



Oldbury Wells



Oldbury Wells School

Member of the Trusted Schools Alliance

Communication Policy

FREQUENCY OF REVIEW:	Annually
RATIFICATION DATE:	Spring Term 2024
RATIFIED BY:	OWS Local Governing Body
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Spring Term 2025 <i>(unless there is a material change)</i>
AUTHOR:	Headteacher

1. Introduction and Aims

We believe that clear, open, proportionate communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education (e.g. reports).
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers (e.g. parental surveys).
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs (e.g. parents' evenings).

The aim of this policy is to:

- Explain how the school communicates with parents/carers.
- Set clear standards and expectations around responding to communication from parents/carers.
- Help parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible.
- Set safe boundaries for the use of social media as a communication tool.

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are overall effective, timely and appropriate.
- Regularly reviewing this policy.
- Ensuring that communication matters do not impinge on the smooth running of the school and / or the school's primary educational purpose.

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this Statement and the school's Data Protection and Digital and E- Safety Policy.
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query, are not the appropriate person to respond to a communication or send the information themselves).
- Staff should never use personal email addresses for school business use. When sending to multiple personal email addresses, staff should ensure they use the BCC field, to ensure personal email addresses are not shared with others, in line with data protection requirements.
- Staff should apply 'FRED' to prevent data breaches, as below:



F – Full email address should always be entered – don't rely on autocomplete!

FRED

R – Reopen any attachment in your email to check it's the correct one



E – Evaluate if you should be sending what you are sending by insecure email

D – Double check the email 'To' field to ensure its correct before hitting Send

As a school we do not expect staff to respond to communications outside of school hours 8.30am - 4.00pm or their working hours (if they work part-time or have specific salaried hours), at weekends or during school holidays.

Please note that senior members or key members of staff will always aim to contact parents as soon as possible if there are any issues related to pupil welfare.

Staff are not expected to check emails outside of their working hours. However, on occasion, staff may choose to work at an irregular time that are convenient to them. If an email is sent outside of the above typical working hours, we do not expect the recipient to read, action or reply to this outside of their working hours unless it is convenient for them.

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times.
- Ensuring that communication is not unduly burdensome in frequency and that in a secondary school many simple queries and matters can be addressed by pupils directly to staff.
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance.
- Responding to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner.
- Checking all communications from the school.
- Ensuring that contact details are up to date.
- Following any specific or tailored communication system that the school has established for specific parents and circumstances, for example, Satchel One.

3. How We Communicate With Parents and Carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in school. Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

3.1 Text messages (or Email where a parent has selected this preference)

We use text to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming school events.

- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days). School surveys or consultations.
- Class activities or teacher requests.
- Copies / links to school letters/newsletters. Attendance matters.
- Payments.
- Short-notice changes to the school day.
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather). Pupil praise and or sanctions.
- Other short communications.

3.2 School Calendar

Our school website includes a full school calendar for the academic year. Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials). Any such event will be included in the calendar.

3.3 Phone Calls

The school encourages teachers to actively call parents to discuss issues/sanctions or praise. Likewise, parents are encouraged to contact the school by phone, but must be aware that due to work commitments it may take a little time to return any calls. The school aims to acknowledge all initial calls within 2 working days. Staff's personal mobile phones should not be used for school business purposes unless essential, for example, in an emergency.

3.4 Letters

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms.

3.5 Reports

Parents receive reports from the school about their child's learning, including:

- A short data capture that outlines the pupils current working at grade and attitude to learning grades (Effort, Behaviour & Homework) and their attendance.
- A fuller data capture that outlines the pupils current working at grade and attitude to learning grades (Effort, Behaviour & Homework) and their attendance. This report also contains a written comment from the student's teacher and Head of Year.
- We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

3.6 Meetings

We hold one parents' evening per year group per year. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern. The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing. Parents of pupils with

special educational needs (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs. The school does not allow the recording of meetings.

3.9 School Website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- School times and term dates.
- Important events and announcements.
- Curriculum and extra-curricular information.
- Important policies and procedures.
- Important contact information.

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

4. How Parents and Carers Can Communicate With The School

Please use the list in Appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance. We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days. For formal complaints, please see the school's Complaints Procedure which can be found on the school's website. If a query or concern is urgent, and you need a response sooner than this, please call the school.

4.2 Phone Calls

If you need to speak to a specific member of staff about a non-urgent matter, please email or phone the school office and the relevant member of staff will contact you within 2 working days. We aim to resolve non-urgent matters within 5 working days. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will get in touch with you to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure you have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 2 days of your request. We will endeavor to contact you as a matter of urgency if the issue is urgent. Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

Please make it clear when you contact the school that the issue is urgent.

For more general enquiries, please call the school office. Staff will rarely use their own personal devices to contact parents. In the rare event that this does happen, staff will endeavour to ensure that any personal numbers are withheld.

Excessive phone communications from parents should be avoided as, in these circumstances, it deters from the school's core purposes. We acknowledge that situations vary but, as a guide, most parents do not use excessive communications and they contact the school by phone no more than once per month.

4.3 Meetings

If you would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, please email the appropriate address (see Appendix 1) or call the school to book an appointment. We will try to arrange a meeting within 5 working days or sooner, but this can be dependent on teaching commitments. While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day, if you need to speak to them urgently, we recommend you book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns you may have about your child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, your child's home environment, or their wellbeing.

If parents attend school without an appointment, they may be disappointed as a meeting may not be immediately possible. It is not always possible for a member of staff to accommodate a meeting without notice.

