



St. Gregory's Catholic High School

Parent & Carer Communication Protocol

Monitoring

The implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

Evaluation

The policy was reviewed by the Director of Finance and Resources and Senior Leadership Team on 27th June 2022 prior to the submission of the policy to Governors' Community Committee for scrutiny and recommendation to the Full Governing Board for approval.

Policy Review Dates:

Date last approved by Full Governing Board: New

Date submitted to Governors' Committee: By email

Date submitted to Full Governing Board: 13th July 2022

Review Frequency: Annually

Start date for policy review: March 2023

Introduction

At St Gregory's Catholic High School, we believe that our parent / carer partnership is at the core of our success. Ensuring that this partnership remains strong and positive will help us to maintain that success going forward for your children through both academic and pastoral support.

The parents / carers of St Gregory's are renowned for supporting our school this is reflected in well above average engagement with parent engage events, survey responses and direct communication with our school. Our parent body takes active interest in their children's education, support our school policies, support our standards and extend our work in the classroom to beyond the school at home.

We recognise that the journey of your children through high school moving through the age of 11 to 16 years old can at times present difficulties and turbulence as they develop from primary school leavers at age 11 to young adults heading off to college and apprenticeships at age 16.

Your children are not numbers, we recognise that they are human beings, unique and at different stages of their journey through high school they will face different hurdles to overcome. At these most testing times, school and parents must strengthen our partnership even further and work together to seek solutions and the backbone of this is strong communication.

The staff of St Gregory's work extremely hard for your children and they go above and beyond to ensure that the care and teaching they receive is second to none, sometimes in incredibly difficult circumstances in our young people's lives.

However, it is important that in order for our staff to provide outstanding education and care for your children, that we acknowledge the workload and wellbeing of the staff in the school, especially when it comes to managing communication workload.

Therefore, this protocol document serves as guidance for parents and school staff for how to manage communication and the expectations of school staff to respond to you in a reasonable time frame depending on the urgency of the situation.

The list below demonstrates the amount of communication methods that the school already have in place to ensure that our partnership is well embedded and opportunity for

How we provide communication with our Parents and Carers

- Parent Engage Evenings
- Whole School / Year Group Mass celebrations
- Year 7 Form Tutor Evening
- Annual Written Report (five over the full school journey)
- Progress Data reports (thirteen over the school journey)
- School Website
- School Twitter Account

- Half Termly Newsletters
- SIMS Parent App daily updates & SIMs 360 App for payments
- Informal interactions at the school gate with senior duty staff
- Headteacher letters home to parents (logged on the parent's page of the school website)
- Phone calls home from staff
- **Email communication**
- Pre-arranged Face to Face individual meetings
- Ambition for All Events
- Intervention Evenings
- Parent Workshops
- Pupil Behaviour Reports
- Classcharts Homework & Classcharts Announcements
- Curriculum Choices Evening
- School Open Evenings
- SEND bespoke tours

In the section below, we want to highlight the most common form of communication in school between staff and parents / carers.

Email Communications

In recent years, and as a result of the pandemic and school closures, communications between home and school have shifted quite dramatically to email, with email becoming the preferred and predominant mode of communication. The pandemic school closure period meant that email became the normal method of interaction with schools. However, this is when schools were closed and pupils were not in school, now that schools are fully open again, it is not sustainable for a teacher to both work full time during the day with children and manage a busy email account.

Email provides us with a quick and easy means of communication. As a result, it is used for such a wide range of communications, it has also become increasingly difficult to distinguish between formal and informal communications. The ease of communication via email has many advantages but there is an increasing expectation for almost instantaneous reply.

As a school, our first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning. On any one day a teacher will have a plethora of demands on their time including up to five hours of teaching (and tutor time, lunch duties and activities, after school practices and clubs and meetings). Teachers cannot and are not expected to monitor and manage their email inbox during lessons or at other times in the day, when they should be planning and preparing for lessons, assessing student work or carrying out school duties that safeguard our children.

Whilst administration staff, support staff and senior leaders may be able to access emails more routinely, their primary function is to support teachers and children. If time is spent on responding to emails during the core periods of the school day, it leads to staff focusing on the immediate task of responding to an email instead of concentrating on the delivering and supporting teaching and learning.

