



THE
**WALDESLADE
& GREENACRE**
SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Communications Policy

Key Document Details:			
Author:	Senior Leadership Team	Department:	Education
Reviewer:	Deputy Headteacher	Version No:	1.1
Last Review:	June 2025	Next Review:	June 2026
Approver:	Headteacher	Date Ratified:	

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A **Beyond** ACADEMY
SCHOOLS TRUST

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Statement of Equality

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for students with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Purpose of Policy

Effective communication between teachers and parents is crucial for fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. The aim of this communications policy is to outline the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with parents and students, emphasising the need for timely and proactive engagement. By implementing this policy, The Walderslade & Greenacre Schools Partnership ("WGSP") strives to strengthen relationships with parents, enhance student outcomes, and address concerns in a timely manner.

Purpose of Communication

Establish a Partnership: Effective communication builds trust and establishes a partnership between teachers and parents.

Share Information: Regular communication ensures parents are well-informed about their child/ward's progress, achievements and areas for improvement, helping them to actively support.

Address Concerns: Open communication channels provide parents with an opportunity to express concerns, enabling timely intervention and swift resolution of issues.

Communication Channels

Phone Calls

Teachers are expected to engage in regular phone conversations with parents to discuss student progress, behaviour, and any other relevant matters.

Email

Email serves as an effective tool for sharing detailed information, such as academic updates, upcoming events, and school policies.

Make sure you're sending any emails via Arbor, not your school email. Go to – Send Email – then start typing the student name in the 'To' box, selecting '<Student Name> Guardians'.



TOP TIP: Have a positive email template saved as a reward. Or open an email thread with a parent, that you can easily update after lessons, so you keep in close contact on how things are going.

Face-to-Face Meetings

Whenever necessary or if facing challenges in communication, it is highly recommended to arrange face-to-face meetings with parents. Bringing parents into the school environment and engaging in direct conversation allows for more personal and effective communication, ensuring a deeper understanding of concerns and facilitating collaborative problem-solving. A face-to-face meeting brings weight to the purpose of the meeting. And so often has a very positive impact.

Remember to LOG all communication on Arbor: Go to the Student – Communication and Notes – then Log Telephone Call/Email/Meeting.

Calling About a Behaviour Incident

Whenever a negative behaviour incident occurs, teachers are required to promptly log the incident on Arbor. It is important to give some level of detail.

TOP TIP: For calling about an incident, try making your Arbor log AFTER you have made the call, so the parent is expecting it. And if it is about an ongoing issue of behaviour, promise a follow-up call for in a few weeks' time and write this in your planner, so you don't forget.

TOP TIP: These phone calls are much easier to make if you also make the positive calls too! If your first call home is a positive one, then calling to report a negative incident becomes so much easier and more openly received.

Positive Phone Calls

As mentioned above, in addition to addressing negative behaviour incidents, teachers should make regular positive phone calls to highlight students' achievements, improvements, or positive contributions to the school community. This practice strengthens the relationship between teachers, parents, and students, motivating students and fostering a supportive atmosphere. We must not just call about the negative.

Prompt Return of Calls

When a teacher receives a message from a parent, it is essential to return the call promptly, preferably within 24 hours, no longer than 48 hours (weekends notwithstanding). This demonstrates respect for parents' concerns and ensures that no communication is left unaddressed or ignored. This is important and parents can understandably become very frustrated when they feel their attempts to communicate are ignored.

In circumstances, when you are under pressure to return a call but stretched for time, cover can be provided by Heads of Year or Line Managers.



Importance of Communication

Parent Engagement

Regular communication strengthens parental involvement in their child/ward's education, enabling them to provide additional support at home, reinforce classroom learning, and help address any challenges their child/ward may face. It gets them on our side. The vast majority of calls to parents end well. Most of the time, parents are on side.

Early Intervention

Effective communication allows for the timely identification and intervention in areas requiring improvement or addressing concerns related to behaviour, academic progress, or social-emotional well-being.

Positive School Climate: Maintaining open lines of communication contributes to a positive school climate. We have many complaints about lack of communication from our staff. And pastoral teams are often having to deal with issues resulting from lack of communication on a base level. Improving our communication with our parents is imperative.

Tips For Making a Challenging Call

Making a negative phone call to a parent can be challenging, but with the right approach, you can effectively handle the conversation and potentially win them over. Here are some tips to help you navigate the call:

Prepare Beforehand

Take some time to gather specific examples, read logs and notes on Arbor so you are well informed, and note evidence regarding the concerns you have about the student. This will help you deliver your message clearly and concisely during the call.

Choose an Appropriate Time

Ensure that you schedule the call at a mutually convenient time when the parent is likely to be available and receptive to the conversation. Avoid calling when they might be busy or distracted or when you might have to rush off for break duty. Always ask: "Is now a good time to discuss your child/ward, or should I call back later?"

Start with a Positive Tone

If you can, begin the conversation by expressing genuine appreciation for the student's strengths, talents, or positive attributes. This helps set a positive tone and shows that you recognise and value the student's abilities.

Ask Them Their Thoughts

Sometimes it is good to let them lead the conversation: "How do you think things have been going in their Maths lessons, lately?" or "How have they been at home?"



