

Positive Communications Policy

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Agreed by Whitchurch Primary School Governing Body	Name
Chair of Governing Body	Peter Tenconi & Deepa Samani
Headteacher	Rachel Inniss

Date	Changes made
March 2026	

1. Introduction

At **Whitchurch Primary** School we strive to build strong relationships with parents, carers, and visitors, in order to help create a stimulating, happy and safe learning environment which continues from school to home and the wider community, providing all our pupils with the opportunity to achieve their personal best. The trust, support and co-operation of parents is fundamental to the continued success of our school.

everyone involved with school life to communicate in a respectful manner, whether in person, on the phone, or online. In this way, staff, pupils, parents, carers, and members of the public behave respectfully to each other at all times, which helps to promote the most constructive working and learning environment. Please note that our staff do not consent to being recorded during meetings or telephone calls, and if they become aware that the exchange is being recorded, they have the right to end the conversation immediately.

Whitchurch Primary School therefore asks parents, carers, and visitors to:

1. We ask that all parents, visitors and members of the public treat each other, staff members, pupils and external agencies with dignity and respect.
2. Positively support the ethos of the school by setting a good example in their speech and behaviour (including online) towards all pupils, staff members and other adults.
3. Work constructively with staff members to resolve any issues of concern, including clarifying specific events in order to bring about a positive resolution. (Details of the most appropriate person to contact depending on the issue being raised can be found on our website 'Contact' page)
4. Only ever send emails to staff that are constructive and respectful.
5. Refrain from communicating (by telephone, email or at meetings in person or remotely) in a manner which could be perceived as threatening or demanding.
6. Work alongside the school to improve their child's behaviour where necessary, understanding and accepting that a behaviour policy is fundamental and necessary to a safe and purposeful learning environment – this policy (and consequences outlined within) apply to ALL pupils; it is not democratic or open to negotiation.
7. Make reasonable requests for meeting times, and not expect to see any member of staff without a prior appointment. (We will always try to accommodate a meeting or phone call as soon as possible, but do have many commitments, including teaching, throughout the day and we would ask that you understand and respect this).
8. Agree to communicate or meet with the member of staff which the school deems most appropriate in dealing with the particular situation. (N.B. The member of staff will be commensurate with the stage and scale of the concern and the choice of staff member is not open to negotiation.)
9. Make every effort to positively promote the school to the wider community and not publicly undermine the school or the implementation of school policies or publicly manifest complaints or criticisms online, on social media platforms (eg Whatsapp / Facebook) or in public forums.
10. When making a decision to contact the school, please remember that we are a school of Whitchurch Primary pupils. No school in the country has the capacity to enter into lengthy or regular email or telephone conversations. **We do not have the capacity to meet persistent or immediate demands from parents / carers.**
11. Emails received will be acknowledged within 2 working days and the school aims to respond to emails within 10 working days. However, it is recognised that under some circumstances, it may prove difficult to meet this deadline. In such cases, the school will inform you of the revised timeline.

12. Parents should be aware of school policies and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies.

Any abusive, foul, or insulting language, physical attacks or aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff members, governors, pupils, parents or any member of the public within our premises, on the phone or online, at face-to-face meetings or remotely will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This also extends to posting or publishing comments online that risk bringing an individual or the school's reputation into disrepute.

Anyone exhibiting these behaviours will be formally warned by the school that this will not be tolerated, and any future violation of this policy could then result in all future communications with the school being restricted to writing. The school will consider taking legal action as appropriate.

All members of Whitchurch Primary School community have the right to work without fear of abuse or violence at all times.

This Policy outlines the manner in which everyone is expected to act whilst on school premises or virtually, as well as further detailing the type of behaviour which will not be tolerated.

All employees of Whitchurch Primary School:

- Are required to demonstrate the highest possible professional standards at all times.
- Deal with all pupils, fairly and consistently.
- Communicate with all parents and visitors with the highest level of professional courtesy.
- Be aware of and conform to all safeguarding routines in the school.
- Uphold the professional integrity of the school and teaching profession at all times.

2. Excessive Parental Contact/Demanding Behaviour

Whitchurch Primary is a very busy and successful school, and our priority will always be to teach, supervise and support our pupils. We are committed to working positively with home to effectively deal with any issues or concerns. However, we would ask parents / carers to understand that we will simply do not have the capacity to engage in excessive communications or lengthy meetings.

Once the school has given a reasonable amount of time to address an individual issue or concern, we will not engage in further communication regarding those issues to which we have already responded.

