-arranged.

3.4 Phone Calls

Staff may contact parents by telephone to discuss a range of matters. Staff use the primary contact provided by the parent on enrolment to the relevant school in the first instance, but may then use alternative contacts, as advised on the pupil's admission form.

3.5 Letters

The Schools regularly sends the following correspondence via email:

- Letters about educational visits and trips;
- Requests for consent forms to be completed;
- A link to the SPS weekly newsletter "Sweyne Park Times".
- A link to the Glebe Primary ("Glebe") newsletter "The Glebe Gazette"

3.6 Homework

At SPS homework is logged and communicated to pupils, students and parents via the "Satchel One" platform.

3.7 Reports

Parents receive reports from SPS about their child's learning, including:

- Termly progress reports covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance;
- A report on the results of Mock Examinations.

SPS also arranges meetings during which parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (refer to Section 3.8 below).

Parents receive reports from Glebe about their child's learning, including:

- Annual progress reports covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance;
- A report on the results of any statutory assessments.

Glebe also arranges open door events during which parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (refer to Section 3.8 below).

3.8 Meetings

The Schools holds a minimum of one Parents' Evening per year. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other areas of concern. These meetings are generally face-to-face but additional meetings are sometimes undertaken remotely using a system called "School Cloud".

The Schools may also contact parents to arrange individual meetings, outside of the scheduled Parents' Evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of pupils/students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to discuss these additional needs.

3.9 School Websites

The Schools' websites comply with the DfE guidance 'What academies, free schools and colleges must publish online'. Key information about the School is posted on its website, including:

- The timings of the School day and term dates;
- Important events and announcements;
- Curriculum information;
- Important policies and procedures;
- Important contact information;
- All communications in letter form can be found at: <https://www.sweynepark.com/key-information/#letters-divider> or <https://www.glebeschool.com/news-information/>
- Recent editions of the "Sweyne Park Times" can be found on our website at: <https://www.sweynepark.com/news/>
- Recent editions of "The Glebe Gazette" can be found at <https://www.glebeschool.com/news-information/the-glebe-gazette/>

Parents should always check the website before contacting the Schools directly.

3.10 Home-School Communications Application

As referenced earlier in this Policy, SPS uses the communications applications "Satchel One and Go4Schools", which allows parents to track their child's attendance, detentions, achievement points and homework set.

As referenced earlier in this Policy, Glebe uses the communications applications Class Dojo to allow parents to track their child's behaviour, communicate with the class teacher directly and keep informed about key events.

4. How Parents Can Communicate with The Schools

Parents of pupil/students attending SPS should use the contact detail in Appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue.

Parents of pupils attending Glebe should use the contact detail in Appendix 2 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue.

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the School, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues, in the first instance. All members of the Schools' community are required to follow email etiquette (refer to Appendix 3).

The Schools aim to answer all emails in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call, if appropriate) within three School days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should telephone the relevant school.

The use of personal email addresses by staff for any official SPS/Glebe business is not permitted. All members of staff are provided with an SPS/Glebe email address, which they use for all official communication.

Members of staff are encouraged to have an appropriate work/life balance when responding to emails, and guidance is that communication is only sent during core School hours (8:00 am to 4:00

pm, Monday to Friday) or during their working hours (if they work part-time). Staff are not expected to reply to emails during the school holidays.

Reminders for Staff

- All language and content should follow professional etiquette and standards (refer to Appendix 3) at all times;
- If a member of staff is unsure about the tone/content/spelling/grammar of any communication, be it to an internal or an external audience, they should ask their Line Manager for support and guidance before sending;
- Staff must follow all safeguarding and professional standards at all times in the language and content of their communication;
- If a member of staff is concerned about any aspect of correspondence with any pupil/student, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or deputies) should be contacted immediately;
- If a pupil/student fails to follow the agreed protocols, staff **MUST** stop all correspondence and report the incident to the DSL (or deputies).

Pupil/Student Email

- SPS pupils/students must use their SPS email and MS Teams accounts for educational purposes only.
- SPS pupils/students are made aware of the expectations and the 'responsible internet and network usage' policy through the Home-School Agreement signed by the parent/pupil/student on joining SPS, and receive education regarding safe and appropriate email/MS Teams etiquette throughout their time in School.