4.4 Tailored Communication Strategies

There are rare circumstances when communication with parents need a tailored approach. These circumstances may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Communication requests have become unreasonable.
- Communication has become excessive.
- Communication has become ineffective / broken down.
- Communication has become disrespectful or abusive.
- Communication has become vexatious.

In these circumstances the school may draw up a Tailored Communication Strategy. A first step is likely to be a clear communication with the parent advising them of the school's specific concerns over communication (such as excessive contact). If this does not address the concerns, then the Tailored Strategy will be adopted. This may include specific centralized email address or restrictions on the number of communications that will be responded to. The school is likely to have consulted their legal team in these situations and the CEO / Headteacher / Chair of Governors will be notified.

5. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school. We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in the following languages:

- English

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

- School announcements and communications translated into additional languages.
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls.

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher monitors the implementation of this Statement and will review the Statement every 2 years. The Statement will be approved by the Governing Body.

7. Links With Other Policies

This Statement should be read alongside the following:

- Digital and E-Safety Policy
- Trust Code of Conduct for Staff
- Complaints Procedure

The Oldbury Wells School Communication Statement has been ratified by the Governing Body of Oldbury Wells School

Signed Chair of Local Governing Body Dated

Signed Headteacher Dated

Appendix 1: School Contact List

Who Should I Contact?

Option 1:

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office on school@oldburywells.com / 01746 765454.
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) in the subject line (for emails).
- We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff.

Remember: check our website first - much of the information you need is posted there.

Option 2:

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address.
- Include your child's full name in the subject line along with their form group.

We try to respond to all emails within 2 working days.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher/subject teacher/ form tutor phone 01746 765454 or email school@oldburywells.com
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	
Y7/8:	lisa.bridgwater@oldburywells.com (Pastoral Support Worker) amy.burrows@oldburywells.com (Pastoral Manager) Y7 chris.smith2@oldburywells.com (Head of Year) Y8 joe.walker@oldburywells.com (Head of Year)
Y9:	claire.shakespeare@oldburywells.com (Pastoral Manager) Y9 jake.cook@oldburywells.com (Head of Year)
Y10/11:	lucy.goodison@oldburywells.com (Student Support Worker) sarah.barlow@oldburywells.com (Pastoral Manager) Y10 april.bishell@oldburywells.com (Head of Year) Y11 terry.cowburn@oldburywells.com (Head of Year)
Bridgnorth Sixth Form	april.bishell@oldburywells.com (Head of Sixth Form) tom.williams3@oldburywells.com (Curriculum Sixth Form)

Payments	susan.billingham@oldburywells.com (Finance Administrator)
School trips	susan.billingham@oldburywells.com (Finance Administrator)
Uniform/lost and found	school@oldburywells.com or school office 01746 765454

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 01746 765454 Option 1
If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the school office or download Leave of Absence Request Form from the school Website (under Parents)	School office 01746 765454
School events/the school calendar	School office 01746 765454
Special Educational Needs	catherine.morgan@oldburywells.com (SENCO)

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our Complaints Procedure. This can be found on the school's website.

Appendix 2: Social Media

The school's official social media channels are directed from the school's website.

- The official use of social media sites only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives, with specific intended outcomes.
- The use of social media is predominately used to communicate and share school successes.
- Staff should always assess what the most appropriate method of communication is. For example, social media should never be used for pastoral or individual school issues. The school's social media feed is only accessible by authorised staff.
- The official use of social media as a communication tool has been formally risk assessed and approved by the Headteacher. No accounts should be set up without the approval of the Headteacher.
- The designated Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member has access to account information and login details for our social media channels, in case of emergency, such as school closure.
- Official social media channels have been set up as distinct and dedicated social media sites or accounts for educational, marketing (including recruitment) or engagement purposes only.
- Staff use the school provided email addresses to register for and manage any official social media channels. At no point should any personal accounts be used or linked.
- Official social media sites are suitably protected and linked to our website. These are agreed by the Headteacher in all instances.
- Public communications on behalf of the school will, where appropriate and possible, be read and agreed by at least one other colleague. No social media should be posted without a check from the designated SLT lead.
- Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including: antibullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality and child protection. At all times safeguarding should prevail.
- All communication on official social media platforms will be clear, transparent, and open to scrutiny.
- Parents/carers and learners will be informed of any official social media use, along with expectations for safe use and action taken to safeguard the community. Where possible, social media will be a one-way form of communication (discussions should never take place on this media).
- Only social media tools which have been risk assessed and approved as suitable for educational purposes will be used.
- Any official social media activity involving learners will be moderated:
 - does it pose any safeguarding risk?
 - if images are used, do the students have permission for photos?
- Written parental consent for any official social media use will be obtained, via the OWS1 school admission form.
- We will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.

Staff Expectations

- Members of staff who follow and/or like our official social media channels must use dedicated professional accounts to secure professional boundaries.
- If following the social media feed, staff should use profiles with no identifiable content, for example, no photo or to use alternative name.
- Personal accounts should not be used and under no circumstances should staff engage in any communication via the school's social media. This includes sharing, commenting, or liking posts.
- If members of staff are participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the setting, they will:
 - Sign to ensure they have read the Communication Statement.
 - Always be professional and aware they are an ambassador for the school.
 - Disclose their official role but make it clear that they do not necessarily speak on behalf of the setting.
 - Always be responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
 - Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.
 - Ensure that they have appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel.
 - Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school, unless they are authorised to do so.
 - Not engage with any direct or private messaging with current, or past, learners, parents and carers.
 - Inform their line manager, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputies) and/or the Headteacher of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from learners.

All staff are reminded of their responsibilities under the school's Data Protection and Digital and E-Safety Policies.