We are a large school, all with individual (sometimes complex) needs, we have a duty of care to support all of them, a range of statutory responsibilities and limited capacity / resources: carrying out these roles effectively for

all pupils is not possible where individual parents / carers demand a disproportionate or unreasonable amount of time through emails, phone calls or meetings. We will ensure that communications cease when we deem that the excessive contact is to the detriment of our ability to carry out our respective duties in the interests of all our pupils.

Please note that it is not possible to interrupt members of staff during the school day as they need to remain with their classes and often have commitments before, during and after school. If you need to speak to a staff member, please contact the school office who will acknowledge receipt of your query within 2 working days. This inability to respond instantaneously is consistent with arrangements in the NHS and other organisations.

Any emergency situations will be dealt with separately.

Please remember that any time dealing with complaints, excessive communications or questioning of school procedures is time away from our primary aim of supporting our pupils.

Please note the following:

- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone over the telephone, our staff will politely end the call.
- If any email is rude or inappropriate in tone, we reserve the right not to reply, or we may choose to take the action outlined within this policy.
- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone during a face-to-face meeting or a virtual meeting, our staff will terminate the meeting immediately.
- In either case, the school will forward a copy of this policy to reiterate our expectations and rights with regard to appropriate communication.
- In circumstances where school has listened to the request of a stakeholder (i.e. parent or pupil), considered the request and shared the outcome of this with the stakeholder, should the stakeholder continue to repeat or labour the same request, school reserves the right to cease communication or to limit the reply with a repeat of key messages already shared.
- In such situations where staff feel that they have been misquoted or misrepresented, the School reserves the right to limit contact to written communications. This is entirely at the discretion of the school.
- When the school judges email correspondence to be excessive, the school reserves the right to:
 - cease communication.
 - limit replies to a repeat of key messages already shared.
 - arrange an alternative method of communication.
 - set out a plan for a reasonable, manageable schedule of contact.
- Following reasonable attempts by the school to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time, or if a meeting is refused, then communication on this issue will cease.

Whilst we welcome feedback and regularly consult with a range of stakeholders in making key decisions, ultimately the school has to make decisions in good faith, which we deem to be in the best interests of our pupils. Whilst it is never our intention to disappoint, given the size of our school it is not always possible to secure agreement or consensus (and schools are not duty bound to do so). Decisions around behaviour expectations, uniform, teaching and learning strategies or strategic direction are at the discretion of the Headteacher and do not require consensus or parental approval. Equally, the school reserves the right to disregard advice given or offered by stakeholders (however well-meaning) that it believes are not in the best interests of its pupils or staff. This includes advice that either exceeds or contradicts DfE (Department for Education) guidance. We are therefore unable to enter into lengthy discussion or debate regarding such issues.

This position is protected by law. Please see our published 'Operational and Strategic decisions protocol' (Appendix One).

3. Communication of Political Views and standpoints

We want our pupils to develop a strong understanding of current and historical affairs; continuing to develop their own opinions and we fully recognise the benefit of healthy, respectful debate.

However, in line with the provisions set out within the Education Act (1996), the school is not permitted to allow the pursuit of partisan political activities by staff or pupils. This can include, and is not limited to, displaying political symbols and campaign slogans (all graffiti, whatever the intention, is not an accepted part of our behaviour policy). Where political issues are discussed in lessons or extra-curricular activity, steps will be taken to ensure there is a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Given that some topics are incredibly complex and engender strong emotive responses, staff and pupils are asked to take into account the sensitivity of key topics. It may be that, at the discretion of the Headteacher, the school decides that it is not appropriate to open certain topics to whole class or group debate. This is in the interests of avoiding any pupil, or group, feeling marginalised and is ultimately in the interest of protecting community cohesion and our fundamental value of kindness.

4. Legal Framework

2.1 This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including but not limited to the following:

The Education Act 2011
The Education Act 1996
The Children Act 2004

2.2 The Malicious Communications Act 1988 prevents the sending of communications (including online messages or letters) that convey a threat, a grossly offensive or indecent message, or false information, if the intention of the sender is to cause distress or anxiety to the reader or recipient. The offence is punishable by up to six months in prison or a fine.

2.3 The Protection of Harassment Act 1997, which makes it a criminal offence to pursue a course of conduct that, in the eyes of a reasonable person, amounts to harassment, or to harass two or more individuals with the intention of persuading a person to do or not do something. As such, online trolling or cyber-bullying can be criminal offences, for which there are serious consequences. Under section 2 of the Protection of Harassment Act 1997, a person guilty of the offence of harassment, which is a summary offence, can be imprisoned for a term of up to six months or given an unlimited fine. There is also a more serious offence, which involves a course of conduct that puts a person in fear of violence, which is an indictable offence carrying a potential sentence of five years in prison (section 4 of the Protection of Harassment Act).

