Communication Policy

Communication with Parents/Carers Policy

Communication is a key component to ensuring a smooth running, harmonious community where no one feels ignored or uninformed, where messages are clear, and information is upfront and regular to all stakeholders so that everyone feels valued and all stakeholders interests are met. It is essential that administrators, teachers, parents, staff, and students have a clear line of communication. This policy will assist in keeping clear communication lines with the entire school community.

Cardinal Newman Catholic School recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (students and parents/carers, governors, Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies, etc), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents and students and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and school.

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone) or written (through letters, notes in planners, text messages, website notices or via email).

Effective telephone communication is essential. However we ask all parents and carers to be mindful of the busy nature of a member of staff's working day where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

For this reason the school urges all stakeholders to engage in the use of modern communications methods, with staff email contacts being publicised regularly in newsletters and all parents/carers being encouraged to give an email address for prompt and effective communication.

Aims of the policy:

1. To improve the quality of service given to students at Cardinal Newman Catholic School by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, students and other stakeholders.
2. To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the school, parents and students on key service areas.

Communication
Communication between the school and parents operates in the following ways:

1. Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening in the September preceding the year of entry to the school. All prospective parents receive a school prospectus with details of examination results.
2. Prospective parents are invited, along with students, to an induction evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented.
3. Parents are invited to a 'Year 7 Information Evening' in the First Autumn Half Term of Year 7 to meet the student's form tutor and review how the student has settled into the school.
4. Parents are invited into to a 'Consultation Evening' for each year group during the year where achievement and progress can be discussed with subject teachers.

5. Parents of each year group are invited into school to an appropriately themed Parents' Meeting, to cover issues relating to the relevant year group of their child, e.g.: Year 8 Option Evening and 6th Form Open Evening.

6. The Student Planner is used as a key vehicle for communication between parents and the school and this planner is fully explained at the induction evening for new parents in July and to all students as they start at the school. The planner is monitored on a weekly basis by both parents and the pupil's form tutor.

7. Communication about pupil progress takes place formally for each student at least 3 times per year. Pupil Progress Reports are sent home after each academic data collection. Each Progress Report will report on a student's progress, attitude to learning as well as their attendance, punctuality and achievement and behaviour data

8. Details about events at the school are published in the school's newsletter to parents, which is emailed and sent out in hard copy as requested, and through other electronic communication posted on our website, selective emails to specific groups of parents or by text message.

9. The school's newsletter is a key vehicle for communicating in a variety of ways: alerting parents and students to forthcoming events or specific issues, celebrating the life of the school etc.

10. The school has all key information on an up to date website.

11. Queries about events at the school may be made by phone to the school or by e-mail to studentreception@cncs.school

12. Parents are also reminded of all teacher email addresses for reference.

13. The school also regularly updates its social media pages including Facebook and Twitter with all the latest news events going on in the school community

Communication Response Expectations

The school has published the following service standards to ensure a prompt response for communication requests by parents. These standards are reviewed on an annual basis by the school's Leadership Team:

The following response times should be adhered to:

Responding to parents – any requests for information, progress reports or requests for references are dealt with within 5 working days (term time only)

Issues, queries or concerns may be raised either via the Planner, or by letter, e-mail or a phone call.
- Notes in your child's Planner will be addressed within 2 working days providing your child ensures the note is shown to the appropriate member of staff.
- Letters will receive either a verbal (usually by phone) response within 2 days or a written response within 5 working days. Verbal responses will generate a brief written note of the discussion and its outcome, to be held on your child's file for future reference.
- Concerns raised by phone will be addressed within 2 working days.
- Emails will receive an email response within 2 working days. Those sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays will probably elicit no reply until term-time. All email communications from staff will also copy in their Line Manager.

Complaints Procedures

In the event of a parent/carer feeling that a response has not been made swiftly enough and in-line with policy, or that a concern or query has not been addressed adequately parents/carers should direct their communication to the appropriate line manager. A call to Main Reception or written communication to admin@cncs.school outlining your complaint will lead to it being directed by administrative staff to the appropriate member of Middle or Senior Leadership in order to respond to your complaint. This response should again be expected within 2 working days.

