

Sonning Church of England Primary School

Communications policy



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Introduction

At Sonning Church of England Primary School, we aim to equip our children with the skills they need to make positive choices in everything they do. Like the wise man who built his house upon the rock (Matthew 7:24-25), our vision is "building strong foundations for the years ahead". Guided by our Christian values and our school values of Love, Courage, Respect, Aspiration and Curiosity, we provide a happy, inclusive and encouraging environment where children, adults can flourish and develop as individuals. We offer a challenging, broad and relevant curriculum that enables all children (regardless of their background, faith, race, ability or gender) to do their best and achieve well.

Effective communication is an integral part of Sonning School's continual strive for excellence and to ensure that all our children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It is essential if all members of the school community, the wider local community and other stakeholders are to work together to support and enhance the learning and development of our children. Hence, through a spirit of partnership, trust is built, understanding is developed and shared, decisions made and appropriate communication action taken, as necessary.

Part of building strong foundations for pupils is ensuring we have built strong foundations with our families and the community. Along with our Trust vision of 'unlocking the future', our vision is our driver for fostering positive relationships and clear lines of communication. This policy describes the methods of communication used and available for use within Sonning Church of England Primary School to establish efficient and effective communication between staff, pupils, parents/carers (and other family members) and the wider community.

It should be noted that all references to 'parents' should be read as 'parents or carers'.

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Objectives

Our communications play a fundamental role in shaping Sonning Church of England's reputation and its relationship with pupils, parents, families, staff and the wider community. Our communications should:

- Ensure that our often time-poor parents and families receive the logistical and other information they need, in the most appropriate range of formats and in a timely and efficient manner, to enable their children to maximise the benefit they derive from their time at the school.
- Effectively convey a sense of the school's vibrancy, positivity, compassion, Christian ethos and high academic standards, both to those directly associated with the school and to the wider community.
- Support efforts to attract prospective parents to the school by projecting a welcoming and positive image and celebrating moments of success.
- Help to enlist support and offers of help from the wider community which can benefit the school and its pupils.

Principles

The following principles should underpin all communications at Sonning Church of England Primary School:

- Be clear, concise, timely and appropriate.
- Be measurable, where appropriate.
- Be open, honest, ethical, impartial, respectful and professional.
- Be delivered through the most pragmatic and efficient method.
- Take account of all school policies.
- Be confidential and protect privacy, if necessary.
- Be entirely compatible with the school's mission, vision and values.
- Provide the opportunity for appropriate response.
- Be ever conscious of the cost of communication transmission.

Key audiences

Sonning Church of England Primary School's key audiences for communication are as follows:

- School governors and staff.
- The school's pupils.
- Parents, guardians and carers of the pupils.
- Prospective parents/carers.
- St. Andrew's Church community and the wider Christian community.
- Sonning village residents and the wider local community.
- The ecclesiastical parish of Sonning (our catchment area).
- The management of The Keys Academy Trust.
- Other schools in The Keys Academy Trust.
- Local businesses, trusts, charities and other groups.
- Suppliers, contractors, external agencies and volunteers to the school.
- School alumni.
- Other school stakeholders, including the Oxford Diocese, Ofsted and SIAMS.

Guidelines and how to get information

Sonning Church of England Primary School's communications need to reflect statutory requirements and what is considered essential or important to the smooth running of the school. The professional integrity of the school will be upheld at all times. Discussions about pupils, events or plans must not be discussed with a third party, if it may damage

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the school, or affect the identity or privacy of a child.

Governors, parents/carers, volunteers, suppliers and visitors to the school are expected to uphold this professional outlook and therefore fully respect confidentiality, privacy, appropriate communication response, the use of social media and the ethics of the school at all times. Staff follow the Staff Code of Conduct and adhere to social networking and online guidance as part of the E-Safety Policy.

The Headteacher and the school office are the main originators of information. All audiences, especially parents/carers and pupil family members needing information, are asked to use the school website as first port of call, backed up by the App. Parents are asked to only telephone or email the school if necessary.

There is a home-school set of expectations which are highlighted to parents each year as a reminder of what is expected.

Separated parents

We are mindful of supporting our separated parents and ensuring that communications reach the right people. Our Separated Parents Policy can be located on our website. Where we have separated parents who both wish to receive communications, we will ensure they are both noted as a first or second contact on our communications system so they both receive key information. In addition, we will ensure key documents, such as the end of the year report, are shared with both parents.

Methods of communication

At Sonning Church of England Primary School, we use a range of communication methods with the aim of ensuring all families have access to the information.

Method of communication	Main audience/s	Additional information
School website (and associated app)	All stakeholders Prospective parents Ofsted / SIAMS Other regulatory bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the key part of our communication. Often, other communications sent from other sources (i.e. our school email system) will have links to our website (especially for calendar dates). The website is regularly updated, and should be the first point of contact for everyone, especially parents, prospective parents, governors and all other stakeholders.
School newsletter	All stakeholders Prospective parents Ofsted / SIAMS Other regulatory bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the second key information source. The newsletter, created on Microsoft Sway, is produced weekly. It is included on the website as well as the link being sent out to families. The newsletter provides the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reminder of the school's vision and values. A calendar of upcoming events with links to the website's calendar (where applicable). Weekly message from the headteacher (or designated individual). Detail on collective worship from that week. Reminders or updates. Highlights from events or achievements of pupils. Signposts to local information and events.