2.4 The Defamation Act 2013 which covers libel and slander and allows legal action to be taken in respect of comments which you make (or have made) relating to the school or its employees where such comments cause (or may be likely to cause) serious harm to the reputation of the school or its employees. This would include any comments you make online, such as Facebook or other social media platforms.

- 2.4.1 This policy also has due regard to statutory guidance, including (but not limited to the following):
DfE (2025) Keeping Children Safe in Education.

5. Related School Policies

This Communications Policy has due regard to the following school policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- ESafety/Online Safety
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media Policy

6. Expected Behaviour

Simply put, we expect that all parents, visitors and members of the public will treat each other, staff members, pupils and external agencies with dignity and respect.

Parents should be aware of school policies, and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies and maintain a positive approach at all times whilst on the school premises and in their communications with school.

7. Telephone calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated 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.

In a non-emergency a return call will be aimed to be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a log of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer via CPOMs.

8. Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

If any parent / carer behaves in a manner that this policy outlines as unacceptable (such as abusive, aggressive, inappropriate or excessive contact, etc) the school may choose to take appropriate action in line with our legal position or forward a copy of this policy to appropriate individuals to ensure that parents / carers are aware of

expectations for future behaviour; the position of the school; our legal rights and protection and any action that we might choose to take.

If parents are unhappy with a decision to implement this policy, they have the right to pursue the issue in line with Whitchurch Primary School's published Complaints Policy and Procedures.

Appendix 1

Operational & Strategic Decisions Protocol

At Whitchurch Primary School we strive to build strong relationships with parents, carers and visitors in order to help create a stimulating, happy and safe learning environment, which continues from school to home and the wider community, providing all our pupils with the opportunity to achieve their personal best. The trust, support and co-operation of parents is fundamental to the continued success of our school.

We will always seek, where possible, to work with parents / carers in a positive manner to ensure the highest standards within school. We value the home / school relationship and, where appropriate, regularly seek the views of our community, and often choose to share the rationale for our decisions. Whilst it is never our intention to disappoint, given a community of our size, we must accept that it is not always possible to secure agreement

on all issues. It is important to note that some decisions are not open to negotiation and that securing agreement is not necessary in some cases. In choosing to send your child to **Whitchurch Primary** School, we ask that parents / carers understand that all schools have the right to make key operational and strategic decisions without agreement from parents. This position is protected by law.

The following list is not exhaustive, but offers examples of areas where the school retains the right to make such decisions:

- Decisions around setting, choice of teacher, class group, teaching assistant, form tutor, tutor group or tier of entry for examinations
- Decisions regarding Behaviour or Uniform Policy (parents cannot choose for their child to 'opt out' of either policy or any of the sanctions outlined within). Indeed, parental permission or approval is not required for the issuing of a detention or Internal Exclusion.
- The nature of our rewards system and how we choose to implement it.
- Choice of curriculum content, resources or approaches to Teaching and Learning.
- Our Quality Assurance procedures, approaches to homework or marking.
- The nature of our extra-curricular offer.
- Timing of INSET / Training Days or other key events within the school calendar.
- The content and delivery of our internal policies and protocols.

Decisions are made in good faith and on the basis of what we consider to be in the best interests of our pupils, our community or the effective running of the school. We will use our professional judgement, expertise and experience and operate in line with DfE advice or statutory / legal frameworks in making key decisions.

We endeavour to keep parents / carers informed regarding key decisions, where appropriate, whilst also ensuring that communications to parents are kept at an acceptable level; it is, therefore, not possible or necessary to share all decisions or enter into dialogue about the rationale.

As stated, we will always listen to concerns that are shared with the school in a respectful manner (in line with our published Communications Policy).

Please note, however, that listening does not mean that a decision will necessarily change, or that that we do not care. Sometimes we may have to respectfully agree to disagree.

Following the Complaints Procedure will not change a decision unless it determines that the school has acted unlawfully or outside agreed policy positions.

Please be aware that plans change from time to time, this is often beyond our control. We will inform parents / carers as soon as possible but ask for your understanding.

Given the huge volume of complex decisions we make, we will not always get everything right, we are human and will always aim to operate with the best intentions. Above all we ask parents / carers to be kind, as working together positively ensures that we can better meet the needs of Whitchurch Primary children.

Please note: Our published Communications Policy outlines acceptable behaviour, how we will respond to abuse and the legal protections in place.