The following outlines school procedure with regard to email communication between home and our school which will enable staff to manage their inbox volume, prioritise and not feel under pressure to multitask.

1. All email communication must respect the dignity of the recipient.
2. Within 48 hours of receiving an email - receipt of an email will be acknowledged (during term time but not over a weekend).
3. Within 5 working days of receiving an email - provide a response to the email by telephone or in writing (including an email). This may include informing the sender that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case, staff will indicate a timeframe in which a response should be expected.
4. If a member of staff is not able to deal with the email directly then they will pass it on to the most appropriate person and inform the sender that they have done so.
5. Staff will not be expected to monitor or respond to emails out of their normal working hours (including weekends and published school holidays). Whilst parents may compose emails at hours to suit their own needs, we would ask that emails are not normally sent outside of a member of staff's normal working hours. Mobile phones and other electronic devices that enable staff to access their school emails when away from school can make it difficult to 'ignore' a message from a parent, leading to unnecessary worry and anxiety on the part of the staff. As the headteacher, I do regularly advise staff to switch off their communication app notifications when outside of school hours.
6. Whilst it is incredibly rare at St Gregory's, if a member of staff receives an email which is of an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassment, they will refer this to a senior staff member, who will decide if consideration needs to be given to dealing with further communication under the schools Complaints Policy (**Unreasonable Complaints**).

Phone calls into school to speak to staff members

Your phone calls into school will be logged by the reception staff who will ask you:

- Who you wish to speak to
- What child you are the parent / carer of
- The nature of your call (this is very important to determine the level of urgency in which we need to respond)

The reception staff will acknowledge your call immediately and pass a message on to the staff member you require to speak with.

The staff member you need will call you back within **48 hours** depending on the urgency of the matter.

The school works very hard to provide parents with timely and informative information concerning their child's progress throughout the year. Currently these are: Progress Reports and one parent-teacher meeting per academic year (two for Year 7).

In addition to this, staff may also telephone, write or email a parent to inform them of a serious incident or serious ongoing concerns about a child's behaviour or attitude to learning. All of this information is also viewable via the SIMs parent app. Staff would not be expected to maintain a running dialogue about such matters, unless it has been agreed as part of a Pupil Support Plan.

We appreciate there may be matters you need to raise out of school hours and during school holidays when staff are not available to reply. Therefore, in the event of a safeguarding emergency, please refer to the agency support numbers in the 'useful contacts' section of the 'safeguarding' page on our school website. The safeguarding page can be found under 'pastoral' on the website's main sections.

Other points to consider

When communicating with the school, please bear in mind that our staff are working extremely hard in trying to help our children achieve well. We would never wish to discourage parents from communicating with staff, establishing a relationship and working together. Parental communication is essential; we do not always get it right and we welcome your feedback to help us to continue to improve.

Many of you will be facing the same challenges in your own workplace from an increasing expectation of anytime, anywhere communications. Some readers may be of the view that this is simply the way the world works now. However, the school has a duty of care to staff, as it does to children. This includes a responsibility to ensure that the staff workload is manageable and does not unreasonably intrude into their private life.

Please be advised that the **SIMS parent App** should only be installed as an app on the parent or carer's personal devices and should **not** be on any pupil's device.

Finally

It might be interesting to note that Ofsted have acknowledged the increasing demands on teacher time and the impact that this is having on the profession. Hence, these references in the new Ofsted Framework:

Ofsted Framework September 2019 Teacher workload and wellbeing

- Inspectors will consider the extent to which school and college leaders take account of the workload and wellbeing of staff
- Leaders and managers must demonstrate that they are aware of and take account of the pressures on staff and that they are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload
- Inspection judgements of 'outstanding' leadership and management require that staff consistently report high levels of support for wellbeing issues
- Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment

Our staff go over and above every day and we want to keep them in a profession they are fully committed to. Unreasonable workloads are contributing to the national recruitment and retention crisis in our profession.

Thank you for your contribution in supporting a sensible approach to staff workload and staff well-being. Your support for this protocol will ensure that our staff are well quipped to focus on the task of providing outstanding care and support for your children.