



Home-school partnership and communication policy

This policy is reviewed biennially by the SENDAT Provision Committee

To be read in conjunction with, but not limited to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and discipline policy
- Attendance Policy
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy for Staff and Volunteers
- Complaints Policy

History of Document

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Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Introduction and aims | 2 |
| 2. Roles and responsibilities | 3 |
| 3. How we communicate with parents and carers..... | 4 |
| 4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school | 6 |
| 5. Inclusion..... | 8 |
| 6. Monitoring and review | 8 |

1. Introduction and aims

At SENDAT we believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on students' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs
- Supports positive behaviour and good school attendance

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

- Explaining how our schools communicate with parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible
- Clarifying expectations of schools and parents/carers

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents/carers are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation and impact of this policy, reviewing it at least annually as part of the School Development cycle.

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents/carers in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents/carers get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours (see individual schools' websites) or their working hours (including if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff 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.

Link to Acceptable Use of IT Policy: [SENDAT](#)

2.3 Parents/Carers

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school
- Allowing staff reasonable time to reply to their communication, considering staff working hours and other responsibilities
- Ensuring their child's school has up-to-date contact details (phone numbers and email address) and emergency contact details.
- Ensuring there is more than one point of contact in case of emergency

Parents/carers should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (see individual schools' websites), or during school holidays.

3. How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents/carers up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in school. SENDAT uses the Arbor School Information Management System as its main communication platform for emails and text messages to parents/carers and for other functions such as paying for trips and school meals.

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

3.1 Email

We use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests
- Emergency school closures

3.2 Text messages

We will text parents/carers about:

- Payments
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

We would usually also use email as a "back-up" for those parents/carers who may not always receive text messages.

3.3 School calendar

Each SENDAT school website should include a full school calendar for the year, which is updated on a regular basis.

Where possible, we try to give parents/carers at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for students to bring in special items or materials).

Any such event will be included in the school calendar.

3.4 Phone calls

School staff may phone parents/carers for a range of reasons, including:

- Informing them about their child's progress
- Letting them know about a particular achievement or positive news
- Informing them about a medical or behaviour incident
- Checking up on a student's attendance where the parent/carer has not contacted the school
- Welfare calls for students with longer-term absence, for example for medical reasons

- Safeguarding concerns
- Illness while in school, that requires the child to go home
- Following up

We recognise that parents/carers may not always be able to answer their phone immediately. For this reason we ask that voicemail, text and alternative contact numbers are available in case of emergency. We also recognise that phone calls may not be the best form of communication some parents/carers, for example those with a hearing impairment; in such circumstances we encourage parents/carers to inform the school of their preferred mode of communication.

3.5 Letters

Regular letters home may include the following. Copies will usually be sent by email:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- School newsletter
- Annual Review paperwork
- Invitations to meetings and events

3.6 School planners/Reading Log

Some SENDAT schools use student planners/Reading logs to communicate as an additional means of communication with parents/carers, typically regarding day-to-day matters and supporting students' reading.

3.7 Reports

Parents/carers receive reports from the school about their child's learning, This will vary according to the age-range of the individual school, and the type of qualifications/accreditation offered, but will include, as appropriate:

- An end-of-year report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance. This may be the same as:
- Termly progress reports, summarising progress against the targets on the child's Individual Learning Plan
- A report on Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 SATs tests (where relevant)
- A report on the results of public examinations (where relevant)
- Information about vocational qualifications gained or credits gained towards these (where relevant)
- The report of the child's Annual Review, where they have an Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP).

We also arrange regular meetings where parents/carers can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

3.8 Meetings

Every SENDAT school provides regular opportunities, at least once a term, for parents/carers to talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's

wellbeing, or any other area of concern. This may be through parents' evenings or placement review meetings.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of students with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) will also be asked to attend an Annual Review of this plan for their child's provision.

3.9 School and Trust website

Key information about the school is posted on the SENDAT website, which has separate sections for each school, including:

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about before and after-school provision

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

3.10 Home-school communications app

Parents/carers are encouraged to download and use the Arbor App, which supports the communication between school and home (see introduction to section 3).

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Parents/carers should consult the school website to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

4.1 Email

Parents/carers should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days.

If parents/carers do not have access to email, they should text or phone the school. If a query or concern is urgent, and parents/carers need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

4.2 Phone calls

If parents/carers need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the school office and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 2 working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 5 days of your request.

If the issue is urgent, parents/carers should call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues
- An unexpected event that may cause the child to struggle in school that day

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

4.3 Meetings

If parents/carers would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see school website), or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request, to take place as soon as possible.

We recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing
- Support with completing paperwork with regards to their child's needs

Meetings may be face-to-face, but many families of students at SENDAT schools live some distance from their school, so we also offer meetings online via Microsoft Teams

4.4 Inappropriate Communication

We believe it is important to work in partnership with parents/carers to support their child's learning and to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for students, staff and parents. In return we ask parents/carers to:

- Respect the ethos, vision and values of their child's school
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our students
- Treat all members of the school community with respect – setting a good example with speech and behaviour
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues

SENDAT schools will not accept any form of communication from parents/carers that is considered disrespectful, abusive, threatening or vexatious. These may be followed up by the school in a manner commensurate with the communication. This could include:

- A letter to the parent/carer
- Inviting the parent into school to meet with a senior member of staff or the Head of School
- Limiting the lines of communication with the school (eg. having one named member of staff as sole contact)
- Seeking advice from the trust's legal team regarding further action (in cases of conduct that may be libellous or slanderous)

- In rare circumstances, banning the parent/carer from the school site

5. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in English. Parents/carers who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

- School announcements and communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

6. Monitoring and review

The Trust monitors the implementation of this policy through the Provision Standards and Attainment Committee, and will review the policy every 2 years.

The policy will be approved by the SENDAT Trustees.