

Ferndown Middle School



Parent Communication Policy

| Policy to be reviewed by governor committee | Full Governing Body |
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| Frequency: | Annually |
| Reviewed: | 26 Feb 2020 |
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This policy has been reviewed in line with the 8 principles set out in the Single Equality Policy and an initial screening Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

Parent Communication Policy

Purpose and Scope

The governing body of Ferndown Middle School encourages close links with parents/ guardians and the community. It believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

We use the term 'parents' to refer to anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil or anyone caring for a child. *(From herein, where 'parent' is used, it relates also to guardians/ carers).*

Our staff are committed to providing a high quality education to your child, and constantly improving their learning. As part of this, communication with parents is very important to us and we always strive to ensure that we communicate well with parents.

In our school 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.

General Communication

The school office welcomes parents and other stakeholders to the school and always strives to help sort out any queries or problems in a professional and friendly manner. If the school office is unable to help for any reason they will contact the person who is able to help as soon as possible. The school office is staffed from 8.15am to 4.15pm (an answer phone system is in place for times when staff are unavailable to answer the telephone).

1) Aims

Ferndown Middle School aims are to ensure all communications are clear, comprehensive, two-way, timely and respectful.

It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and that communication between home and school is effective. We recognise however that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; equally we recognise that parents also have very busy lives.

2) Responsibilities

This section explains the school's and parents responsibilities.

2.1 School

The school will undertake to ensure that:

- Parents and children have clear lines of communication.
- We communicate in a timely fashion.
- Parents are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Key policies, documents and procedures are stored in areas that are accessible and useful to the entire school community (e.g. the school website).
- Parents are kept informed of the progress of their child at regular intervals.
- We inform parents about the types of data that the school holds concerning pupils, why that data is held and, where necessary, who it may be shared with.
- If we cannot share information we will explain why.

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- The curriculum is clearly communicated to parents.
- Parents are informed of forthcoming events within appropriate timescales.
- All school related communications will be treated as confidential.

2.2 Parents

Parents will undertake to:

- Read all communications issued by the school and respond/act upon communications when appropriate.
- Visit the school website for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, school achievements and other useful documents.
- Raise issues or concerns with the school at the earliest opportunity in the most appropriate manner*. Appendix 1: *Parents guide to contacting Ferndown Middle School*
- Inform the school of medical conditions/allergies, along with medical documentation of these conditions.
- Inform the school of all up-to-date contact information (phone numbers, addresses, etc), including that of emergency contacts.
- Inform the school of child protection matters or legal issues.
- Not discuss school issues on Social Media.

3) How we communicate

Depending on the nature of information or issue being discussed, we typically communicate with parents through the following means:

- ParentMail.
- The school website (where the information is relevant to all parents).
- Letters - some will be posted home, some are sent out via ParentMail and/ or sent home via pupils. Copies of class letters sent home can be obtained from the school office.
- Telephone calls.
- SMS Text in emergencies.
- In person (through a face-to-face meeting).
- Whole school information is included in a Weekly Parent Bulletin which is published on Friday of each week during school term time, via ParentMail and published on the schools website. Hard copies of the bulletin are available from the school upon request.

Parents are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address to facilitate prompt and effective communication. However, if we are unable to obtain a current email address for any parent, communications will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post. Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as “friends”.

If you wish to communicate with any member of staff - including senior leaders - please do so via letter, telephone, the school office email: office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk or in person at the school office.

4) School Website

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including:

- Inclusion information
- Pupil Premium information
- Show My Homework Link
- Uniform list
- Holiday dates
- School prospectus
- It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

5) Severe weather and emergency closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents via text or email. Parents should also tune in to local radio and check the school website. Please note that during these times, high demand can often lead to a slow-down in web services.

6) Contacting the School

For information on how to contact the school please see the '*Parents' Guide to Contacting Ferndown Middle School*', which can be found on the schools website. (Appendix A.)

Notes in student planners are by far the best way to get a message to a tutor/ teacher promptly and should be used for the majority of everyday communications (for example, messages about homework. Parents will need to ask children to give their diary to a teacher to read the note.

