

Introduction

Ridgeway Primary School understands the importance of clear and effective communication with all stakeholders (pupils and families, governors, Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are pupils and families and this policy addresses the practical ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and school.

Clear, effective and consistent communication with families and with the wider community is vital to how the school is perceived. Good communication enables the school to share our aims and values through keeping families well-informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that families play in supporting their children's education and the wider school community.

Methods of Communication

We continually seek to refine how we liaise with families in order to meet our aim of providing you with all the information needed to be active partners in your child's learning journey.

We have set out below the main methods of communicating with you, and this policy should be read alongside the Home-School Agreement which is available on the school website and Weduc.

I want to know about...	Where I can get it from...
Expectations for children, staff and families	Home-School Agreement
My child's progress	Class teacher Individualised communications plan (if necessary) Informal/formal meetings Parent-teacher meetings End-of-year achievement report
School policies Key calendar dates Olive Dining menu Acorns	School website Weduc Newslines
Whether the school is open or closed (weather)	School website Open Check https://opencheck.atomwide.com/default.aspx
School clubs School trips School events (including PTCA)	Weduc The school office PTCA https://www.pta-events.co.uk/ridgeway/#.Xd-tVej7RaQ
Special Educational Needs	SEND Policy School Information Report/Croydon Local Offer The school's SENCO
Child Protection/Safeguarding	Safeguarding Leads
ParentPay/consent forms	The school office
My child is unwell/absent	Weduc The school office
Home learning	Weduc
Further information on curriculum	Yearly information meetings School website Family workshops Weduc Newslines
Giving feedback to the school	Annual questionnaire Class teacher/HST
I have a concern/complaint	Class teacher

Families' Communication with School

At Ridgeway Primary School, we believe that:

- every child is entitled to the best learning opportunity and we are committed to working in partnership with families to deliver this
- the child is the most important consideration of any conversation
- a three-way process of communication between the child, home and school is essential for all children to thrive and flourish
- all communication should be open, accessible, timely, respectful and appropriate
- communication is about more than information exchange; it is about the development of positive relationships
- communication involves active listening
- when families understand what a school is aiming to achieve and work with the school to achieve this, they are able to help their own children more

Communication Protocol

We have developed the following protocols to ensure that all communication meets our aims above.

We are committed to being a listening school and always welcome families who want to meet with our staff. However, we do recommend that an appointment is made if you have a particular issue you wish to discuss as this will ensure the member of staff you wish to see is focussed on you.

Appointments can be made in a number of ways:

- sending a note in with your child addressed to the class teacher
- asking the member of staff at drop off/collection
- telephoning the school office to leave a message
- emailing the school office to forward a message on (via Weduc if not strictly confidential)

Generally speaking, we always recommend that you discuss concerns with your child's class teacher in the first instance, as this will be the person who will know you and your child best. If this doesn't provide you with the information you need or you feel the issue hasn't been resolved, then we ask you to refer to the Complaints Policy.

Staff availability

Staff will endeavour to meet with families as soon as their timetable allows. Please bear in mind that teaching commitments have to be met and that there are other circumstances that lead to staff not being available at school. All teaching staff have Preparation, Planning and Assessment (PPA) time as part of their working week, and there are also times when they may be absent for training or liaison with other schools or agencies to ensure we are continually reviewing and updating our practice in school.

Email

The proliferation of email traffic over the last few years has allowed us to communicate more efficiently and effectively. In order to ensure all parties (staff, governors and families) find that email use continues to be effective and not too burdensome, please follow the steps below:

- **Recipients** – Check who you are sending it to before doing so. Bear in mind that the 'Reply All' option should only be selected if you really need everyone on the distribution list to see your reply. It should be used sparingly.
- **Identifiable** – Ensure that the pupil's name and class is included within the subject or body of the email.

- **Purpose** – Make sure that it is clear in your email what the purpose of the email is - do you require a specific action or is the email for information only? Information-giving is the best use of email – be careful with any other purpose, particularly any that involves emotion.
- **Specific** – If you are writing about more than one subject, do so in separate emails. Messages are more easily missed when embedded in a wide-ranging communication and can lead to confusion.
- **Concise** – Keep the email as a whole brief, and **include a clear subject line** as a header so people can identify swiftly if it is relevant to them. Lengthy, regular and detailed email communications can be difficult to decipher and therefore to respond to.
- **Review** – Re-read your email before you send it - a basic thing, but easy to forget.

