Orchard Lea Federation

Guidelines for communication between parents/carers and staff.

Date agreed: May 2024

Date for renewal: May 2027

We believe that effective communication between home and school is key to supporting children to achieve and feel happy in school. Ultimately, all parents/carers and staff want the best for all pupils and working together is the best way to achieve this.

These expectations are in conjunction with other policies but especially our Complaints Policy which can be found on our website.

Communicating to parents/carers:

As a minimum, we will keep parents/carers informed about the progress of their child and the life of the school through:

- Weekly newsletters.
- An up to date website.
- Parents/carers evenings.
- Termly drop- ins.
- Regular assemblies and opportunities to see the schools in action.
- An annual written report.
- Celebrating success through assemblies and posts on our Facebook page.

In addition to the above, we will also ensure that leaders are accessible to parents/carers most mornings and we have an open door policy where parents/carers are able to request an appointment or drop in to meet with staff. We will try to meet with parents/carers as soon as possible.

However, despite our best intentions, we recognise that on occasions, the unique relationships that a parent/carer and school have with a child might at times lead to a difference of opinion. On these occasions we would encourage parents/carers to come into school to meet with us directly in the first instance following the stages outlined on page 3.

The following expectations help to clarify how we can work together.

Section 1. Our Guidelines and expectations for staff.

We expect all our staff to:

- ✓ Greet parents/carers with a positive tone of voice.
- ✓ Listen to the parent/carers.
- ✓ Endeavour to acknowledge receipt of an email or phone call within 48 hours (2 work days). If it is something that will require a longer period to investigate, staff will make it clear that the concern has been heard, that it is being investigated and a more detailed response will be sent within a specified timescale.
- ✓ Ensure that school policies are followed.
- ✓ Respect confidentiality.
- ✓ Share positive communications.
- ✓ Be familiar with the Complaints Policy and direct parents/carers to the next stage where appropriate.
- ✓ Acknowledge when/where the school has made a mistake and issue an apology.

When we will contact a parent/carer

In addition to our usual cycle of parent's evenings and assemblies, staff will contact a parent/carer when we have a concern or notice a change in a child. Following an incident, we will contact parents/carers in line with our behaviour policy.

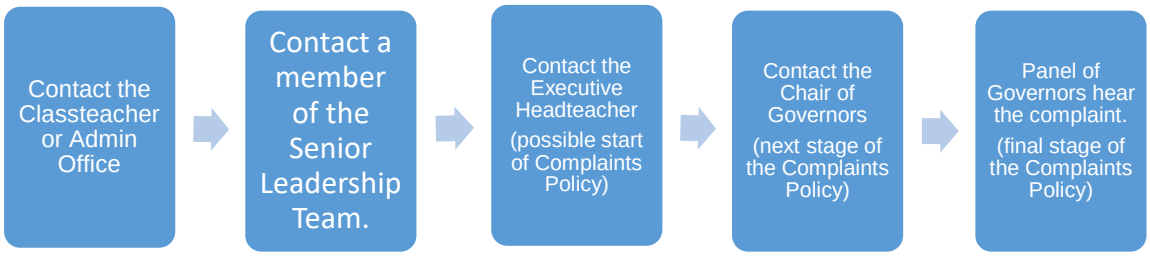
Section 2. Guidelines for parents/carers

Most teachers will be teaching or about to take a class when parents/carers try to contact them. We will try to respond to a query immediately however, this is simply not possible in all cases. Staff will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of an email or phone call within 48 hours (2 work days). If it is something that will require a longer period to investigate, they will make it clear that the concern has been heard, that it is being investigated and a more detailed response will be sent within a specified timescale. If the matter is urgent, staff will endeavour to deal with the matter urgently or will pass the concern onto the next available person. Please be aware that staff are not expected to monitor or respond to emails outside of their normal working hours (including weekends and published school holidays).

Who do you contact?

We ask that parents/carers contact the Class Teacher in the first instance or for general enquires, contact the office team. We also ask that e-mails are addressed to the Class Teacher in the first instance or if the enquiry is a general one (for example about a trip) then to the admin office.

We ask that parents/carers follow the stages listed below. This is to ensure that communication is directed to the right people and prevents situations from escalating. We also need to ensure that we adhere to the stages in our Complaints Policy.



If the concern is about the Class Teacher, then we still ask that parents/carers meet with them in the first instance to try to resolve the issue.

We ask parents/carers to:

- ✓ Raise any concerns directly with the school following the stages outlined above avoiding the temptation to post online.
- ✓ Contact the appropriate person who can deal with the enquiry. Raise any issues they may have with one person in the first instance.
- ✓ Read the communications sent out.
- ✓ Remember that initially they only have their child's version of events about an issue, so be prepared on occasion to hear an account which may run counter to this.
- ✓ Try to use language that expresses desire to work in partnership with the school to find a solution.
- ✓ Follow the steps in the Complaints Policy before escalating an issue to Ofsted or the Local Authority.

Section 3. How will the schools respond?

The schools will always seek to investigate any concerns raised and address issues raised. We will respond to the parent/carers in one or more of the following ways:

- A written response.
- An informal meeting/catch up with the parent/carer at the beginning or start of the school day.
- A phone call.
- A more formal meeting booked in advance at a mutually convenient time.
- A referral to the Complaints Policy.

If one of the schools receive a series of e-mails or calls about one particular issue then the relevant school will issue a general written response to all the parents/carers involved. This may be followed up with a general response via a weekly newsletter.

During a meeting or call

The vast majority of meetings and calls end on a positive note however, on occasions, we may:

- Ask a parent/carer to modify their tone if their voice is not being respectful or enabling the meeting to move forward.
- Suspend a meeting/call to another time. This will allow for the school to reflect on the communication so far and seek ways to move forward.

- End the meeting if we feel intimidated or threatened and seek further advice or refer the parent/carer to the next stages of the Complaints Policy.

Following on from taking one of the actions listed above, the schools will then either make an attempt to re-engage with the parents/carers at a later date **or** respond in writing **or** refer the parents/carers to the Complaints Policy.

In rare and extreme cases where the security of staff and/or pupils feels threatened, leaders will ensure that steps are taken to keep the community safe. This may include a call to the Police or a letter requesting that the parent/carer does not come onto our site.

Likewise, parents/carers also have the right to suspend a meeting or a call if they feel that doing so may lead to a more productive outcome. Parents/carers may also decide to refer to the next stage of the Complaints Policy if they feel that the outcome of a call or meeting was not satisfactory.

When do Governors become involved?

Governors have a strategic role and are not involved in the day to day management of the school. They do not have any powers to manage the day to day running of the school. Our Complaints Policy makes is clear that Governors only become involved at the final stages of a complaint. It is important that they are not involved immediately to enable them to be impartial if called upon at the final stage of a complaint.

We expect that if Governors are approached by a parent/carer that they direct them to engage directly with the schools.

Section 4. Making a complaint

If a parent/ carer wishes to make a complaint about the way in which a member of has communicated, they should follow the Complaints Policy on the school website.

Staff will refer any concerns regarding the conduct of a parent/carer to a member of the leadership team.