



Communications Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1** It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers, and communication between home and school is key. Good communication between the school and the home is essential. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve, and how they can help.
- 1.2** In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the importance of the role that parents play in supporting the school in educating their children.
- 1.3** We communicate with parents through a range of different strategies. Some of our communications are the result of a statutory requirement, others reflect what we believe is important to our school.
- 1.4** We recognise that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; and we recognise that parents and carers also have very busy lives. Modern communication methods can mean more efficient sharing of information, though this needs to be structured to ensure that it is manageable for staff whose primary responsibility is to teach our children.

2 Home School Agreement

- 2.1** Our Home-School Agreement has been updated for the summer of 2019. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents, and what the school expects of the children. We ask parents to sign this agreement when their child starts in our school and again when their child moves to KS2.

3 Annual written report to parents: children's achievements

- 3.1** Each year for children in Y1 to Y6, in the autumn and spring terms, we produce a short report on how our children are progressing in Maths, English (Reading and Writing) and Science as well as their effort and application.
- 3.2** In the summer term, we provide a fuller report to parents, which includes each child's attainment and effort in each National Curriculum subject. We also ask the children to comment on their own progress, and parents to make a similar comment. We also give children in Year 2 and Year 6 the details of their performance in statutory assessment.
- 3.3** As well as receiving the annual written report, parents meet their child's teacher in the Autumn and Spring terms for a private consultation. This gives parents the opportunity to

celebrate their child's successes and also find out how they can support their child with any areas of development. Parents are able to look at their child's work during the parent consultation.

- 3.4** In the EYFS we report twice a year, in the spring and summer terms detailing children's attainment and progress across the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The parents are invited in to receive and discuss their child's summer report.

4 Information Meetings

- 4.1** In the autumn term the school holds a curriculum meeting in each key stage; this is an opportunity for teachers to inform parents about that term's curriculum as well as other important issues that need to be communicated.

- 4.2** We hold an induction meeting for new to Reception parents each June and then again in September.

- 4.3** The school welcomes all new pupils and parents with an informative induction pack to support the pupil's induction into the school. We also direct them to our comprehensive website which has a whole range of information.

- 4.4** We also host a number of meetings giving parents guidance on the curriculum at Garden Fields such as maths workshops, early reading, e-safety and giving information about our residential trips.

- 4.5** Parents also have an opportunity in the summer Term to visit the school during Celebration Evening, having the opportunity to speak to staff and look at their child's work.

5 Public access documents

- 5.1** The school makes available a range of documentation, including policies, for parents. These documents are available on the school website (www.gardenfields.herts.sch.uk).

6 Home-school communications

6.1 School Comms System

- 6.11** The School uses its School Comms system to communicate with parents via email or text. It is the most common way that we contact parents with school news and information about events.

- 6.12** We send a number of newsletters to parents each term and parents are notified of a new edition via School Comms. These newsletters contains general details about school events, activities and developments in the school. We also send other letters of a general nature regularly via School Comms.

6.2 Telephone

- 6.21** We ask that parents inform us about an absence, arrangements for picking up your child or other reason by contacting the school office either by telephone or email. Our office staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible. Please note that lessons will never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

6.3 Email

- 6.31** Parents are asked to contact the general admin email admin@gardenfields.herts.sch.uk if they need to contact staff. The admin team will be able to direct your query to the correct teacher or leader.
- 6.32** Teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work email to be checked during a teacher's personal time.
- 6.33** We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within three working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply.
- 6.34** Teachers on occasion may find it easier to email you regarding your child using the contact details we have on file. It is acceptable to continue these conversations directly with the member of staff once they have contacted you, but any subsequent new question or issue should be raised through the admin@gardenfields address so that it can be tracked and routed accordingly.

6.4 Teamer

Invitations for children to participate in sports fixtures and musical events are issued through Teamer. It is possible for parents to download the Teamer App to their phone, which makes for a convenient platform from which to accept or decline offers for such events. Please respond promptly. If you do decline an invitation then please do so as soon as possible to enable another pupil to be invited and have the opportunity instead.

6.5 Blogs

- 6.51** All teachers have access to their year group blog and can use this to write to inform parents about the curriculum being covered in class as well as to celebrate their children's learning. It also contains information about homework. These are also a key way that teachers give reminders about class or year group specific activities. Parents can sign up to receive alerts.
- 6.52** Parents are also given links for the Sport and Music blogs. Again, these are a key way that information about our sport and music provision and activities are communicated to parents.

6.6 Home School Books / Homework Diaries

- 6.61** Children in school have either a Home-School Book or for older children a Homework Diary. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they share regularly with the teacher. These diaries are used to record homework assignments, record reading and act as a regular channel of communications with parents.

7 Issues/concerns

- 7.1** The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them and therefore concerns should be taken up with teachers in the first instance. Parents can talk to teachers or staff members who are on duty on the playgrounds at the start of the day, or see the class teacher at drop off time. We allow many parents to take the opportunity to have a word with the teacher when they bring/collect their child from school. Where this is not possible, the parent can make an appointment by contacting the school office.

- 7.2** If the parent has already seen the class teacher and still has concerns then they should make an appointment to see the appropriate phase leader for their child's year group. If there is still a concern then an appointment can be requested with the deputy headteacher and then after that if there is still a concern, the headteacher. We have a Complaints Procedure which is available on our website.
- 7.3** Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff. We recognise that sometimes you receive news that may cause upset. It is not appropriate to come to school expecting to speak to a particular member of staff without an appointment. Appointments can be made via the school office and a pre-arranged meeting will allow us to have the right information to hand and to meet with you at a time that both suits you and fits with that teacher's timetable and other fixed commitments.
- 7.4** If you urgently need to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, where possible please phone ahead and the office staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to ring or see you.
- 7.5** For non-urgent meetings we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

8 School Social Media feeds

- 8.1** We use our social media channels to promote student achievements, subject information and key events at the school. Our school Twitter feed is @gfs_stalbans and our Facebook page is @GardenFields. Our social media feeds are not monitored for inbound messages. If you have a question about an event or other post on social media, please check the website first and then either email or call the school.
- 8.2** Our social media feeds and blogs operate on a 'best efforts' basis by staff whose primary commitment is to the teaching and learning of students. Expectations around frequency and timeliness of updates need to be moderated accordingly, particularly after normal school hours or during holiday periods.
- 8.3** We understand that parents and carers particularly enjoy updates and photographs from school trips. The primary concern of staff needs to be the safety and learning of students on the trip and there may not be time to post about trips in detail. Parents/carers should also be aware that we are often in parts of the country or abroad where there is limited signal, so it may only be possible to update at the end of the day. We will endeavour to update parents on the return time for trips.

9 Appropriate use of Social Media

- 9.1** Our social media sites contain terms and conditions relating to acceptable comments and posts. These terms and conditions are available on the main school Twitter and Facebook pages. We reserve the right to remove posts on these pages that breach the terms and conditions.
- 9.2** We are aware that some parents set up group chats for classes or year groups on WhatsApp, Facebook and other platforms. Whilst we recognise that these can be useful for some parents, these are not endorsed by the school and we will never post official messages on these forums. On occasion, information provided by parents on these forums can be

inaccurate or not representative of the school's view. Please rely on official social media channels, the school website or email/texts received directly from the school.

9.3 Our teachers and staff have a right to a personal life and to be protected from harassment online. We ask that parents avoid addressing staff members directly via social media and avoid posting inaccurate or defamatory statements about staff or the school on social media platforms.

9.4 Communication with parents and carers is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

Policy Adopted June 2019

Review Summer 2020