<u>Communication with Parents/Carers Policy – Guidance to Staff</u>

Excellent communication is the bed rock of ensuring successful relationships with parents and carers. Where communication is poor, delayed, piece meal, inconclusive and lacks professionalism then relationships are soured and work load increased. Furthermore the welfare and success of Cardinal Newman students is negatively affected when communication is not comprehensive, timely and professional.

Cardinal Newman Catholic School believes best practice would always be to return calls or reply to emails within 24 hours of initial contact by a parent or carer. However this is not always possible in a busy working day and therefore a return call or email should always be made/sent within 48 hours/2 working days.

The following guidance outlines the protocol and guidance for all staff when communicating with parents/carers.

<u>By phone:</u>

- Before you make the call, write down everything you need to communicate with that parent. Be organized with your thoughts.
- Be polite and courteous. Try not to interrupt or talk over Parents / Carerers.
- Keep a phone log and record it in initiatives on Arbor under behaviour management. Record the date, time, and reason for calling that parent.
- Be direct and mindful of the parent's time.
- If the parent is unable to talk to you at that time, politely ask when would be a good time to call them again.
- If you get redirected to voice mail; identify who you are, what you are calling about, and leave information for them to return your phone call.

<u>By email:</u>

- Correspondence should be formal and addressed as per the salutation in Arbor
- Staff should never address parents using their first name. Only correct salutation and surname is allowed
- Line managers, relevant HoDs/HoYs or members of Leadership Team should be cc'd in.
- Make sure that all text/graphics are large enough to be seen and read; and avoid the use of creative fonts or colours other than black.
- Avoid the use of jargon and ensure the email is polite and courteous but at the same time short and to the point. Do not be tempted into writing an essay!
- Be sure to check spelling and grammar.
- Emails should be saved/filed for future reference.

- Emails should only be sent to addresses logged on a student's account in Arbor or in reply to an email sent to you once you have checked they are on the contact list in Arbor
- Ensure the communication is again logged in intervention and on your tracker.

<u>In Written Form:</u>

- Letters should only be sent to parents/carers listed in Arbor.
- All letters to parents should be proofread by a member of staff's Line Manager.
- After the letters have been proofread they **<u>must</u>** be sent to the Headteacher and Headteacher's PA for final approval.
- The Headteacher will turn round all letter requests within 48 hours.
- A copy of all letters should be made and attached to a students Linked Docs in Arbor. A paper copy may also be added to a student's file.
- All written communication should be professional, courteous, and have contact information to get back in touch with the member of staff.
- Avoid the use of jargon.
- All letters should be typed in at least standard 11 point font and no more than 14 point.
- All letters to parents should be signed off "Yours sincerely" when you know the name of person you are addressing, i.e. Mr. Smith. "Yours faithfully" should be used when you are starting your letter with Dear Parent/Carer or Sir/Madam.

<u>Parent/Carer & Teacher Meetings:</u>

- Always ensure that another colleague, preferably your Line Manager is aware of any meetings you arrange. Staff should also inform Main Reception where they will be holding the meeting.
- Greet the parent/carer confidently, with a handshake (where appropriate) and ask after their wellbeing.
- Create a comfortable atmosphere. Avoid placing a desk between yourself and the parents/carers if possible.
- Use the same type of chair if you can and consider offering a drink, if available.
- Be prepared! Have your agenda ready. Have materials available that show the positive and/or negative behaviour of the student.
- Always try to start the meeting with something positive.
- Be attentive and listen.
- Let them know that you care about their child.
- Never talk about other students or teachers.
- Avoid the use of jargon.
- Conclude the meeting by recording any actions and read them back to the parent to confirm.
- End the meeting with something positive.
- If the meeting becomes difficult, be prepared to call a halt to the meeting and seek additional support.
- Keep minutes of the meeting and log it in initiatives (SIMS) and on your tracker. Record the date, time, reason, and key points discussed in the meeting.

<u>Additional Communications:</u>

Other communications might exist in the form of text messages or notes in a planner.

