

Introduction

Ridgeway Primary School understands the importance of clear and effective communication with all stakeholders (pupils and parents/carers, 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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers well-informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting their children's education and the wider school community.

Methods of Communication

We continually seek to refine how we liaise with parents/carers 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 sent to you at the start of each year.

I want to know about...	Where I can get it from...
Expectations for children, staff and parents	Home-School Agreement
My child's progress	Class teacher Individualised comms plan (if necessary) Informal/formal meetings Parents consultations End-of-year achievement report
School policies Key calendar dates Chartwell menu Acorns	School website
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)	ParentMail 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	The school office
Home learning	Fronter
Further information on curriculum	Yearly information meetings School website Parent workshops
Giving feedback to the school	Annual questionnaire Class teacher/HST
I have a concern/complaint	Class teacher Complaints Policy on school website

Parents/Carers 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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers 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

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 parents/carers 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 parents/carers) find that email use continues to be effective and not too burdensome some simple guidelines are listed below:

- Try to decide if you are sending the email for the purposes of information-giving or some other reason: information-giving is definitely the best use of email, but be careful with any other purpose, particularly any that involve emotion.
- Try to 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.

- 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.
- If you are writing about more than one subject, do so in separate emails or it could prove confusing, and messages are more easily missed when embedded in a wide-ranging communication.
- The best approach is to re-read your email before you send it - a basic thing, but easy to forget.
- 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?
- Please note that defamatory or abusive emails will not be responded to.
- It is important that parents/carers do not email staff directly. All email communication should come through the school office or through specifically set up email addresses, eg for the SENCO.
- Staff will respond to emails as soon as possible. Due to teaching during school hours and planning sessions after school they may not have the opportunity to respond immediately. Staff will respond within 5 working days (this may be longer in extreme circumstances). If a longer time is needed to gather information, they will communicate this within the 5 days.

Open-door policy

- Ridgeway has an open-door policy. Parents/carers are welcome to bring their children into school to help settle their child in the classroom. By Year 3, most children like the independence of walking to their classroom by themselves. Parents/carers can come and give a quick message to staff during this time if needed. Some children will be dropped to our Learning Zone for breakfast club. During drop-off time, staff's priority will be to settle the children. If one parent/carer is dominating a staff member during this time, or if the presence of a parent/carer is having a negative impact on the children or staff member, then the class teacher or Headship Team (HST) will liaise with the parent/carer about this. Parents/carers who try to have in-depth conversations with staff at morning drop-off 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 parent/carer has need for a longer conversation with a member of the HST at drop-off, please pop into one of their offices and see if they are available. If they are unavailable, please contact the main office to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Parent consultations

- Parents/carers are provided with the opportunity to meet their child's teacher during the Autumn and Spring terms for a parent-teacher consultation. 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. Parents/carers are able to see their child's work during these meetings. The consultation time is 10 minutes.
- However, we encourage parents/carers 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 parental feedback, alongside standard topics we know

are important to parents. 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 parents'/carers' responsibility to keep the school office informed of any changes to contact details.

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 parent 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 parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers endeavour to see parents/carers 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 parent/carer wishes to invite to a school meeting, such as an interpreter, support or liaison eg Parent Support Services. 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. 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 parents and the wider community, in newsletters, on the school website or in the governors' report to parents. Parental permission must be obtained before using photographs of children or their work, as detailed in the permission form sent to parents. 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 parents are not permitted to take in 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 parent/carer who communicates in an abusive, inflammatory or threatening way. See the Behaviour Policy for more information.

Covid-19 Annex - Home-school Communications Policy

Due to the ongoing nature of Covid-19 and the restrictions in place to protect the safety of our school community, the following amendments to the home-school communication policy will be in place until further notice.

Communication Protocol

We are committed to being a 'listening' school and always welcome parents/carers who want to meet with our staff. However, face-to-face meetings will not be possible in most cases to protect our staff and to minimise the spread of coronavirus. If you have a particular issue you wish to discuss, you should request an appointment via the school office, indicating who you would like to contact. Appointments can be made in the following ways:

- telephoning the school office to leave a message
- emailing the school office to forward a message on

Meetings will take place via telephone in the first instance, or if a more in depth conversation is needed this can be arranged via Zoom.

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, which outlines the steps you can take in seeking a resolution

Staff availability

Staff will endeavour to talk with parents/carers as soon as their timetable allows. Parents should be aware that teachers have after school meetings and commitments, which impact their availability. .

Open-door policy

The Ridgeway open-door policy will not apply under current Covid-19 restrictions in order to satisfy our risk assessment and to ensure the safety of our school community.

- Parents/carers should follow the drop-off and collection arrangements for their child's class, including arriving at the correct times, waiting at the designated points and following the one way systems in place
- It is imperative that drop-off times and collection times are strictly adhered to as they ensure the safety of all on site and ensure the smooth movement of children into and out of school
- The HST and other staff members will be on site during drop-off and collection times to support children and families
- Parents should vacate the site quickly and should not linger
- Parents and carers should ensure that social distancing guidelines are followed at all times
- During drop-off and collection time, staff's priority will be to ensure the children move into the school building as quickly as possible. Parents/carers will not be able to have conversations with any staff at this time. If you need to pass on a message to the class teacher, please do so by emailing the school office.

- The HST will be on door duty daily to ensure the site is safe and that parents and children follow the drop-off and collection arrangements. Parents/carers will not be able to have conversations with the HST at this time. If you would like to speak to a member of the HST, please email the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a phone call.

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.
- Meetings will take place by telephone or Zoom. The class teacher will contact you to agree a mutually convenient time. If the meeting is to take place via Zoom, the school office will send you the link to join the Zoom meeting at the agreed time in advance of the meeting.

School office

Please only come to the school office if it is essential to do so. In the first instance, all queries should be raised by phone or email.

When visiting the school office, you must sanitise your hands on entering the building. Please respect social distancing at all times and stand back from the office window when talking to office staff. If there is already another parent/carer/visitor in the vestibule, please wait outside the school building until they have vacated the area.