

# Cowbridge School



## Communication with Parents/Carers Policy

**Formulated by:** D Thomas

**Adopted by:** Staffing Committee - 11.10.16

**Last Reviewed:** Autumn 2024

**Review:** bi-annually or subject to changes in statutory guidelines or legislation

**Next Review:** Spring 2026

**Date of any amendments made to policy & brief points:**

| Date           | Details  | Approved by    |
|----------------|--|----------------|
| 04.01.19       | Bullet pt 6: addition of meeting time restrictions   |                |
| 30.09.22       | Names of staff contacts updated only   |                |
| January 2023   | Added parent evenings are online and removed reference to student planner  | MGB 19.01.2023 |
| September 2024 | Added reference to achievement managers<br>Amended AA/AM's covering each level of school rather than year group<br>Stipulated meetings no later than 3pm | MGB 17.10.2024 |

## **Rationale**

Cowbridge School recognises and values the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders; pupils and parents/carers, governors, Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies, etc.

We are committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the School and we understand that the primary concern for parents is the safety, wellbeing and achievement of their child.

The key stakeholders for a school are parents and pupils and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school aims to ensure effective two-way communication between home and school.

### **1. Aims of this policy**

- (i) To make communication between home and school simple, efficient, informative and relevant;
- (ii) To ensure high quality support and guidance for students attending Cowbridge School by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents/carers, pupils and other stakeholders;
- (iii) To set out clearly the expectations and procedures that staff at all levels of the organisation will follow in their communications with parents/carers, whatever the context or media used;
- (iv) To ensure that staff and parents/carers are able to communicate with mutual respect, courtesy and politeness.

### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of effective communication with parents and carers is about much more than the simple exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve parents/carers as partners in the learning process. Communication is as much about expectations of attitudes and behaviour as it is about the message being conveyed. It is vitally important that the quality of all communications model the highest standards of articulacy and literacy and at the same time, reflect the core aims and values of the School.
- 2.2 We understand that effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers are teaching full time, running clubs or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents/carers 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 has been particularly proactive in ensuring that we have Achievement Assistants/Managers covering each school, employed to deal with front line queries, concerns etc.**

- 2.3 The Achievement Assistants/Managers do not have a teaching commitment and are the first point of contact for parents/carers. Each Achievement Assistant/Manager has a unique and direct telephone number and an e-mail for

this purpose. Please be aware that there are around 240 pupils in each year group and therefore the Achievement Assistant/Manager will prioritise issues and concerns according to need and demand.

### **3. Principles for Effective Communication**

All communications from and within Cowbridge School should adhere to the following principles:

- (i) keep staff, pupils, parents/carers, governors and the wider community well informed about the work of the School;
- (ii) be open, honest, ethical and professional at all times;
- (iii) use jargon free, plain English that is easily understood by all;
- (iv) be actioned within a reasonable time. See guidance below regarding time frame;
- (v) use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience;
- (vi) be compatible with our core aims and values;
- (vii) follow the 'corporate' School style;
- (viii) characterised by a high standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- (ix) promote the School as a centre of excellence.

### **4. Details of Events and Other General News**

Details about events, news, key messages at the School are published in the School's weekly newsletter to parents – Parentmail, which is emailed normally each Friday. Sometimes additional messages will be sent to compliment the weekly newsletter where feel appropriate.

### **5. Methods of General Communication**

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

#### **5.1 Prospective Parent/Carers and Y7 Pupils**

- (i) Prospective parents/carers are invited to an Open Evening in September/October, preceding the year of entry to the School. All prospective parents/carers receive information about the School and are informed of the online prospectus (paper copies available upon request) with details of a range of information regarding the School.
- (ii) Prospective parents/carers will receive confirmation in writing from the Local Authority of a formal offer of a place at Cowbridge-School in March.
- (iii) Parents/carers 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.
- (iv) Parents/carers of any child who is identified with a problem settling at Cowbridge School are invited to a 'Year 7 Settling-In Evening' in the November of Year 7. This allows parents/carers to meet key staff in order to review how the student has settled into the School and how we can work on further strategies to settle and learn.

## 5.2 All Parents/Carers - Parents' Evenings

- (i) Parents/carers are invited to attend a Parents' Evening each year to review the academic progress of the student with the individual class/subject teacher. This will provide parents/carers and teachers a valuable opportunity to discuss relevant assessment data, examples of work where appropriate and to keep a focused discussion regarding strengths, areas for development and 2/3 action points for pupil and parent/carer. This meeting will be held online, using the School Cloud platform. The time allocation for each individual meeting per teacher will vary and is dependent on the year group in question.
- (ii) **Where a parent/carer feels that an issue which will take longer or there is a potential dispute, parents/carers need to make an appointment with either the Leader of Achievement (Head of Year) or Senior Leader of Achievement/ Assistant Headteacher.**

**5.3 It is expected that communication between staff and parents/carers is respectful, polite and with the aim of resolving issues raised. Should staff feel that the situation is becoming difficult, parents/carers will be referred to a more senior member of staff.**

## 6. Meetings with Parents/Carers - Additional

6.1 At other times during the School year, it may be appropriate for parents/carers and staff to meet to discuss progress and other issues from time to time affecting a student's achievement, wellbeing etc. This is an integral part of the roles of Achievement Assistants/Managers, Leaders of Achievement, Subjects Leaders and Senior Leaders.