4.2 Phone Calls

Parents should only telephone the relevant school office for urgent issues. Urgent issues might include such matters as:

- Family emergencies;
- Safeguarding or welfare issues.

For more general enquiries, parents should email the relevant school office on admin@sweynepark.com or admin@glebeschool.com.

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should contact the Schools via the appropriate email address (refer to Appendix 1/2), or email the relevant school office to book an appointment. The Schools try to schedule all meetings within three school days of receipt of the request.

Parents may book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns that they have about their child's learning;
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing.

Parents may not attend school to meet with staff without an appointment. Staff are entitled to refuse to meet with a parent where an appointment has not already been scheduled.

4.4 Letters

Staff should ensure that all letters are quality assured before sending. Approval should also be sought from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) before publishing to the wider School community.

It is important that the security of the official school headed paper is maintained. Therefore, staff with access to this stationery must ensure that security is not compromised.

4.3.1 Expectations of Conduct During Meetings

The Schools expect all meetings to be conducted in cordial terms, even if a parent is unhappy with the school. The Schools listen to parental concerns and attempts to resolve them. Parents are expected to use a cordial and low tone, and not to raise their voice when talking to staff. Recordings of the meetings are not permitted as the Schools do not consent to any recording of any meeting with parents. If a parent records a meeting covertly, the Trust Board and the relevant Local Governing Body will not allow a parent to use any such recordings as evidence in any complaint that may be raised subsequently.

In accordance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), it is not a criminal offence for a private citizen to make a recording in secret provided it is for personal use only. However, if the recording is then shared without the consent of the participants, sold to a third party, or released in the public domain without the consent of the participants, this might then become a criminal offence.

If the member of staff cannot immediately resolve a parental concern, they will provide a timeframe for when they will revert. Brief notes will be kept of the meeting. A copy of these notes can be sent to parents on request.

Ground rules that support a conducive and productive environment are based on:

- Allowing all parties to participate;
- Listening with an open mind;
- Thinking before speaking;
- Attacking the problem and not the person.

5. Social Media Expectations

In accordance with the Rayleigh Schools Trust's Online Safety Policy, the expectations regarding safe and responsible use of social media applies to all members of The Schools' community.

The term social media may include, but is not limited to: social networking sites, blogs, wikis, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and instant messenger.

All members of SPS/Glebe are expected to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner.

6. Inclusion

It is important to SPS/Glebe that everyone in its community can communicate easily with the Schools.

The Schools websites can be translated into many other languages in order that parents and pupils/students can opt to read school information in their first language.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Headteachers monitor the implementation of this Policy and ensure that it is reviewed every three years. The Policy is approved by the relevant Local Governing Body and ratified by the Board of Trustees.

8. Links with Other Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Staff Code of Conduct;

- Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- SPS Home-School Agreement;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

Appendix 1: Sweyne Park School Contact List

Who should I contact?

For questions about any of the topics in the table below, or to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address;
- Include the child's full name in the subject line.

SPS aims to respond to all emails within three School days.

There are two main communication routes into School that a parent may pursue, should they need to.

Pastoral matters relating to the welfare and wellbeing of a child

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The child's Form Tutor;
2. The child's Head of Year/Assistant Head of Year;
3. The child's SLT Link;
4. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral);
5. The Headteacher.

Matters relating to the learning and progress of a child

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The child's class teacher;
2. The subject's Head of Department;
3. The subject's SLT Link;
4. The Assistant Headteacher (AHT) (Teaching and Learning);
5. The Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum);
6. The Headteacher.

Following these stages of communication helps to ensure that the issue or concern is heard, dealt with and resolved as quickly and as effectively as possible.

