



# Home-School Communication Policy

## Clarity Independent School

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**Written by Debbie Hanson**  
Head Teacher and Proprietor

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## Our Home-School Communication Policy

Teaching staff start work at 8.30am and they finish either at 4pm or 4.30pm but many stay on later than that voluntarily, purely to benefit the pupils. I'm sure you agree that there is a lot of work to fit in to their hours and I would like to ask your help with the following, regarding communication.

### Daily / Regular Home-School Communication with Keyworkers for Updates

As parents and care-givers, you can choose to be contacted for updates about your child, by phone or email, and the regularity of that contact across the week.

As you are aware, we no longer offer the previously handwritten parent-communication record book, because GDPR regulations state that personal, sensitive information needs to be stored and transmitted in a secure, private manner to keep personal data safe. This method also took staff much longer to complete each day and was at risk of becoming mislaid or open to audiences it was not intended for. In valuing your and our privacy, we moved to an email and phone system to secure this data and enable us to work more efficiently.

If you would like to change the method by which you receive updates (phone or email) and / or frequency of this regular home-school communication, please email your preference to your child's keyworker and they will update our records on Arbor accordingly.

### How to communicate with school - by email:

Please can we ask that you email rather than phone wherever possible. This is so that your email can easily be forwarded to the right person, avoiding the Office Manager having to take and relay handwritten conversation notes round the school to the relevant person and will ensure that someone is able to get back to you more promptly.

### When to contact us:

Before 9am, staff are busy preparing for the children's arrival; therefore, please preferably email the member of staff or office manager on [admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@clarity.essex.sch.uk).

***Please note, the phone is now no longer answered before school, so that the line is not blocked by one extended call, leaving other callers unable to leave their messages.***

If you prefer to call rather than email, you can leave a very brief message on the answerphone with the main bullet points you wish to communicate and the Office Manager will forward it to the right person for you and before school starts.

Between 9am and 3pm, teaching staff cannot come to the phone as they are supervising children, so please either email, or leave a message either on the answerphone or with the Office Manager, who will relay it to the right person to call you back if necessary, when the children have gone home after 3pm.

During times of home-learning, teaching staff are likely to be in contact with you between 9am and 3pm, to support pupils getting online at home etc. but cannot do this when pupils are learning in the school building.



## Communicating with the Head Teacher

Please note that although I enjoy talking with parents and having that communication, I myself can't always be available to answer queries in the time frame you would like. This isn't because I don't want to speak to you, it's just that there simply isn't time to get back to all the calls within the working day and early evening. If you leave a brief message with the Office Manager, stating what your call is about, or email me directly with brief bullet points, I can get back to you much quicker, but this still may not be the same day. This is why we request the above procedure is followed, via the main office, so that your call can be directed to the most relevant person and make sure someone from our staff team gets back to you as soon as possible and much sooner than I could.

## What if I really need to speak to the Head Teacher?

If you really need to speak to me specifically rather than anyone else, please can I ask that you email me the brief bullet points that you would like to ask / me to respond about first, before phoning and asking to speak to me directly. Alternatively, please call the Office Manager after 9am and let her know your brief bullet points to email to me on your behalf. If anyone else can help instead, the Office Manager will forward it to them to get back to you quickly and let you know. I simply cannot call everyone back who calls me each day, so am likely to take quite a while to get back to you, particularly if I do not know what your call is about. I will endeavour to call urgent cases that require my attention solely, as soon as feasibly possible.

## Calling the Head Teacher as a First Point of Call

Please note, I will not be able to answer immediate requests for calls back unless I know what the reasons are and they are indeed urgent. This is so that my return calls do not leave another case that may require more urgent, immediate, possibly safeguarding, cyber-bullying or dangerous attention unresolved. If you request to speak to me urgently, the Office Manager will need to know the main reasons for this so that she can triage the call and follow our procedures. ***Please note, she will not be able to put a call through to me directly without knowing the nature of the call.*** In all cases, please note the brief bullet points of your main concerns so that we can help you in the most timely manner and be assured that the Office staff will keep your information within the strictest of confidence.

## What if I want to make a complaint?

At Clarity, we pride ourselves on having regular, positive communication with parents and this is often something that parents, the Local Authority and regulatory bodies praise us for and parents say they enjoy how much communication they have with us and how regularly we offer it to them. If you do feel that you need to make a complaint, please can I refer you to our Complaints Policy on our website, which states the best procedure for you to use to do this, and who to speak to at each point to ensure your complaint is heard and responded to in the right and timely manner.

