

Home-school positive relationships policy

Date: reviewed regularly; see date in document label for most recent update

Our schools are happy and healthy places for all. Positive relationships between parents and carers, and other visitors, ('home') and members of staff ('school') have a key role to play in ensuring this.

Meetings with parents/carers

By 'meeting' we include telephone conversations, virtual meetings as well as face-to-face meetings.

We welcome quick informal conversations as a useful way to build up the partnership we have with home. Such meetings are ideal ways to answer quick questions, to alert us to any minor concerns, or to celebrate a child's achievements out of school. However, these meetings should not disrupt learning or undermine safeguarding by, for example, delaying a teacher from being with their class.

We also recognise when a longer conversation is important, and the importance of conducting such a conversation face-to-face for full understanding – meetings in person allow topics to be explored and messages to be heard more fully. If you require a longer meeting, then contact the school office.

Staff will meet with parents on their own or supported by another adult with prior consent.

Electronic recording of any meeting is not permitted without the consent of all attendees and only in special circumstances where there are communication difficulties. Agreement must be sought from all parties. Any recordings remain private and further sharing is subject to restrictions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

Emails to parents/carers

Some parents/carers are not able to meet or speak with us during a typical working week. Emails are a way to ensure positive home-school relationships when a meeting is not convenient/possible. However, we also recognise that our staff work long hours, often including lunchtimes and extended hours at the start and end of the day. With this in mind, the following points are for parents/carers and staff to follow.

Parents/carers should...	Staff will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact staff by email with questions that are simple and quick to answer/respond to • for more complex issues, contact school to arrange a longer telephone conversation, online discussion or face-to-face meeting • make sure their emails relate to learning or their child's social/emotional needs • if they want to, send pictures or other communication which celebrates their child's achievements outside of school • limit the number of emails they send to staff • telephone school for anything urgent (eg to report a sickness) • Scholes (Elmet) Primary: 0113 264 9149 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forward to the Head of School any emails which are more complicated and/or an email trail which is becoming unmanageable or unreasonable (typically over five emails in a half-term) • be reasonably available for meetings • not respond to emails which are of a personal or social nature; instead they will forward these to the Head of School • share a child's positive news (providing time is available) • ask the Head of School to intervene if the number of emails from one family begins to feel excessive; if an issue persists, staff will be advised to block messages from a particular email address and may also be instructed to delete all emails • not be able to respond to anything urgent

- Moortown Primary: 0113 268 5915
- St James' CE Primary: 01937 583 379
- not expect a response to emails before 8.00am or after 5.00pm
- avoid sending emails at weekends or holidays (instead, consider scheduling an email)
- avoid copying the emails to another person
- contact the Head of School if they have more general issues or if they have any sort of concern
- aim to respond to emails within two working days (where a response is needed)
- not respond to emails at weekends or holidays
- not 'reply to all' if the email has another person copied in
- aim to respond to emails that raise a concern, in line with our Complaints Policy, but not respond to emails that are negative or demanding in any way; instead they will forward these to the Head of School who may choose to respond appropriately

Unreasonable communications

Occasionally, it may be the case that communications from parent(s)/carer(s) are considered to be unreasonable. Unreasonable communications might include:

- a very high number of communications
- abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language (including foul, inappropriate, or offensive language related to race, disability, or sexuality)
- conflicting communications and/or requests (including communications from different parents/carers which lead to confusion or concern)
- threats or intimidation (including communications that use threats or aggressive language)
- excessive contact (very frequent, lengthy, or complex contact that is repetitive and/or places unreasonable demands on staff and which potentially distract from the normal work of school staff)
- falsified information (knowing and deliberately providing false or unsubstantiated allegations)
- public dissemination of unacceptable content (for example, posting derogatory, defamatory, or abusive comments about the school, its staff, or students on social media or other public forums)
- harassment (including persistent, obsessive, or harassing communications which cause disruption or distress)
- unreasonable demands (for example, demands which conflict with Sphere Federation policies and demands insisting on outcomes which are unrealistic and/or lack serious purpose)
- refusal to cooperate (for example, refusing to cooperate with the complaint investigation process or changing the basis of the complaint during the investigation).

This is not an exhaustive list; it provides illustrations of unacceptable communications.

If communications are considered unreasonable, the Head of School or Head of Federation will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) explaining that their communications are unreasonable and asking them to change it.

If such communications continue, we may draw up a communications plan which specifies methods of communication and limit the number of contacts. It may also specify appropriate content and tone.

For example, in the case of a very high number of emails, this might limit communications (other than telephone calls regarding a child's absence and matters of urgency) to a dedicated email account with emails being read in a particular, limited window each week/fortnight. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

Unacceptable communication and behaviour

The vast majority of parents/carers and other visitors to Sphere Federation schools are supportive and act in a reasonable way, ensuring that the school is a safe, orderly environment in which pupils feel happy and healthy and safe. Occasionally, however, a negative attitude is expressed in an aggressive, verbally abusive or physically abusive way towards members of the school community which is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

We require our members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations, attempting to defuse the situation wherever possible, and to seek the involvement of other members of staff as appropriate. However, all members of staff have the right to work without harassment, violence, intimidation or abuse.

We expect parents/carers and other visitors to always behave in a reasonable way towards all members of the school community whether in person or online. We will take action where the behaviour displayed, whether in person or online, falls below the standards expected and will not be tolerated.

The types of behaviour which are unacceptable and will not be tolerated include:

- shouting, either in person or over the telephone
- using language or behaviour which is or is perceived to be intimidating, threatening, abusive or insulting

- using aggressive or offensive hand gestures for example shaking or holding a fist, pointing in close proximity to an individual's face
- swearing
- pushing, shoving or jostling
- hitting, slapping, punching or kicking
- spitting
- speaking directly to a child to complain about their behaviour
- any other behaviour likely to cause anybody witnessing it (including the recipient) alarm, distress or to fear that violence may be used against them or others

This is not an exhaustive list; it provides illustrations of unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated.

Consequences of such behaviour are likely to include barring individuals from school premises. Parents/carers have an 'implied licence' to come on to school premises at certain times. However, anyone whose behaviour is unacceptable will have this 'implied licence' to come on to school premises temporarily withdrawn ('barring').

"Schools can bar someone from the premises if they feel that their aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or pupils. It's enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened."
(Controlling access to school premises *Department for Education: November 2018*)

The process typically involves two stages: first, a warning, and second, withdrawal of implied permission (ie barred) for a fixed period of time. Where behaviour is deemed particularly serious, it is likely that the parent/carer or visitor's 'implied permission' will be withdrawn immediately, without a warning. The individual whose implied permission has been withdrawn (ie the barred individual) is allowed to present their side.