Teachers want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so, however, the majority of teachers' time is taken up teaching and preparing for lessons, and their responsibilities can extend beyond the classroom. We have also agreed with staff that there is no expectation that they should respond to queries during their personal time.

6.1 Telephone

Please use the school office number to leave a message for a teacher to contact you.

- Office staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible.
- If a call is urgent, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please inform the receptionist who will attempt to find a senior member of staff to speak to you.
- Please note lessons will never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

6.2 Email

We ask parents to use the following email address: office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk

For the purposes of administration we require all emails to go to a central email address. However, all emails will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff to whom the email was addressed.

Please note that all emails should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed.

Please note Teachers are not in a position to check emails constantly throughout the day and the school does not expect work emails to be checked during a teacher's personal time.

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6.3 Letters

Letters can be handed into, or posted to, the school office. As with emails all letters will be treated with full confidentiality and the responses will be made by the member of staff to whom the correspondence was addressed. Please note that all letters should specify the member of staff to whom the query is addressed. Please let the office staff know if the letter contains information about your child which you would like the tutor/ teacher to receive urgently.

6.4 Absence

If a child is absent, parents are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence by telephone or email. For full details please refer to the Attendance Policy (copy available on the school website).

7) Reasonable response to parental communication

When a parent contacts the school by telephone or by email a member of staff will aim to return the telephone call or email at their earliest convenience but within two school days. A member of staff may well be out of school or teaching a full timetable on the day a telephone call or email is received meaning that a same day response may not be possible and should not be expected.

All urgent responses will be dealt with as quickly as possible by the member of staff concerned.

In a non-emergency, contact will be made within two working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within five working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply. Any delay in the response will be communicated to parents.

7.1 No Response

If you have not received a response from the school within the expected time frame (see above) please contact the school office who will follow up your enquiry.

8) Appointments

If necessary, parents can visit the school to ask questions, to gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with either the child's tutor, class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team as appropriate.

Parents are asked to contact the school office to make an appointment giving a brief outline of what they wish to discuss.

We will aim to make appointments within 5 working days and are willing to meet either before (from 8.30am) or after school (3.40–4.30 pm) to fit in with parents.

If parents are unable to keep an appointment, they should give adequate notice to the school. Parents should not expect to meet teachers during the school day, unless by prior arrangement.

Parents are asked not to approach teachers if they meet them outside school as this does not allow for confidential discussion.

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

9) Resolving Concerns

We always aim to work with parents in the best interests of their children and to deal with any issues that may arise in a prompt and professional manner. Most issues can be quickly and easily resolved through effective communication and working in partnership.

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Parents have a right to expect the best for their children and they have a right to express their concerns, though at the same time, teachers and pupils must be allowed to work and learn in a safe and secure environment.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a respectful and reasonable way towards members of school staff both face to face and by telephone or in writing. All members of the school community have a right to expect that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn.

10) Acceptable Behaviour and Working in Partnership

We want to foster a community where people are treated with respect and courtesy. It is important that parents do not approach a child other than their own about a concern. It is also important that parents do not try to address their concerns directly with other parents where those concerns relate to incidents that have happened in school between children.

We are happy to meet with parents to discuss and try to resolve concerns. However, inappropriate types of behaviour towards staff, pupils or other parents will result in termination of the meeting/or in removal of the offending parent(s) from the premises. The following are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone
- physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him
- the use of aggressive hand gestures
- threatening behaviour – in person, over the phone or in writing
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person
- pushing, hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking
- spitting
- breaching the school's security procedures
- use of inappropriate language either face to face, over the phone, in writing or through electronic communication (including social media)
- persistent demanding/ intimidating email correspondence to a member(s) of staff (persistent being more than twice on the same matter)
- inappropriate communication about the school or individual named member of staff through social networking sites and/or casual communication.

The school expects that all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence, abuse and intimidation (verbally and in writing) and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence. The above is not an exhaustive list, but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour. In serious cases, the police may be called.

Similarly, we will not tolerate confrontational or inappropriate behaviour in public spaces around the school (such as the corridor), where this behaviour could potentially be witnessed by pupils.

11) Procedure to be followed if a parent behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community

If a parent behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or an appropriate senior member of staff, will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation.