## Our Zero Tolerance Policy

Our staff work extremely hard and go the extra mile every day to ensure that the children have the best experience here and to help you. We will always try to be as helpful and polite as possible, even during difficult and challenging times. This goes without saying, I am sure you will agree with me that they (and I) should not have to

experience shouting, swearing, intimidating or threatening language or behaviour, all of which will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

## **Emotions and Over-Passionate Communication**

We understand that sometimes emotions can fly, particularly when talking about things we feel passionately about, and sometimes it can be difficult not to offload everything you are feeling onto the member of staff taking the call / email. But if this were to happen, please note that you will be directed to have a moment out, call back later and speak to us calmly and politely, or directed by email to bullet point your main points briefly in a calm, polite manner so we can deal with those. We care about the wellbeing of our staff and school community and ensure that we all show the Fundamental British Value of mutual tolerance and respect.

## **E-Safety and Social Media Communications – the Danger of Over-Sharing**

Whilst electronic communication can be extremely positive, unfortunately, it is also open to abuse and over-sharing your own or another person's information they do not wish to be shared. We all want to be positive role models to the children, to inspire them with our own conduct, and ensure that they are fully supported to navigate their journey positively through school during these challenging times. We all want to encourage them to trust staff and feel safe and looked after at school.

## **Accurate Information**

If you do have concerns in these or other areas, please share them with us first rather than with your children, in front of your children, or on social media, so that we have the opportunity to discuss things with you, take onboard your feedback and respond to you in a positive, productive way. If you come to us about concerns following the correct procedures above, we can give you accurate, up to date information of incidents, which may be different from how they have been reported to you via a third party, social media or an adult or child when they felt heightened or worried. We can work together to sort issues out before they escalate.

## **Social Media and Discrimination**

At Clarity Independent School, we all belong to a small community where sensitive, personal information is not possible to keep completely confidential all the time, because we are aware that children naturally discuss things with their families as part of discussing their day with you. Thank you in advance, therefore, for keeping discussion about children and staff's private, confidential, sensitive information positive and out of the realms of social media, as this is not generally considered moral or ethical behaviour that we want to model to the children. Sharing other people's personal information online or on social media, about their disabilities, their needs or the personal issues they face, is irreversible and can cause immediate and long-term distress, and harm. Once shared online, it is impossible to fully recall and is then open to being forwarded, shared, exploited or reported to the authorities.

## **WhatsApp**

Please note, WhatsApp has a minimum age limit restricted to 13 years due to the likelihood of it being mis-treated, especially by children younger than this who have not yet matured in their knowledge of online etiquette. We do not support the use of



WhatsApp by children younger than 13, due to the frequency of mistreatment, upsets, arguments and cyber-bullying incidents leading to police involvement for the parent and child.

We do, however, ask parents to supervise their children very closely online, due to the dangers that children with social and emotional communication can frequently face, and to ensure they are safe and only looking at appropriate material. If you are not able to continuously supervise your child online or whilst using social media, and are concerned about their likelihood to become drawn into inappropriate language or behaviour and unwittingly become a victim, witness or even perpetrator of cyber-bullying, please consider restricting access to devices or the internet / social media to times when they can be supervised by you, as this is so serious and can sometimes lead to prosecution.

### **Our Responsibility to Each Other and the Children**

As adults, we also want to model safe conduct online, along with appropriate conduct, language and behaviour that does not put them or us at risk by sharing sensitive information, particularly about disability, which constitutes **disability discrimination and is protected in law**.

We therefore do not tolerate cyber-bullying, ostracism of pupils / their families, discriminative or inappropriate / excluding language, aimed at or about another by pupils or parents / care-givers, or sharing pupil / family sensitive information across the school community or outside it.

I am sure you have seen in the news that such 'over-shares' have been known to attract policing and legal attention, fines and severe penalties for breaching data protection and can unnecessarily put people at risk your / their sensitive information is forwarded to other parties with or without the person's knowledge. Please note, we would be forced to treat any such behaviour within our school community, by children or adults, as malicious in intent, and would be duty-bound to record it as a discriminative cyber-bullying incident and report it to the safeguarding authorities accordingly. Please refer to our E-safety, Anti-Bullying and Behaviour policies for more information on this and the signed E-Safety agreement we make between home and school when the children first begin attending the school.

Thank you for your support in modelling appropriate conduct both on and offline and positive communication in and out of school, as we partner together to support your child as they journey through their education.

Signed: 

**Person responsible for updating this policy every two years:**

Head Teacher, Mrs Debbie Hanson