Please contact the relevant member of the team listed for queries relating to:

The Child's Learning/Class Activities/Lessons/Homework	Pupil's/student's class teacher
The Child's Wellbeing/Pastoral Support	Pupil's/student's Head of Year/Assistant Head of Year
Trip Payments	Email: atwomey@sweynepark.com
ScoPay related queries	Email Pupil Services at: pupilservices@sweynepark.com
Educational Visits/Trips	The Educational Visit/Trip Leader (as stated on the visit/trip letter)
Uniform/Lost Property	Contact Pupil Services
Attendance and Absence	To report a child's absence, contact the dedicated absence line on 01268 780293 or send an email to pupilabsence@sweynepark.com
To request approval for term-time absence	Email the Headteacher at admin@sweynepark.com
Bullying and Behaviour	Head of Year and/Assistant Head of Year
School Events/the School Calendar	Email admin@sweynepark.com
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	SENDCo: admin@sweynepark.com
Health & Safety	atwomey@sweynepark.com
Hiring the School Premises	lettings@sweynepark.com
Chair of Local Governing Body	Mrs Lynda Walker c/o admin@sweynepark.com
Safeguarding Issues	In an emergency, ring the School and ask to speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or email admin@sweynepark.com
The School Office	Tel: 01268 784721
ICT issues/Technical Support	support@sweynepark.com

Appendix 2: Glebe School Contact List

Who should I contact?

For questions about any of the topics listed in the table below, or to speak to a member of staff please use Class Dojo in the first instance.

Glebe aims to respond to all communications within three school days.

There are two main communication routes into School that a parent may pursue, should they need to.

Pastoral matters relating to the welfare and wellbeing of a child.

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The class Teacher
2. The Learning Mentor
3. The Phase Leader
4. The Assistant Headteacher
5. The Deputy Headteacher
6. The Headteacher.

Matters relating to the learning and progress of a child.

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The child's class teacher;
2. The Subject Leader
3. The Phase leader
4. The Assistant Headteacher
5. The Deputy Headteacher
6. The Headteacher.

Following these stages of communication helps to ensure that the issue or concern is heard, dealt with and resolved as quickly and as effectively as possible.

Please contact the relevant member of the team listed for queries relating to:

The Child's Learning/Class Activities/Lessons/Homework	Pupil's class teacher
The Child's Wellbeing/Pastoral Support	Pupil's student's class teacher
Trip Payments	Email: admin@glebeschool.com
Scopay related queries	Email admin@glebeschool.com
Educational Visits/Trips	The Educational Visit/Trip Leader (as stated on the visit/trip letter)
Uniform/Lost Property	Email admin@glebeschool.com
Attendance and Absence	To report a child's absence, contact Glebe on 01268 784253
To request approval for term-time absence	Email the Headteacher at admin@glebeschool.com
Bullying and Behaviour	Pupil's class teacher
School Events/the School Calendar	Email admin@glebeschool.com
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	SENDCo: admin@glebeschool.com
Health & Safety	Email: headteacher@glebeschool.com
Chair of Local Governing Body	Mr Steve Munford c/o admin@glebeschool.com
Safeguarding Issues	In an emergency, ring the School and ask to speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or email admin@glebeschool.com
The School Office	Tel: 01268 784253
ICT issues/Technical Support	support@sweynepark.com

Complaints

The procedure detailed in the Trust's Complaints Policy should be followed in the event of any complaint. The document is available on our website.

Appendix 3: Email Etiquette

The Schools' community should carefully consider the email etiquette below before sending emails.

- Use a meaningful and professional subject line.
- Ensure that an email starts with a salutation even if it is informal, i.e. "Hi". This is far more professional and courteous than an email without any salutation.
- Always sign off appropriate to the recipients.
- Always add a full SPS signature to all external emails.
- If writing about something that relates to previous correspondence, keep all messages on the same chain and, where possible, do not start a new chain.
- Ensure that the email is addressed to those from whom action/response is required, and that those copied are not required to action/respond.
- If a recipient should reply to all, state that in the email.
- If action is required by a certain deadline, state that in the subject line. For example: "Action - Pupil Premium Strategy Statement - Deadline 31 December 2022".
- When necessary, ensure that an Out of Office message is always switched on and that the message includes details of an alternative contact point.
- If appropriate, add detail to email signature regarding any part-time working arrangements. For example: "My usual working pattern is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday", or "Please note that my normal non-working day is Friday. As a result, my response to emails arriving on a Friday may be delayed".
- If appropriate, add detail around expectations for others to respond. For example: "Please note – I sometimes send emails at times that suit my own commitments, there is no expectation that you will respond out of usual office hours".
- If needed, ensure that spell check is switched on.
- If spell check is not relied upon, ensure that every email is proof read before sending.
- Do not use all UPPERCASE letters in any email.