



# West House School Communications Policy

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| Policy Title:            | Communications Policy                                                                                                                                           |
| Last Review:             | August 2025                                                                                                                                                     |
| Next Review:             | August 2026                                                                                                                                                     |
| Responsibility:          | Head of Marketing and Communications, Headmaster                                                                                                                |
| Other relevant policies: | Complaints Policy<br>Equal Opportunities Policy<br>Marking, Feedback and Assessment Policy<br>Pupil Behaviour Policy<br>Staff Code of Conduct<br>Staff Handbook |

## Aim

To support West House School in its aim to continue as a leading independent preparatory school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

## Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about the message content. We should also remember the significance of listening within the context of communication. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation. For the purposes of this policy, communication includes not only the message but also how that message is delivered; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out. Staff should remember that they represent the school in all communications, external and internal.

## Objectives

All communications at West House School should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, Governors, and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable timescale.
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies, in particular Equal Opportunities & Acceptable Use of IT.
- Be compatible with our core values as reflected in the West House Way and the staff Code of Conduct.

## Internal Communications

### Meetings

Informal and formal meetings are used to deliver information to staff and facilitate discussion and involvement.

All formal meetings should be structured, with a pre-agreed agenda and minutes taken by a designated staff member. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to dialogue concerning reflection on priorities, activities, and future plans. For all other meetings notes should be taken,

action points progressed, and feedback given to staff. The approved minutes of meetings are available on request from the Headmaster, subject to GDPR and confidentiality.

Teaching Staff Briefings take place on a daily basis (8.00am). The diary for the day is discussed and information shared. The main points are distributed to all staff in a daily email to all staff.

## **Email**

The primary form of written communication at the school is email. All staff at WHS are expected to use their school email accounts and regularly check their emails, at least once per working day to ensure that each member of staff is using email effectively, line managers should set aside adequate time to talk through the IT systems during the staff induction process.

An 'All Staff' email option is available ([allstaff@westhouseprep.com](mailto:allstaff@westhouseprep.com)). Staff should bear in mind that this includes all members of staff, as well as peripatetic teachers, so may not be appropriate in every circumstance. You should only expect a response to an email during a staff member's working hours, and within school opening hours (7.30am until 6.00pm).

Emails should:

- use a legible font
- contain a clear subject line
- include an appropriate greeting
- be worded professionally and should not include slang or casual terms, abbreviations or emojis.
- Be an appropriate length with correct grammar and punctuation.
- Be sent to the appropriate person, with the cc and bcc options used carefully.
- Contain an appropriate email signature with your contact information and the school logo.
- Include any relevant attachments mentioned.

In the event of a data subject access request, all emails relating to particular key words may be requested, so it is important to always bear in mind that an email sent at work could be read. Refer to the school's GDPR policy for further information.

Emails should be sent during normal school opening hours (7.30am until 6.00pm). Emails can be typed at any time if required and scheduled to send the following morning, for example, using features on the school's email system.

## **Letters**

Written communications to staff placed in pigeonholes, in the staff room, which staff should check regularly. Alternatively, they can be handed or posted to staff personally or emailed as an attachment. Letters containing sensitive information should be placed in a sealed envelope marked as private and confidential.

## **Whole school communications**

Communications sent to the full parent and/or pupil body should also be made available to all staff, to ensure consistency of messaging and aid with the operational running of the school.

## **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp can be used to convey messages to staff, particularly for time sensitive messages. It should not, however, replace email communication. It must not be assumed that all staff have immediate access to WhatsApp so should not be used in place of email. If in doubt, use both methods to ensure effective staff messaging. Staff should not respond to WhatsApp messages while they are on 'active duty' in the classroom. It is acceptable to use WhatsApp as a means of communicating with other members of staff when on playground duty, such as in the event of assistance being required.

## **Mobile phones**

Mobile phones are not permitted within the EYFS Department and should be stored in the agreed designated areas.

Within the wider school, mobile phones should not be used during lessons or when in contact with the children other than in the circumstances outlined below. In exceptional cases such as family illness, the circumstances should be discussed with the Headmaster. Non-intrusive work-related mobile phone use is acceptable during planning time. During trips and off-site provision, staff should ensure they can be contacted by mobile phone at all times.

Mobile devices can be used as reference tools and to carry out registration, as long as it is made absolutely clear to pupils what the device is being used for, e.g. by showing a pupil the screen or by clearly explaining what the device is being used for.

Staff must not contact another staff member using their personal mobile phone unless both parties have agreed.

## **Poster**

Posters and other relevant information can be displayed on the staff notice board in the staff room.

## **Telephones**

The internal telephone and voicemail system can be used when a message is particularly time-sensitive. However, it is important to note that staff would not normally be required to answer a phone call during a lesson unless it was to check on the whereabouts of a pupil. Phone calls should be answered promptly, preferably within three rings.

## **Paging**

The internal paging system should only be used in an emergency situation and only with the permission of the Headmaster or his designated deputy.

## **Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare**

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to inform relevant members of staff of safeguarding issues on a need to know basis. This includes members of the 'front of house' team being made aware of specific collection arrangements and any domestic issues that might impact drop-off and collection, or lead to parents entering into conversations with administrative staff. All staff are reminded to treat such information in the strictest confidence and to seek advice from a member of the Senior Leadership Team if in doubt.

## **External Communications**

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. At West House, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. It is important to remember that our parents and our pupils are effectively our 'customers'.

Staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, and they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end, parents will always be addressed in an appropriate manner and staff will avoid developing close friendships with parents. Our written communication should be as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

## **Communications between the school and the home**

### **Engage**

Parents are required to register with and regularly log onto the Engage parent portal which gives them access to the calendar of school events, their fee records, letters home and details about their son's educational journey such as reports and parent consultation evenings.

### **Emails to parents**

As with internal emails, all email communications to parents should:

- use a legible font.
- contain a clear subject line.
- include an appropriate greeting.
- be worded professionally and should not include slang or casual terms, abbreviations or emojis.
- Be an appropriate length with correct grammar and punctuation.
- Be sent to the appropriate person, with the cc and bcc options used carefully.
- Contain an appropriate email signature with your contact information and the school logo.
- Include any relevant attachments mentioned.

In the event of a data subject access request, all emails relating to particular key words may be requested, so it is important to always bear in mind that an email sent at work could be read. Refer to the school's GDPR policy for further information.

Emails should be sent during normal school opening hours (7.30am until 6.00pm). Emails can be typed at any time if required and scheduled to send the following morning, for example, using features on the school's email system.

### **Emails from parents**

The school acknowledges that staff receive a large volume of emails from parents, all of whom will be seeking a quick resolution to their query. To ensure the traffic of emails is manageable, staff should respond to emails from parents within 24 hours of receipt during the working week.

If the issue raised in an email cannot be resolved within this time period, it is appropriate to send a holding email to the parent, stating that you acknowledge receipt of their email and that you are looking into their enquiry.

Part-time staff may wish to alert their line manager to an issue that may need to be resolved on their non-working day so that the school's response is still prompt.

Parents are reminded annually that time-sensitive requests, such as those relating to early collection, should not be sent via email.

### **Meetings**

Parents can have a brief word with a teacher when they collect their child before or after school. If it is not possible for teachers to meet with parents on this basis due to other commitments, appropriate arrangements should be made to meet as soon as possible.

Staff should listen politely and empathetically to all parental concerns. Meetings should take place in a quiet place but within reach of other colleagues and notes should be taken during the meeting to refer to later in the case of any matter which might require further investigation.

If a meeting becomes difficult, it is important to remain professional by staying calm, maintaining a polite and level tone of voice, respecting personal space between you and the parent, listening carefully and being aware of someone you might be able to call for help if necessary. Staff can choose to end a meeting that is not progressing or can ask for a pause for the parent to step outside for a moment before resuming. The school's policy is that verbal or physical abuse towards its staff will not be tolerated.

### **Class Dojo**

Teachers of boys in Reception to Year 3 will communicate every day matters via the class Dojo. Communications will be sent out on a group or individual basis and parents have the opportunity to reply or raise any questions/queries they might have via the Dojo. Staff will respond to such messages before the end of the working day on which they are received. Time sensitive communications should be delivered by telephoning the main school office.

### **Concerns and Complaints**

Parents may bring an informal concern to the attention of the school via any means of communication although a quiet word at either the beginning or the end of the day is encouraged. Where the concern is raised by electronic means, the school will act upon the concern within 24 hours of it being received during the working week. The initial response will be either via telephone or a brief face to face meeting.

Formal complaints about the school or an individual should be directed to the Headmaster who will follow the Complaints Policy and Procedures, a copy of which is available to view via the website. They should be presented in writing or via email.

### **Reports**

Written reports are provided to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Reports should be written with correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, and appropriate in style and content as directed by the Head of Department or Headmaster. Refer to the school's Marking, Assessment and Feedback Policy for further information. Following receipt of the report, parents are given the opportunity to arrange an appointment with the school to discuss any matters arising.

### **Parents' Consultation Evenings**

In addition, parents meet their child's teacher at least twice during the year for a private consultation at Parents' Consultation Evenings. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes and to support their child in specific areas for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being at any point during the course of their West House journey. For children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or if a pupil is making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents more regularly and such meetings are arranged on an individual basis. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

### **Website**

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. The website will be run by the school's Marketing and Communications Manager and specific members of staff.

### **Social Media**

The school's social media pages (Facebook and Instagram) will be used regularly to help promote the school. The social media pages will be run by the school's Marketing and Communications Manager in accordance with the School's Social Media Policy and specific members of staff. All proposed social media content should be directed to the Marketing and Communications Manager. No social media pages using the name of the school should be started without the permission and involvement of the Headmaster and the Marketing and Communications Manager.

No member of staff should contact or respond to requests from the wider media without the permission of the Headmaster.

### **Planners**

Children in Years 3 to 6 have a planner. This enables parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the planner or reading diary to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents. Planners are checked regularly but parents are asked to mention to their son when there is a message for the teacher so that it can be brought to the teacher's attention and responded to in a timely fashion.

### **Group Meetings**

The school arranges various meetings for parents throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content, health, safety and welfare issues, alongside any specific arrangements. A meeting for new parents is organised each June and regular afternoon teas are arranged throughout the Summer Term.

### **Communication with other schools and outside agencies**

We recognise that children have diverse needs and we are supported by various external agencies and groups of professionals who provide advice and support in meeting these needs, so that children may participate fully in school life. Communications with outside agencies should be conducted in the manner outlined in this policy.

### **Training and Communication**

Training on this policy forms part of the induction process for all new staff. All existing staff will receive regular, relevant training on how to implement and adhere to this policy.