



Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Parental Communications Policy

June 2024

1. Introduction

At Royal Free Hospital Children's School (RFHCS) we aim to have clear, effective, high quality communication among staff and with students, parents/carers/families, governors, and members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

This policy sets out our approach to communication with students and their families.

2. Aims

All communications should:

- Keep staff, students, parents/carers/families, and other stakeholders well informed about students' progress and personal development, as well as any issues affecting students' wellbeing;
- Be clear, open, respectful and professional;
- Be easily understood by all;
- Be actioned within a reasonable time (as defined within the policy);
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method, and audience, and;
- Take account of other relevant school policies.

3. Communication from parents/carers/families to school

We encourage parents/carers to contact the school if issues arise regarding their child's progress or wellbeing:

- For everyday issues, parents/carers should contact the programme link or the relevant key member in our team (Tutor, Designated Safeguarding Lead, SENDCO).
- For pastoral issues that have not been resolved please contact a member of the leadership team.
- If there are specific subject problems, parents/carers should contact relevant subject leads within the school.
- If you are not sure who to contact, the school's administration team will be able to advise on the most appropriate member of staff (admin@royalfree.camden.sch.uk)

We would ask that parents/carers:

- Follow the expectations set out in the Home-School Agreement;
- Communicate in a respectful and reasonable way at all times when communicating with members of staff or other school representatives, whether that be face to face, by phone, in writing, or online;
- Allow a reasonable period of time for a response as per the communications protocols set out below;
- Escalate any issues or lack of response to your communications to the appropriate member of senior staff (if you are not sure, contact the school's main admin address)
- Follow the school's Complaints Policy – available at www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk if you have any significant concerns.

4. Communication from school to parents/carers/families

At RFHCS we aim to have clear, effective communications with all parents/carers/ families and the wider school community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents/carers/families well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents/carers/families play in supporting students and the school.

Due to the nature of needs within our school community, daily, personalised contact with parents/carers/families is part of our provision. We ask that parents maintain daily contact and/or respond to contact from school on the same day, to ensure that we are informed about attendance. This is part of our wider responsibility around safeguarding.

The expectation is that any issue or concern (including those related to attendance, punctuality, behaviour, academic progress, or other issues) is communicated to parents/carers as early as possible so that the school can work together with the family to address it before it escalates (see Attendance Policy for more information). Staff will use the appropriate communication method from the range described in paragraph 6, most often using telephone calls.

RFHCS aims to make our written communication as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping, or any form of discrimination. We wish to celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the groups represented in our school.

RFHCS acknowledges the right of non-resident parents/carers to receive all key school- to-home communications (such as progress reports) at the same time as resident parents, and to have the same opportunities to interact with school staff regarding the progress and welfare of their children. If a communication is not in a format/language that enables parents/carers/families to fully engage with it, the school will work to provide it in an appropriate format/language. If you require communication in any other format, please ask.

5. Meetings with parents/carers/families and other stakeholders

Any parent/carer/family wishing to meet with a member of staff should contact the school in advance and request a meeting with the member of staff. This request should be responded to in a timely manner within the usual communications protocols as set out in this policy.

Parents/carers/families or other stakeholders should not come to the school to talk to a member of staff without an appointment. If a parent/carer/family or other stakeholder comes to the school without a prior appointment, the relevant member of staff may still choose to meet with them, but there is no expectation for them to do so.

All visitors should report to reception prior to meeting with a member of staff. If the meeting is due to take place outside reception's opening hours, separate arrangements can be made for another staff member to collect visitors from the entrance. A member of staff may ask for their line manager to accompany them.

If a meeting with any stakeholder is taking place outside normal school hours, the member of staff should try, where possible, to ensure that another colleague is nearby.

It is important that parents/carers attend meetings if invited to do so.

Accessibility support can be provided if requested in advance, including use of interpreters.

Meetings can be arranged online if deemed to be appropriate by the school.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not typically permitted and would only be permitted in exception circumstances. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be

sought before meetings or conversations can be recorded. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

It is acceptable for a member of staff to call a meeting to a close in order to allow time for further investigation if they suspect recording is taking place.

6. Communication regarding students with additional educational needs:

The key workers (such as personal tutors and programme links) of students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) will be in regular contact with their parents/carers/families.

Students with EHCPs will receive an Annual Review where the student's progress towards their outcomes as stated in the EHCP is measured and discussed, along with any support required or provided.

The Annual Review will be a face to face (or online, if appropriate) meeting with the key members of the SEND Team. Please see our SEND Policy for more information.

