



Carshalton High School for Girls

Communication Policy

Statement of Intent

The school recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (students, staff, parents/carers, governors, the Local Authority, the local community, outside agencies and national bodies). So the school is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. Good communication between the school and the home is essential and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or telephone), written (through notes, letters, newsletters, or formal reports), or electronic (through emails or the website, texts and APPs). These means of communication may overlap and will develop as new technologies become available. Occasionally, a communication can be received second-hand or through an intermediary.

At CHSG we strive to ensure we communicate in a clear, open and timely fashion, in such a way as to make that communication effective for all who receive it. Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message.

Our school aims to ensure all communications are:

- Clear
- Comprehensive
- Two way
- Timely

This explains the school's aims and values in terms of communication, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents, what the school expects and the school's responsibility to the wider community.

1. Objectives of the policy:

1. To provide a clear, transparent and effective framework of reference;
2. To clarify the school's commitment towards its stakeholders;
3. To clarify the school's expectations of parents/carers;
4. To ensure fair access for all stakeholders;
5. To set a framework for consistency in the application of communications, including the timeframe for action;
6. To lay out a robust and accessible process to meet the needs of all stakeholders;
7. To respond to the schools improvement plan.

2. Understanding and responding to the nature of communications:

2.1 We acknowledge that communications may take a number of forms and be based in a range of motivations. While we all enjoy receiving compliments, we are also aware that communications may also be based on concerns that parents or carers wish to raise, or in complaints that they wish to make. Each type of communication will require a different level of response. Stakeholders are reminded that the school has a defined complaints procedure, should they feel this level of intervention is warranted. The timescale for responding to complaints is laid out in the complaints policy.

Ref: Complaints Policy

2.2 Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents will always be addressed in a formal manner and staff will avoid developing close friendships with parents.

We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We are committed to avoiding bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

3. Data:

3.1 It is important that we have details of parents, carers and students to make sure all our systems work and communication is prompt and effective. For this reason every year all parents and carers have to complete a Student Data Collection Form which will update our records of necessary details required for all students. Any change of details can be updated anytime via the school website, email or by visiting the school. All data held is in accordance with the Data Protection Act and is always secure.

Ref: Data Protection Policy & Freedom of Information Policy

4. Safeguarding:

4.1 All communication related to Safeguarding matters and the procedure that should be followed are outlined in the Safeguarding policy.

Ref: Safeguarding Policy

5. Confidentiality:

5.1 It is essential that all stakeholders are aware of their responsibility with regards to confidentiality and this is clearly outlined in the Information-Sharing and Confidentiality Policy.

Ref: Information-Sharing & Confidentiality Policy

6. Meetings

6.1 There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal. All formal meetings should be structured with minutes. All participants of meetings are invited to contribute to the agenda. For all meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to participants.

6.2 If stakeholders feel a meeting was unsatisfactory there is a structured escalation process whereby line manager, SLT in charge and then finally Headteacher could be requested for a meeting. In some cases this could go to governors for final consultation.

6.3 The approved minutes of meetings are available electronically in the common folder for staff and external stakeholders can be sent a copy via email or a hard copy via post, if requested.

7. Email

7.1 Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email where appropriate. Email is a quick and effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. The following considerations should be realised and adhered to:

7.2 All stakeholders:

- **Send fewer, receive fewer:** Do not copy [cc], blind copy [bcc] or include [to] in more individuals than required
- **Realistic about replies:** Replies are sent within a reasonable time but do not expect them in hours due to teaching commitment
- **Think twice, be nice:** Appropriate language is important in the use of email while being polite and courteous at all times. Over use of capital letters or writing in red should be avoided
- **If it's sensitive or delicate – talk:** Do not use email to avoid face to face contact as 1:1 contact can help to avoid misunderstandings
- **Be clear and transparent:** Subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found, addressed and filed easily. Avoid using bcc (blind carbon copy)
- Delete mail regularly
- Emails should be proof read in order to check tone and appropriateness
- Respond to emails that may require responses

7.3 Internal staff should also:

- Use the standard school signature (footer) on all emails

7.4 Students:

- Do not reply to anyone you do not recognise.
- Do not send inappropriate emails.
- Always state your full name and tutor group when communicating with teachers.

7.5 All emails are monitored and are subject to the data protection act.

7.6 Bulk email delivery is also used to get important message to all parents and students. These are generated by selected office staff and approved by the Senior Leadership Team and are for whole school purposes. Emails can also be sent to specific classes for curriculum or pastoral issues. These are sent by teachers and approved by the Head of Department or Head of Year. Bulk messages can be sent via InTouch or the regular email system.

Ref: eSafety Policy & Mobile Device Policy

8. Written Communications

8.1 These are placed in pigeon holes for staff which should be checked on a daily basis. Staff will endeavour to reply to parents' letters or communications within 24 hours. A letter of complaint should be dealt with in line with the school complaints policy. It should be referred to a member of the Senior Leadership team should advice be needed. Letters to parents must be approved by the line manager and shared with the Senior Leader in charge for final approval. Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed on student files via SIMs under linked documents. General letters should also be given to administrative staff so they can be placed on the school's website.

