



# St. Mary's RCPS School Communication Policy



## 1. Introduction

East Lothian Council's vision is for an even more prosperous, safe and sustainable East Lothian, with a dynamic and thriving economy, that enables our people and communities to flourish.

Our schools at the centre of this vision. They work to secure the best outcomes for our children and young people. We aim to provide the best education service in Scotland through a relentless focus on Inclusion, Achievement, Ambition and Progress for All. We will all work together to Get it Right for Every Child and to ensure that all children and young people are Safe, Healthy, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. This supports our common moral purpose of 'Believe, achieve, strive for excellence and care for all', and our public proposition 'We care for all and believe in ourselves and others.'

## 2. Aims and objectives

We believe fostering positive partnerships between parents and schools underpin our commitment to improving the quality and extent of parents' involvement in their child's learning and the important role they play in their child's education.

The School Communication Policy complements the Parental Engagement Strategy. We believe effective and interactive communication promotes effective partnerships between schools and families. It helps to develop understanding and build trust between our schools, pupils, families and the communities they serve.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure there is a consistent approach for schools to apply in ensuring effective communications between colleagues, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate. We also want to ensure the school has a high and positive profile in the local community and in the wider education sector. This will ensure St. Mary's school is a thriving and successful part of the community.

All communications should:

- Ensure staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be consistent with school policies and core values.
- Be open, honest, ethical, professional and timely.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.

## 3. Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

The senior management team will:

- Make available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- Ensure staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- Maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.

All employees will:

- Engage regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- Ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

#### **4. External methods of communication**

The school will make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

#### **5. Public relations**

A designated staff member will maintain links with the local media to provide proactive information on routine matters for story content. The staff member will be the central point of contact for collating this information centrally within the school and alerting the media. Such information could – for example – relate to school projects or pupil achievements. The Communications Team can provide advice and support on ideas for stories and review outgoing material. Providing such information may occasionally result in follow-up enquiries from the local media. Where this is of a routine nature, the school will respond directly to the journalist.

The council has an in-house Communications Team which is the first point of contact for journalists on council media enquiries. This enables responses to media enquiries to be logged and co-ordinated by a dedicated Communications Team, which can provide professional support and advice to departments across the council.

For any matters of a higher profile, the Communications Team will assist with the proactive issuing of such material and dealing with enquiries.

#### **6. Communications with Parents/Carers**

##### **Letters**

The school will acknowledge or respond to parents' letters within 24/48 hours (one/two school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Head Teacher or delegated senior member of staff immediately. Letters to parents must be approved by the Head Teacher or delegated senior member of staff before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files. A copy of general letters will be held at the school reception.

##### **E-mail/Text**

The school has an e-mail/text system which it uses to communicate with parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Head Teacher or delegated senior member of staff. If a parent communicates with the school using email with a complaint or a matter that requires an action, a copy should be stored in a digital file or printed & filed. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the Head Teacher or delegated senior member of staff and should always do so if the content is a complaint. All e-mails requiring an answer should be responded to within 24/48 hours (one/two school days). E-mail communications concerning a child are kept for the academic year in a digital folder unless they are required for evidence trailing, in which case a copy should be printed.

##### **Telephone calls**

Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency.

## **Newsletters**

Newsletters are e-mailed out or a link sent out by email twice per term and a copy is available on the school website. If a parent has not signed up to receive such newsletters then a hard copy will be sent home with the child.

## **Social Media Sites/Blogs**

The school may operate its own social media platforms to promote school activities and events. Use of social media must be consistent with data protection principles. Before such platforms are used the school must consult with the council's IT Service and Communications Team. All staff are advised to familiarise themselves with the council's Social Media Acceptable Use Policy. Staff are advised not to communicate with parents via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Staff will not accept pupils or ex-pupils as "friends".

## **School Website**

The school website provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. The website can be updated more frequently than a newsletter and can be linked to from social media content.

We recognise that children's protection is a shared responsibility, and that St. Mary's School should provide a safe and secure environment. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Senior Person for Children Protection, or the Deputy DSP, who may share this information with Social Services.

## **Written Reports**

Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress.

## **Parents' Evening**

Parents can meet their child's teacher/s twice during the year for a private consultation at a Parents' Evening. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly. We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand communication.

## **7. How will this policy be monitored and evaluated?**

This policy will be monitored through on-going school self-evaluation. The Head Teacher will use a variety of methods to evaluate this policy with staff, parents and the parent council representatives.