**Please note that it is not possible to meet with individual class/subject teachers/ form tutors over and above the designated Parents' Evenings as outlined above.**

6.2 Meetings will take place with the most appropriate staff members and the School will decide which member of staff is the most appropriate, depending on the individual circumstances. Meetings must take place between the hours of 8:00 and no later than 16:00. The last meeting of the day should be scheduled no later than 15.00. This is to ensure the appropriate management of workload.

6.3 Brief written notes will be kept in addition to the action points agreed.

6.4 Requests for meetings will be accommodated as soon as practically possible. This will normally take place within 10 school working days, with the relevant staff member.

## 7. Specific, Primary, Front-line communication for Individual Students

7.1 As outlined above, each year group of students has been designated an Achievement Assistant/Manager. Parents/carers can contact the School by telephone or e-mail using the contact details below.

| Year Group of Student | Contact Direct number and e-mail   |
|-----------------------|--|
| Y7                    | <a href="mailto:year7@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year7@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776705  |
| Y8                    | <a href="mailto:year8@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year8@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776711  |
| Y9                    | <a href="mailto:year9@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year9@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776712  |
| Y10                   | <a href="mailto:year10@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year10@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776714  |
| Y11                   | <a href="mailto:year11@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year11@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776717  |
| Sixth Form            | <a href="mailto:year12@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year12@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> 01446 776718<br><a href="mailto:year13@cowbridgecs.co.uk">year13@cowbridgecs.co.uk</a> as above |

7.2 The Achievement Assistants/Managers will liaise internally with the relevant staff and will convey messages to and from staff, obtain information from staff and where appropriate refer issues to other staff where it is felt necessary for intervention from Subject Leaders, Leaders of Achievement (Heads of Year), Senior Leaders of Achievement or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

## 8. Telephone Calls

8.1 Achievement Assistants/Managers can receive high volumes of calls from parents/carers and other individuals during the school day. They will attempt to respond to external calls and convey messages, collect information **usually within 24 hours**.

8.2 **Parents/carers will not be put through to individual teachers.** A simple log (date and time) and also a brief outline of the content of the conversation and any actions resulting from it will be kept by the Achievement Assistant/Manager.

8.3 Where staff contact home and are unable to reach a parent/carer, and subsequently leave a voicemail message, staff will be clear who is calling and where from as well as indicating briefly the nature of the call. This prevents undue stress for parents/carers and also supports the School team when parents/carers return missed calls.

## 9. Social Networking Sites

**Staff will not communicate with parents/carers or pupils via social networking sites** (such as Facebook) or accept them as their “friends”. The exceptions to this rule are networks or blogs used in the safety of Software Learning Platform for the purpose of teaching and learning.

**Under no circumstances will staff communicate with parents/carers or pupils using their private email accounts.**

## 10. Written Communication

### i) **E-mails**

We will aim to respond to e-mail communication as soon as practically possible. **This will normally be within 5 working days.** Holding e-mails **will normally be sent within 24 hours. Emails received on weekends/**

out of school term time (i.e. holiday times) will not elicit a response until after the start of the school week/term.

**Please note that the working time for Achievement Assistants/Managers is 8am – 4pm.** Therefore any e-mail communication received outside of these times will not be actioned until the next working day.

**ii) Written Letters Received in the Post**

We will aim to respond to **written communication within 10 working days**. Where this is not possible for example where an issue needs further exploration/ investigation, we will acknowledge receipt of correspondence and will outline when written communication will be responded to.

**11. Addressing Parents/Carers – Verbally or Written**

Parents/carers must be referred to by their formal title i.e. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr etc. and not by their forename. Staff should use their full name or appropriate salutation i.e. Mrs Smith, Leader of Science. Staff should not respond by use of their forename only.

**12. Disputes Between Home and School**

12.1 It is recognised that from time to time, that parents/carers may dispute a particular approach or viewpoint as to the behaviour or attitude of their child. Where staff are faced with potentially difficult or challenging communications with parents/carers, they will always seek advice from the relevant line manager, rather than enter into a dialogue which may become stressful for staff and parents/carers or make a difficult situation worse.

12.2 Line managers will always look to support their colleagues in these circumstances, where necessary taking over the communication from members of their team.

**12.3 At all times it is vital to retain professionalism. Where parents/carers may become abusive or aggressive in their response, in whatever form of communication is being used, staff will politely inform them that the communication will have to cease and that they may wish to speak to the relevant line manager.**

12.4 Should any member of staff receive persistent complaints and/or impolite communication via any medium, this will be referred to the relevant Senior Leader. The Senior Leader(s) will discuss with the Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher. Relevant action will be taken by the Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher in accordance with relevant policies.

**13. Complaints Procedure**

There is a system in place for monitoring the nature of complaints at the school in order to identify trends and address any recurring issues. Please refer to the Complaint's Procedure for full details.