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Email / letters	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters and/or emails are sent to families as necessary. • These communications may also request permission or consent for an event. • Where possible and appropriate, information will be included in the newsletter as opposed to sent via email or letter. • Where possible and appropriate (e.g. for a school event), the letter and information sent out will be attached to the website's calendar page, so that information can be retrieved from a central point.
Book bags / reading bags	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is used as a 'backup' to the website and newsletter by class teachers and school office staff for key information and 'reminders'. • This may also include posters or vouchers that cannot be scanned and sent electronically (e.g. World Book Day tokens). • Reports may be sent home in book bags (sealed).
Social media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter • Instagram • Facebook • LinkedIn 	All stakeholders Prospective parents Ofsted / SIAMS Other regulatory bodies Local and wider interested parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of our families prefer seeing pupils' work, activities and learning via social media. To provide a social media presence for whichever platform is preferred, we share to a range of the social media sites. • Social media also allows us to promote the school's activities and offer to a wider community. • Links from Twitter are embedded into our newsletter each week. • Facebook and LinkedIn are used less frequently, and are used more to signpost to the website or highlight key celebrations or successes. • Social media may also be used for advertising (events, school vacancies etc.).
Microsoft Teams	Pupils Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative home learning is sent home and marked via Teams. • Meetings for classes that are online will also be scheduled through Teams. • Each pupil has an account which is part of our tenant (organisation), so parents must join meetings using their pupil's account.
School prospectus	Prospective parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school prospectus is updated every two years. It is designed to give an overview of the school, its vision and values, key features, expectations and general offer (including wrap around care and extra-curricular). • The school prospectus is available on the website (electronic) and in hard copy.
School gate and playground presence	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A daily, term-time opportunity for family members to talk with the Headteacher and all teachers or school officials.
Sandwich boards	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative school information displayed, including site warnings, event notices or information for upcoming events.
Notice boards	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative school information displayed, including lunch menus and other information.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is used less frequently, due to the increased level of online communication.
Reports	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual report on each child's attainment and progress is sent to parents at the end of each summer term. Any mid-year reports may also be produced (e.g. for parents' evenings).
Parents' and Carers' meetings (called Parents' Evening meetings)	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual report on each child's attainment and progress is sent to parents at the end of each summer term
SEND meetings	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents of a child with SEND will have additional meetings to discuss their child's Individual Support Plan (ISP). For pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), there will also be an annual review.
Other meetings	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be times throughout the year when parents may want to arrange an additional meeting. These are facilitated by the school office.
Homework, creative home learning and reading records/planners	Pupils Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home learning and reading records/planners are sent home on a regular basis, with parent feedback encouraged. Some of this may be sent via Teams, and some will be in book bags.
Parent information sessions	Parents/carers and other family members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings may be held in school on various topics, as well as information shared and distributed to parents within the class.
Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)	All stakeholders Local community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PTA is a key organiser of events and fundraising source. Our active and generous community are what helps us thrive as a school.
Local community groups	All stakeholders Local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local community groups and charities support the school throughout the year. We communicate with these groups to request support and provide assistance where we can.
Local press and media	All stakeholders Local community Prospective parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have regular articles published in The Parish Magazine. The school engages with a range of media outlets, including local news sites and BBC Berkshire radio.

Communication from home to school

There are a number of key reasons for families contacting the school. These are as follows:

- **Absence:** Parents are asked to inform the school, by email or telephone, on the first day their child is absent. A recorded message can be left with the school office.
- **Updating contact details:** It is the responsibility of parents to keep the school up to date with contact numbers, change of address and any medical information pertinent to their child.
- **Requesting a meeting:** parents may call to request to speak to a member of staff. Please note that teachers will be in class for the majority of the day, and often

There are a number of key communication methods which families may require. These are as follows:

- **In person:** Conversations with members of the leadership team at morning drop off (on the school gate) or with class teachers at afternoon collection

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- **Telephone and email:** Used to contact the school office (spsadmin@sonning.wokingham.sch.uk), in particular to check information and to inform the school of pupil collection changes. Messages can also be passed to class teachers and other staff via this email address.
- **Urgent communication:** For any urgent communication during the school day, please call the school office on 0118 9693399.

Internal communication

To ensure an effective, communicative and efficient staff team, the following are used:

- The Headteacher, teachers and staff meet daily and in regular diarised meetings, as part of the effective running of the school and to exchange information or news.
- The Full Governing Body (FGB) meets once a term and sub committees/teams also meet each term, at least.
- All teachers, staff and governors have school email addresses for internal, regular and ad-hoc communication.
- The school staff room is a daily source of information exchange.
- Governors often visit the school and attend classes, as part of their duties.
- The Headteacher and school office are at the centre of all other telephone, email or conversational communication within the school.

Emergency and extraordinary event communication

This is covered in the School Rainbow Plan/Health and Safety policies.

Communications measurement

The school closely monitors the success of its communication and the governor School & Community (S&C) Committee meet regularly to assess the school's attainment against the objectives outlined in this policy. This committee reports to the FGB each term.

In addition, formal measurement occurs in the form of an annual staff surveys (January) and an annual parent/guardian survey (May), where communication features high in the list of questions. A pupil survey is also held in May each year.

The S&C committee also welcomes and actively encourages feedback about communications effectiveness throughout the year.

Governors regularly visit the school to talk to teachers, staff, parents, contractors and other visitors, with a view to gaining an impression of communication success. Any issues are raised with the Headteacher and the S&C Committee.