Other key points to note regarding email communication:

- Staff will respond to emails as soon as possible, within a maximum of 5 working days (although this may be longer in extreme circumstances). If a longer time is needed to gather information, acknowledgement of the email will be sent within the 5 working days. Due to teaching during school hours and planning sessions after school, staff are unlikely to have the opportunity to respond immediately.
- Our preferred method for email communication is via Weduc – these emails are accessed by all office staff. If your email is strictly private and confidential, please email directly to the school office email address rather than via Weduc.
- It is important that families do not email staff directly. All email communication should come through the school office (ideally via Weduc if not confidential), or through specifically set up email addresses, e.g. for the SENCO.
- Defamatory or abusive emails will not be responded to.
- If the number of emails from a family member is becoming frequent and excessive, the school will put in place a plan to limit the email communication to enable staff to support all children and families equally. If emails continue when a family member has been asked to limit their emails, then they will not be responded to unless the school feels it is necessary.

Before and after school communications

- Families are welcome to give quick messages to staff when dropping their children to school or at the end of the day. If the child's class teacher is not outside, a message can be passed through another staff member including the Headship Team (HST) member on duty.
- During drop-off and collection time, staff's priority will be to support the children. If one family member is dominating a staff member's time, or if the presence of a family member is having a negative impact on the children or staff member, then the class teacher or HST will liaise with the family member about this. Families who try to have in-depth conversations with staff at morning drop-off / end of the school day will be preventing staff from supporting children; staff will stop a conversation if it is more than a quick message.
- The HST are on door duty daily for quick chats. If a family member has need for a longer conversation with a member of the HST at drop-off, please arrange this through emailing the school office via Weduc, or talking to them when they are on duty.

Parent-Teacher Meetings

- Families are provided with the opportunity to meet their child's teacher during the Autumn and Spring terms for a parent-teacher meeting. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Families are able to see their child's work during these meetings. The meeting duration is 10 minutes.
- We encourage families to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being at any time throughout the academic year.

SEND

- See the SEND Policy for further information regarding the process for supporting children with SEND.

Workshops and information evenings

- We arrange a wide range of workshops and information sharing meetings throughout the year. These are planned based on familial feedback, alongside standard topics we know are important to families. We gather feedback on these workshops and meetings, which is used to drive improvements in how these are run to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Phone calls

- There will be occasions when news and issues will be discussed over the phone. It is the family's responsibility to keep the school office informed of any changes to contact details.
- Any family member wishing to speak to a specific member of staff via telephone should arrange a mutually convenient time via the office, either by telephone or via Weduc.

Ad-hoc or other pre-arranged meetings

- Other meetings can be arranged by the teacher if there is a concern to discuss. A meeting of up to 30 minutes should be enough time to discuss issues raised. If one family member is asking for regular meetings or trying to have a disproportionate amount of time, staff may need to decline their request to meet. This is to enable equity for all, and to enable staff to manage their workload. The school encourages families to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers endeavour to see families as soon as possible by agreeing a mutually convenient time. Staff may agree on an agenda prior to a meeting to enable the best use of time.
- We welcome the presence of any other adult the family member wishes to invite to a school meeting, such as an interpreter, support or liaison e.g. Parent Support Services. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a family member with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication. The school reserves the right to decide who will attend school-related meetings. Staff may choose to take their own notes during these meetings, though school may also ask a member of staff to attend the meeting as a notetaker to have a record of the meeting.

Photographs/Learning

- We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with families and the wider community, in newsletters, on the school website or in the governors' report to families. Permission must be obtained before using photographs of children or their work, as detailed in the permission form sent to families. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher and by the school office.
- Children, staff and families are not permitted to take personal cameras to school or to use cameras, phones or other personal devices to take images, unless authorised by a member of the HST.

Behaviour

- Staff will cease to communicate with any family member who communicates in an abusive, inflammatory or threatening way. The family member will be informed that their behaviour is inappropriate and a plan will be put in place to ensure staff are protected in the future. See the Behaviour Policy for more information.