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A verbal or written warning will be given by the Headteacher or appropriate member of senior staff, in the first instance, to a parent whose behaviour continues to be unacceptable.

In the event of a repeat of the behaviour, or in serious cases during the first incident, the Headteacher will write to the parent imposing a ban from the school site. The ban will vary in length depending on the seriousness of the behaviour. Parents will be informed in the banning letter of their right to appeal the ban; any appeal should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors.

If the aggression or intimidation is repeatedly taking place in any written form or verbally, over the telephone, the Headteacher will issue an initial warning and any further communication from the parent of a similar kind will then result in a restriction over written, telephone communication with the school for a specific period of time, which will be subject to review.

In imposing a ban/ communication restriction the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises or that their written or verbal communication will be restricted, subject to review. They will also be advised what will happen if the ban is breached, (e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow).
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included. Where communication breaches harassment legislation the police will be informed.
3. The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban/ restriction.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for students being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified. As will arrangements for communicating with parents over any safeguarding or critical educational matters involving their child if they are subject to a communication restriction.

Ferndown Middle School has a close working relationship with the local police. Unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed.

The Governing Body itself may take action where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation. In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the school's health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

12) Complaints

Most complaints are best dealt with informally. If you have any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with your child's tutor/ teacher at the earliest opportunity to prevent matters escalating to the formal procedure.

The formal procedure will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Formal complaints should be made to the school's Complaints Co-ordinator via the office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk

A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by email to office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk and you will be asked to complete a complaints form. The Complaints Co-ordinator will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (letter or email), within 3 school days.

Parent Communication Policy

A copy of the General Complaints Policy can be found on the schools website.

13) Monitoring and review

Communication with parents is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach, to improve the process further. The efficiency of this policy will be continuously monitored throughout the year by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

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This policy will be reviewed bi-ennially by the Governing Body.

Appendix A: Parents Guide to Contacting the School

At Ferndown Middle we have an open door policy and parents/guardians are always welcome at school.

We ask parents to be understanding of the fact that staff are not always available to meet with you without notice and we encourage parents to make appointments with staff to discuss any concerns that you may have regarding your child.

Contacting the school

If you have a general query, not specific to your child, please contact the school office or visit the school website.

All urgent responses will be dealt with as quickly as possible by the member of staff concerned.

If you have an urgent enquiry that can't be discussed with your child's teacher/ tutor please contact the school office for advice.

If you have a safeguarding concern, please contact a member of the school office and ask to speak to Mrs Allen or Mrs Giddens.

If the matter is not urgent please follow this step by step guide.

Step 1: Decide who the best person to contact is

- If you wish to discuss an issue about your child you need to speak with your child's tutor.
- If you wish to discuss a piece of work or homework you need to speak with the teacher who set the work.
- For SEND matters please speak with Mrs Hitchins.
- If you are unsure who the best person is please ask the school office for advice.
- If you wish to leave a message for your child during the school day please contact the school office no later than 1.00pm. (Please keep this to important/ urgent messages)

Step 2: Arranging to speak with a tutor/ teacher

- Please contact the school office in person or telephone 01202 876556 or email office@fernmid.dorset.sch.uk
- If you call before 8.15am or after 4:15pm an answer phone will take the call.
- Please ask for an appointment to speak with the relevant tutor/ teacher/ Year Leader. Please specify whether you would prefer a telephone appointment or a meeting.
- A member of the office staff will contact the tutor/ teacher. Staff will aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within two working days (during term time). Part-time staff may take longer to reply.
- Letters for requests to speak with tutors/ teachers should be delivered to the school office.

Step 3: What should I do if the issue is still not resolved?

In nearly all cases meeting with the form tutor or subject teacher resolves the issue, however if you need further assistance please contact your child's Year Leader via the school office.

- Year 5: Mr Bebbington
- Year 6: Mr Nesbitt
- Year 7: Mrs Baynham
- Year 8: Mrs McKinley

Please note that the Headteacher and the senior leadership team are kept informed of matters and will become involved as necessary.

Step 4: Informal Complaints

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Step 5: Formal Complaints

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