



Otterbourne Church of England Primary School

Trust, Respect and Determination

PARENT COMMUNICATION POLICY

Name / Signature of Headteacher:	Martin Geraghty
Name / Signature of Chair of Governors:	Sue Barham
Date Policy approved and adopted:	April 2026
Date Due for review:	April 2029

VERSION CONTROL LOG

Date	Description of changes (person responsible)
February 2026	Hampshire Policy (Sept 2022) adopted in full

RATIONALE

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and Board of Governors to protect the wellbeing of all members of the school community. We believe it is important to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for pupils, staff and parents in our school. We encourage clear, open communication links with parents as we believe it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It provides parents with the information they need to support their child's education and helps to build a partnership between home and school. Such communication can be entirely positive and practical, for example, to seek information, ask a question, or to draw attention to a matter. Sometimes there is a need to resolve an issue or misunderstanding.

We use the term 'parents' in this policy to refer to:

- Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil
- Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents or child-minders)

The term 'member of staff' or 'staff' as referred to in this policy includes:

- Anyone employed by the school
- Anyone training in a professional capacity at the school
- Governors (when acting in this capacity)
- Volunteers at the school (when acting in this capacity)
- Anyone employed through an external agency, who is acting in a professional capacity on the school site

This Communication Policy aims to set out the methods of communication available to parents for contacting the school and our expectations from parents when visiting our school, or communicating with staff at our school.

We acknowledge that sometimes there can be situations that can be emotional and challenging for parents and staff to work through. Nonetheless, we expect all our community to show mutual respect. We have clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the Staff Code of Conduct) and pupils (through our Behaviour Policy). We also expect parents to engage constructively with school staff and to work together with them in the best interests of our children.

We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information on another child. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers, then this will be shared with the school's Local Authority legal advisers at Hampshire County Council.

If parents are considering making a formal complaint, they can find the complaints policy on our website. However, stage 1 of the complaints policy suggests that other forms of communication can often help in resolving issues, and we encourage parents to use this route. However, this is not compulsory and does not prevent the use of the complaints policy either straight away or after other forms of communication have been tried.

Communication with the school.

In the case of communications with the school, that are not raising a formal complaint, the following guidance will apply.

Meetings

Face-to-face conversations are generally the best way of communicating with the school. This can be with the member of SLT who is present on the school gate at drop-off, or with staff in the school office in the first instance. At pick up time, teachers are mostly always available for exchanging quick, short messages.

When a member of staff is not able to speak immediately due to school commitments, or a longer conversation is deemed necessary or appropriate, then a request for an appointment can be made in person, by phone or email, to discuss the matter either in person or by telephone, at a later date. Parents are encouraged to call the school office on 01962 712020 or email admin@otterbourne.hants.sch.uk so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. To support

teacher workload and wellbeing, and to ensure requests can be supported in a timely manner, we ask that teachers are not contacted directly. Outside of teaching hours, all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school so availability of staff outside of teaching hours should not be assumed.

Should a meeting be requested, it may not always be appropriate for this to be with the member of staff first requested and the decision of which staff member will attend will rest with the Head Teacher.

Email

Parents are welcome to email the school: admin@otterbourne.hants.sch.uk about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

Emails will be most helpful if they are concise, explaining concerns in a clear way. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.

The school will always aim to respond as quickly as possible to a request as we always hope to resolve matters quickly and productively, but the expectation is that a response will always be given within 5 working days. Emails received after 4.30 pm will be considered to have been sent the next working day for the purposes on this timeframe.

Where a full and considered resolution cannot be given within the initial 5-day period, then a revised timeline will be provided and communicated to ensure everyone has the same expectations. We ask that parents await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.

It is not always possible for the school to act independently, and in those cases support from agencies and external organisations might be required. This may have the consequence of slowing down the speed of response.

Phone calls

If a query or concern is time sensitive and urgent, parents should call the school office, which will liaise as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments.

If the query or concern is not time sensitive or urgent, parents should email or call the school office and the relevant member of staff will aim to contact them within 2 working days, but this could be up to 5 working days if it is a complex issue or busy time in school. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time.

For general enquiries, please call or email the school office.

Social Media

The school will not respond directly to concerns raised via social media or communication applications such as WhatsApp. The school actively encourages parents to raise all concerns with the school directly in order for a resolution, where appropriate, to be found.

The school does not currently have a social media presence.

Should the school be made aware of derogatory content, threats or abusive behaviour towards staff members on social media then the school will consider the best course of action in order to have this removed, including reporting this to the Police and seeking the removal of this content from the site.

Communication during school hours/ working days

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours 9.00 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. or their working hours (if they work part-time).

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours 9.00 a.m. – 3.30 p.m., or during school holidays.

Staff may choose to work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Types of unacceptable behaviour and communication

There are some types of behaviour / communication that the school considers unacceptable. These are as follows:

- Any physical aggression eg. slapping, hitting, punching and kicking
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, or pupils e.g., standing very close to her/him
- The use of aggressive hand gestures including finger pointing towards a member of staff or pupil
- Spitting at a member of staff or pupil
- Shaking or holding a fist towards a member of staff or pupil
- Shouting at members of staff or pupils (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing)
- Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010
- Threatening or offensive comments about a member of staff or pupil of the school; this can include verbally, via texts, emails, social media, etc.

- Sending abusive messages to a member of staff, including via text, email or social media
- A large volume of emails in respect of the same matter over a short period of time
- Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed by the school
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the school, its staff, on social media platforms
- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches)
- Breaching or not conforming to the school's security procedures
- Covertly recording phone calls or meetings with a member of staff
- Any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening or offensive

This list should not be considered exhaustive but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour which has no place in our school community.

Actions that may be taken by the school as a result of unacceptable behaviour and communication

In the first instance, (if the unacceptable behaviour has occurred on site) the school will ask the parent to desist and/or leave the site. If the behaviour is of a serious nature, then the police will be contacted.

Thereafter the school (Head Teacher/Member of School Leadership team/Governors) will gather information on allegations of unacceptable behaviour. This may include talking to the parties concerned or others as witnesses to the behaviour.

If unacceptable behaviour is considered to have occurred, the following actions may be taken by the school, dependent on the severity/gravity of the behaviour:

- The parent will be told verbally that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action
- The parent will be told in writing that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action
- Advising the parent that all future meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present, and will be minuted
- Putting in place a contact plan to deal with any communication between the individual and school. For example, except in emergencies, communication to the school must be in writing only to a named individual and the school can set out timescales for school responses;
- A warning letter or an immediate ban from the school site
- Contacting the Police where behaviour is or believed to be criminal in nature

- Seek advice from the Local Authority's legal team regarding further action

The school will always seek to respond to an incident in a proportional way. The final decision for how to respond to the unacceptable behaviour and communication rests with the Head Teacher and, where necessary, the Governing Body.