7. Communication methods used by the school

The school uses a wide range of communication methods to communicate with parents/carers/families according to the requirements of each situation. Some of these provide general information to all (e.g. student planners, the website, our social media accounts, letters, Newsletters), and others are for tailored communications to individual families (e.g. telephone calls, emails, texts, meetings).

The following set out the purpose and the associated communications protocols of each communication method used by the school.

a) School website and social media accounts

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk

The school also uses official social media accounts to communicate news to all school stakeholders and other interested parties. Links are available on our website homepage.

Staff will not communicate with students or parents/carers/families via social networking sites or accept them as their 'friends'. The exception is where there is a pre-existing relationship between a member of staff and a parent/carer/family. In these circumstances, school business should never be discussed through social media.

b) Telephone calls

Telephone communication to parents/carers/families should only be made using the school telephone system or issued devices, except in an emergency.

Staff are asked to ensure that they leave a voicemail in the event that the call is not answered, in order that parents/carers are able to return the call directly without having to go via the school reception, and without knowing whether the call was related to an urgent matter.

Staff should take notes about the content of telephone calls, as they would with meetings with parents/carers/families. Notes from phone calls, including main points of discussion and action required/taken could be shared with parents/carers/families by email, and should be recorded on our MIS.

We encourage all parents/carers to inform the school of their current mobile number, which enables calls to be made in an emergency, and urgent messages to be sent by text message. Except in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, we would expect to hold contact details for two family members on file, in case of emergencies.

We aim to respond to voicemails/phone messages from parents/carers/families within two school days, except in emergency/safeguarding circumstances, when they will be followed up as soon as possible on the same day.

Please note that school phones are monitored from 8:30am-4pm daily. If parents/carers/families contact outside of this time, they may not receive a response until the following day.

c) Emails

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information. However, it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. Email is helpful to follow up an informal meeting/conversation by clarifying agreements and action points in writing.

All emails should be treated as letters and should be checked carefully, and written carefully in the same way as a letter written on school headed paper. Staff should acknowledge email as they would a letter; within two school days and send a full reply within ten school days. In emergency/safeguarding circumstances, they must be followed up as soon as possible on the same day.

Under no circumstances should staff use their personal email address to contact students, parents/carers/families, or conduct any school business. It is good practice for individual staff to CC another member of staff into their email communications with parents/carers/families.

We encourage all parents/carers to inform the school of their current email address. This allows written communications to be sent via email rather than letter, which is quicker, more cost effective, and more environmentally friendly. Paper copies are sent to those who do not have access to an email address.

d) Texts

Text messages are used for efficiency when there is an urgent or time-related message to communicate directly to parents/carers. This could be a short message within the text itself, or a direction to read a longer communication on the website or being sent home via letter.

Please note that school phones are monitored from 8:30am-4pm daily. If parents/carers/families contact outside of this time, they may not receive a response until the following day.

e) Letters

We encourage the use of email correspondence to the school rather than letters wherever possible.

Staff will endeavour to respond to parents'/carers' letters as quickly as possible. We will seek to acknowledge receipt of letters within two school days and to send a reply within ten school days.

Letters dealing with whole school matters, sensitive matters, or matters relating to parental concerns or complaints must be approved by a member of SLT before posting.

Copies of correspondence with parents/carers will be placed on student files.

f) Written reports

On some of our alternative programmes, written reports are sent to parents/carers on their child's progress in each subject up to three times a year. The report identifies areas of strength and areas for further development.

g) Progress Reviews

These happen on a termly basis for most of our alternative programmes and are a chance to discuss academic progress. These are held in person where possible although we aim to offer some meetings online to support increased accessibility and convenience for families.

8. Breaches of accepted behaviour

Staff should call a meeting or phone conversation to a close in the event of a parent/carer/ family or other stakeholder becoming angry or abusive. The member of staff should report such an incident to their line manager and seek further advice. The line manager should either accompany the member of staff to a further meeting with the parent/carer/family or other stakeholder, or hold it without the original member of staff present.

Any breaches of accepted behaviour by anyone communicating with a school representative will be considered by the Headteacher and appropriate action taken.

The Headteacher has the right to withdraw permission to attend the school (onsite or online) from any stakeholder or their representative.

9. Related Policies

Staff Code of Conduct

Home-School Agreement

Complaints Policy

Equality, Diversity, Dignity, and Inclusion Policy

Data Protection Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

SEND Policy

E Safety Policy

Attendance Policy

Date Updated: May 2024

Next due for review: May 2027

Approved by governors: 16/05/2024