- Notes in a planner should be short, courteous and largely information sharing rather than part of some written dialogue. All messages should be countersigned and dated.

- Texts should only be sent by the Admin Team currently. Texts should be no more than 160 characters long and requests forwarded to the Admin Team and Line Mangers copied in.

- The Admin Team should confirm with the Assistant Business Manager or a member of Leadership before sending a text at the request of staff other than the Senior Leadership Team.

Internal Communications (Staff to Staff emails)

- Staff should address emails courteously and professionally
- Staff to staff emails should be short and to the point where possible, long wordy essays of an email should be avoided at all costs.
- Staff who the email is directly sent to where actions are necessary or relevant should be included in the To: box
- Staff who the content is relevant to but do not have a specific action from it should be included in the cc: box
- Staff should always acknowledge receipt of an email within 24 hours/1 working day and ensure a full reply is complete within 48 hours/2 working days.
- Staff may choose to send emails at a weekend but cannot expect a response or even that it is read until working hours commence on the next working day.
- Emails should never use ALL CAPS or red font, it is often poorly received.
- Staff might consider using the Importance Tag (!) to highlight the urgency of an email.
- Staff should never use the full name of a student in the subject field. Only the student's initials are to be used in the subject field. The staff member can use the students full name in the main body of the email

Internal Communications (Staff to Student emails)

- Staff should not communicate with students on an individual basis. Staff should only email using distribution groups and always CC another member of staff into emails to students
- Staff should only communicate with students using official school systems. Any such communication will be professional in tone and manner
- Staff will not respond to students using personal email addresses. Students should only communicate using official school systems
- Staff will sign off emails professionally and appropriately with work signatures

Internal Communications (Radio Communication)

- Staff that have access to a radio must only use the appropriate channels for communication
- Should not use students' names over radio communication where confidential information is pertaining that student
- All radio communication should end with the word "over" to signify the end of the message

Remote teaching

If working remotely, staff should consider the following safeguarding issues;

• It is not appropriate for staff members to hold one-to-one video conferences with a pupil/student

• If it is essential to hold a video conference, two members of staff should be present for video calls to an individual child. This is to safeguard pupils/students and members of staff.

• The child should be notified if there is another adult present for the call.

• Staff must notify parents/carers about the use of video conferencing and the school policy should be available to parents and carers. This should reflect the standard the school expects from parents/carers and pupils/students when video conferencing takes place and should be made available to all parties.

• Staff should separate their remote learning account from their personal online profiles and use a duplicate of the staff notice image or school logo for the platform profile picture. Staff should set up school accounts for any online platforms in use and check the privacy settings.

• Staff should never share any personal information e.g. personal telephone number, email accounts, Facebook and other social media links. Staff should never use personal social media accounts as a 'short cut' to communicate with parents and pupils.

• For the purposes of video-conferencing, staff should make use of the parents' or carers' own account, where possible, rather than a child's, to deliver lessons. Staff should use parents' or carers' email addresses or phone numbers to communicate with pupils/students, unless this poses a safeguarding issue. If staff need to communicate with pupils/students using the pupil/student's personal email address, another relevant member of staff should be copied into all emails.

• Staff members should work against a neutral background. Staff should present themselves as they would if they were giving a face-to-face lesson, in dress and in manner.

• Where lessons are delivered to a class, parents/carers and pupils should be provided with safeguarding and etiquette guidance in advance of the lesson. For example, the pupil/student must take lessons in a room with an open door. Parents should be notified of the timetable for their child in advance of the lessons taking place. and All staff should be aware of their setting's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. Ensure that staff members can contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or, in the event of the DSL being unavailable, deputy DSL, should they have any concerns about a child. Examples of potential concerns may include;

  o a staff member seeing, or hearing, something of concern during communication with a student

  o a disclosure, made by a pupil/student, when in communication with them during a phone call, via email or when video-conferencing.

• Contact with pupils/students should happen within normal school hours.

- Staff should not record online lessons which include pupils without parental permission, or student permission where they have competency to consent.

- Staff members must record the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.

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