9. Telephone Calls

9.1 All staff have access to a telephone and internal phone calls should only be made when necessary and appropriate. Staff should record their personal answer phone message that is in the standard format and respond to messages left. Phone messages taken by office staff will be given to the appropriate staff as soon as possible. All messages should be replied to within 24 hours. If there are difficulties due to teaching commitment, a member of staff should ask the office staff to make a holding call.

9.2 Calling the school automatically takes you to our automated telephone system that allows your call to be directed accordingly. A file note on SIMs under linked documents will also be recorded with the details of the conversation by staff.

10. Text Messaging

10.1 The whole school text messaging system may be used for any urgent, last minute information or trips and visits information to be shared. Recipients' are not able to receive or reply to any messages as it is only a delivery service. Bulk texting can also be done and follow the bulk email rules.

11. VLE – Frog

11.1 Our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for our parents, students and teachers provides an opportunity for parents and carers to be involved in their child(ren)'s learning and for students to be able to choose to learn anytime and anywhere. Frog VLE is a safe and secure virtual area; it provides a unique bridge between school and home. It is a secure cloud environment which can only be accessed via the internet by the use of a username and password.

11.2 Students are able to:

- Access subject resources and information
- Submit work and receive feedback
- View what homework has been set

11.3 Staff can also send messages and work to students' via the timeline and replies can also be sent and received.

Ref: eSafety Policy & Homework Policy

12. Reporting (Go4Schools)

12.1 Three times a year we provide a summary report of all students on their progress, behaviour, achievements and grades. Parents have online access via our reporting portal Go4Schools. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.

Ref: Assessment, Recording & Reporting Policy

13. Absence Alert (Attendance and Punctuality)

13.1 Absence Alert is an automated communication system that will contact parent(s)/carer(s) directly if a student is marked absent at registration. This will ensure that the reason for the absence is known as soon as possible and will alert parent(s)/carer(s) if a student is not in school when she should be. Post-registration absence can also be detected and reported to parents.

Ref: Attendance and Punctuality Policy

14. Newsletter

14.1 The school's Newsletter is published every half term and sent to carers/parents. The newsletter will promote school successes and will incorporate news relevant to the School. Members of staff and students are encouraged to contribute appropriate items to the newsletter which should be emailed to the Administration Officers. Newsletters are also accessible on the school's website.

15. School Website & Social Media

15.1 There is a separate eSafety Policy that gives guidance on social media and the internet. The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. It also has a wealth of information for parents, carers, students, staff, governors, Ofsted and other stakeholders.

Ref: eSafety Policy & Mobile Device Policy

16. Parents' Evenings & Other Evenings

16.1 Using an online booking system allows parents and carers to book in the comfort of their own surroundings. The fast and precise system also allows parents the opportunity to change or alter bookings up to the last moment.

16.2 We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.

16.3 Parents can meet their child's teacher(s) once during parents' evenings. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes and to support their children in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. It also allows parents to view or talk about their student's work. We expect full attendance by all parents at these evenings as it is a key opportunity for parental engagement. Teachers will consistently chase up non attendance and through our central administrative teams calls and letters will go out for non-booking or non-attendance.

16.4 We also organise parent information evenings which are organised so key information can be passed to students, parents and carers. These are targeted for key year groups depending upon the specific issue for that year group.

16.5 There are other academic events like the Year 8 options evening and Careers Fair and the Year 11 parents' revision evening which are both valuable for students and parents.

Throughout the year there will various evenings like charity shows, music evenings, prize giving and other events that we publicise and promote to which parents and friends are invited.

17. Survey Feedback

17.1 During the parents evenings, events and campaigns we always ask parents and carers to complete parental surveys so we constantly receive feedback and improve the services we provide. Parents and carers are encouraged to take part in these and share their views. All results are launched on our website and subsequently shared via our social media facilities.

18. School Prospectus

18.1 The school prospectuses contain a range of specified information to give the audience a full picture of the provision and learning at our school. The whole school (Years 7 – 11) and Sixth Form prospectuses are updated every two years.

19. Planners

19.1 These can be used for quick communication between parents, tutors and subject teachers. Students should also use the planners to record homework. Parents are asked to sign the planners weekly which are then checked by staff.

Ref: Homework Policy

20. Individual Learning Programmes

20.1 There are a range of individual learning programmes that may be set by a variety of staff according to the individual needs of students. They may be initiated by a range of staff but all have the purpose of aiding students to maximise their achievement. Parents will be notified of the programmes and the aim will be to involve the parents in the setting of the programme.

21. Staffing Only Communication

21.1 Staff Briefings

21.1.1 Staff Briefings take place on a weekly basis (8.20am to 8.35am). The diary for the following week is discussed and information shared. The main points are also distributed via an email by the HT's PA immediately after. Important points are also on the Weekly Bulletin that is emailed to all staff.

21.2 Staff Information File & Notice Boards

21.2.1 A copy of the Staff Information File is saved electronically on the U Drive folder (Staff shared area) and a hard copy is given to all new teaching staff. It is updated annually and contains references to policies, procedures and important information on all aspects of school life. Staff Notice Boards are located in the Staff Room. They are used to give out important information from SLT that concerns all staff. Staffs also use the notice boards to get information out.

21.3 Communication with other Schools and outside Agencies

21.3.1 We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on suitable ways to meet these needs so that children may participate more fully.

21.3.2 We hold information on students in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.