Outcomes First Group

PARENT/CARER - SCHOOL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Acorn Park School

Updated September 2026

Outcomes First Group

PARENT/CARER SCHOOL COMMUNICATION POLICY

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1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

We recognise that some of the children and young people we educate, and support have often had difficult schooling experiences previously, and that this has likely been impactful for them and their parents/carers. We seek to understand these experiences to meet parents and carers where they are at, to emphasise the importance of developing positive and supportive relationships between parents/carers and the school. An inclusive person-centred, trauma-informed and neurodivergence affirming ethos is at the heart of our approach, and we encourage parents/carers to contact us with any information, questions, and concerns that arise during their child's time at the school at the earliest opportunity.

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by explaining:

- How the school communicates with parents/carers to keep them informed about their child's progress and overall well-being in school.
- How parents/carers can contact the school and teachers so they can get an informed response as quickly as possible.
- Setting out clear and supportive expectations for communication between parents/carers and the school.
- Providing guidance on what to do if additional support is required for effective communication.
- This policy applies to all communications, including in-person meetings, telephone calls, visits to the school, and online environments.

1.1 Policy Framework

This policy has been developed in line with the following policies:

- School Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Mobile and Smart Technology Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Information Security Policy
- Code of Conduct & Ethics (for team members)

Most of the above policies can be found on the school's website https://www.acornpark.org.uk/contact/or can be provided by the school office on request (Please see Section 6.0 for school contact details).

Please note that the terms "our teams" and "team member/s" include everyone working with children in our school and Outcomes First Group's services in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, consultants, agency staff, and contractors.

2.0 HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

2.1 Methods of Communication

We use a variety of methods to ensure effective communication with parents and carers, including:

- **Telephone Calls** - for urgent communications and to discuss specific concerns or issues regarding a child.
- **Email** - for non-urgent queries, updates, and information sharing. The iSams Email Wizard or Parent Portal must be used for all email communication with parents.
- **Text Messages** - sent only from a central school admin system for important reminders and announcements.
- **Meetings** - scheduled to discuss student progress, address concerns, and foster collaborative relationships between parents/carers and team members. These may be in-person or online.
- In-person meetings at the school site must be pre-arranged by appointment only and the school site security and safeguarding procedures must be adhered to at all times when at the site.
- **School Based and/or Classroom-Based Apps** - used to share updates, homework assignments, and direct communication between parents/carers and school/teachers, including DOJO
- **School Calendar** - available on the school website and regularly updated with important dates and events.
- **School Website -** key information about the school is posted on our website, including:
    - School times and term dates
    - Important events and announcements
    - Curriculum information
    - Important policies and procedures
    - Important contact information
    - Information about before and after-school provision
    - Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Co-Heads of school or Equivalent will:

- Ensure that communications with parents/carers are effective, timely, and appropriate.
- Monitor the implementation of this policy.
- Respond to questions and concerns escalated by parents within 24 hours.
- Seek to keep parents/carers informed regularly of any ongoing issues in a proactive and open way.
- Seek support for themselves and their teams to ensure that parents/carers are communicated with respectfully.
- Endeavour to recognise and understand the parent/carer perspective in any communication.

All Team Members are committed to maintaining a professional and supportive dialogue with parents and carers. The following expectations are set for team members:

- **Timeliness:** Respond to parents' communications promptly, aiming to reply within one working day during core school hours (8:30 AM – 4:00 PM).
- **Respect:** Treat all parents/carers with respect and consideration, regardless of the nature of the concern or query. Endeavour to recognise and understand the parent/carer perspective in any communication. Seek support where appropriate to ensure their own communication to parents/carers is positive and respectful.

- **Clarity:** Provide clear, concise, and jargon-free information to ensure parents fully understand the communication.
- **Professionalism:** Use appropriate language and tone and ensure that all communications adhere to the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy. Team members must not use their personal phone or devices to contact parents.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all communications, in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.
- **Supportive:** Offer assistance and guidance, directing parents to additional resources or support services when necessary.
- **Collaboration:** Work with other team members to ensure parents receive timely and accurate information.
- **Escalation:** Escalate concerns expressed by a parent/carer to the appropriate school leader to enable proactive support. For example, tutor to Assistant Head, Assistant Head to Headteacher. Safeguarding straight to DSL and Headteacher or equivalent.

3.0 WHAT WE ASK OF PARENTS/CARERS

We ask that parents/carers:

- Raise any issues or concerns they have directly with the school in the first instance, rather than use social media platforms. This ensures that concerns can be addressed promptly and appropriately.
- Communicate with the school respectfully and provide all relevant information.
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner.
- Check for communications sent from the school.
- Follow the school's complaint procedure (available on the school website).
- Understand that team members may be unable to respond to their communication outside of core school hours (8:00 AM – 4:00 PM), or during school holidays.

4.0 EXPECTATIONS FOR RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

We recognise that discussions regarding children may sometimes evoke strong emotions. We are committed to providing a supportive environment where these concerns can be addressed constructively. Whilst emotional responses are understandable, respectful dialogue is essential for conflict resolution. We reserve the right not to respond to communications that are aggressive or disrespectful. If threatening behaviour is displayed towards team members, in-person or online, we may need to contact the police and may also have to consider banning the offending adult from entering the school premises in future.

If parents/carers find it challenging to communicate respectfully due to the emotional nature of their concerns, we encourage them to seek support. This support can include utilising school support services. Parents and carers can request to reach out to the school clinical team, or family liaison teams for assistance. This support will enable the framing of one another's challenges constructively and supportively. The ultimate goal is always to foster a collaborative and respectful partnership between parents/carers and the school, ensuring the best outcomes for our children and young people.

5.0 PARENTS WITH ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

We aim to make communications accessible to all. We have taken the following steps to achieve this:

- All communications are written as clearly and concisely as possible.
- Accessibility is considered when designing/updating the school website, such as providing alt text for images (a brief description of the image) and using text colours that show up clearly against the background colour. Team members will endeavour to provide information in an accessible format (e.g. through support with their clinical team members, such as Speech and Language Therapists).
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Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- School announcements and communications in accessible formats.
- Translations of important documents and communications for those who speak languages other than English.
- Use of technology to support effective communication.

Please contact the school office to discuss these needs.

6.0 SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

Acorn Park School, Andrew's Furlong, Mill Road, Norwich, NR16 2HU

01953 888 656
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