Be Empathetic and Understanding

Show empathy towards the parent's perspective and concerns. Acknowledge that discussing challenges can be difficult and that you understand their love and concern for their child/ward. This can help create a cooperative atmosphere. A good line is "Many of us are parents too...", or "We appreciate this must be very frustrating for you."

Use "I" statements and Focus on Observations

For example, say, "I have noticed that your child/ward has been struggling with completing assignments on time," instead of "Your child/ward never completes assignments on time."

Use a Collaborative Approach

Involve the parent in problem-solving by asking for their insights and suggestions. Show that you value their opinion and input in finding solutions. Together, you can work towards the best outcome for the student: "Is she ever rude or defiant at home? How do you deal with that?"

Offer Support and Resources

Assure the parent that you are there to support their child/ward's success. Provide information about any additional resources or interventions that may be available to help the student overcome the challenges they are facing.

Listen Actively

Give the parent an opportunity to share their perspective, concerns, or questions. Actively listen to their responses and show that you genuinely consider their viewpoint. This will help build trust and open lines of communication.

End on a Positive Note

Reiterate your commitment to the student's success and express your willingness to work together with the parent to address the challenges. End the conversation by emphasising that you believe in the student's potential and that you are confident that, with collaborative efforts, they can overcome the obstacles.

Offer a Follow-Up

Offer to give them a call back at the end of term, to check-in. And write it into your planner so you do not forget. It is always good to send them an email after a discussion too: not only can you thank them for their time/support, but you then have an open line of communication that you can update easily, even delivering 'live' updates on how their child/ward is performing in lessons going forward.

Apologise, Take Responsibility

If you or the school have made an oversight or something has been missed. It is imperative we take responsibility for that. Do not be afraid to acknowledge an error and apologise. Parents will usually respect and appreciate that; it is a great way to de-escalate.

Abusive Calls

If the call escalates and becomes abusive, end the call. These types of calls are so very rare, but if you cannot talk the parent down, or they become abusive. Politely but clearly end the call. You might want to say: "I hear you are upset, but I cannot continue this conversation when there is offensive



language being used. We will find a more constructive way to address your concerns. Goodbye.” Then, end the call, log it (including time and date), maybe send a follow up email to the parent and/or pass on to a Head of Faculty or Line Manager.

Do Not Take It Personally

As a teacher, it is natural to feel emotionally invested in your work, including interactions with parents. However, it is essential to remember that taking things personally may not be the most constructive approach. It is crucial to maintain professional detachment to address the situation effectively. And remember, parents may be acting out of concern for their child/ward and their emotions can influence their reactions.

Communicating with our Students: The Student Voice

Young people, like anyone else, appreciate being spoken to in a respectful and engaging manner. Here are some tips, from them, on how to communicate effectively with our students:

Do not make the first thing you say negative

If they walk in wearing trainers, or they walk in late. Start with “Hello, I’m so glad you are here. How are you doing?” before you ask “Why are you late?” or “Where are your shoes?”

Use a friendly and approachable tone

Speak in a friendly and casual tone to create a comfortable atmosphere. Avoid being overly formal, as this may create a barrier between you and the student.

Be respectful and listen actively

Treat students with respect and give them your full attention when they speak. Show genuine interest in their thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Active listening helps foster a sense of validation and promotes open communication.

TOP TIP: Try to remember things they have said and ask them about it at a later date.

Encourage participation and open dialogue

Create an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. Encourage class discussions, ask for their input, and provide opportunities for them to share their ideas.

Provide constructive feedback

When offering feedback or criticism, frame it in a constructive and non-judgmental manner. Focus on specific behaviours or actions rather than making personal observations. Offer suggestions for improvement and highlight areas of strength.

Allow for autonomy and independence

Our students are at a stage where they seek independence and autonomy. Give them opportunities to make decisions and take ownership of their learning process. Provide choices when appropriate, allowing them to feel empowered and responsible for their education. Even if they are misbehaving say: “If you CHOOSE to continue talking out of turn, I will have to remove you from the lesson.”



Be a role model and mentor

Demonstrate the qualities you wish to see in your students. Be approachable, fair, and consistent. Show enthusiasm for your subject matter and a genuine desire to help them succeed.

Show you care

Be gentle, inquisitive and endlessly patient.

Remember that building rapport with young people takes time and effort. Be patient, understanding, and authentic in your interactions. Developing a positive and respectful relationship will greatly enhance communication and create a more conducive learning environment.



Equality Impact Assessment

Who is the policy or process intended for?	Student	Employees	Govs/ Trustees	Volunteers	Visitors		
	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒		
Status of the policy or process:	New policy or process			Existing policy or process			
	☐			☒			
Analysis							
Protected Characteristic	Impact analysis			Explanation of impact analysis			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative				
Age:	☐	☒	☐				
Disability:	☐	☒	☐				
Sex:	☐	☒	☐				
Gender reassignment:	☐	☒	☐				
Race:	☐	☒	☐				
Religion or belief:	☐	☒	☐				
Sexual orientation:	☐	☒	☐				
Marriage or civil partnership:	☐	☒	☐				
Pregnancy and maternity:	☐	☒	☐				
Student groups (PP/SEN/CLA):	☐	☒	☐				
Evaluation and decision making							
Summary of action taken:							
Final decision:							

