



STRATFORD GIRLS'
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Communications Policy

Disclosable under Freedom Of Information Act 2000	Yes
To be published on website	Yes
Policy ownership	
Governor committee:	Curriculum Leadership & Management
Department responsible:	Senior Leadership Team
Post-holder: (title and name)	Jacqui Cornell, Headteacher
Linked procedures	
Responsible person	Jacqui Cornell
Implementation date	February 2018
Planned review interval	Every three years
Planned next review date:	February 2021

Rationale

Stratford Girls' Grammar School recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (students and parents/carers, governors, outside agencies, national bodies etc), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents, students and staff, and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and school.

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), or written (through letters, email or notes in planners). For routine communications ie parent bulletin, Head's letters School letters, email by Schoolcomms will be the usual means of contacting parents.

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time, running clubs or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents can feel frustration if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

For this reason the school has been particularly pro-active in encouraging use of modern communications methods, with key staff email addresses being made available to parents on the secure parents' area of the website, and all parents/carers encouraged to provide an email address for prompt and effective communication.

Surveys indicate that the majority of parents are very satisfied with the two-way communications they have with school. However, this does not mean that the school always gets things right and this policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively and clearly.

Aims of the policy

1. To improve the quality of service given to students at Stratford Girls' Grammar by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, students and other stakeholders.
2. To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the school, parents and students on key service areas.

Part One: Parents

Service Standards at Stratford Girls' Grammar School

Communication with Parents

We aim to respond to requests for information, concerns, and requests for references or progress within two working days (term-time only). Replies might take the form of a holding response before a follow-up with further information to follow. Please note that there may be occasions, for example staff being on a trip, when it is not possible to respond within this timeframe. Responses to letters might take longer.

We understand that parents can be frustrated by events or matters affecting their child. However, we ask that parents communicate with the School and the staff in an appropriate fashion and using appropriate language. We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. (*See separate Complaints Policy*)

Communications Procedure

Initially, communications should be addressed to the appropriate Head of Department for academic concerns, or a student's Tutor for low level pastoral concerns. For more serious concerns, please contact the Head of House/ Head of Sixth Form.

There is a system in place for monitoring the nature of complaints at the school in order to identify trends and address any recurring issues. (*See separate Complaints Policy*)

Communication methods

Communication between the school and parents/carers operates in the following ways:

1. Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening in the summer preceding the year of entry to the school. All prospective parents receive a school prospectus, via the school website, with details about the school's policies and procedures.
2. New Y7 parents are invited, along with students, to an induction evening in June where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented.
3. Y7 Parents are invited to a 'Meet the Tutor Evening' in the October of Year 7 to meet their daughter's tutor and review how they have settled into the school.
4. Parents are invited to attend a Progress Evening each year to review the academic progress of their child with subject teachers, and have the opportunity to meet with their child's Head of House/ Head of Sixth Form if requested.
5. Parents of each year group are invited into school as appropriate, to cover issues relating to the relevant year group of their child (eg options for Y9, Introduction to GCSEs for Y10, Sixth Form Open Evening for Y11, an Introduction to the Sixth Form for Y12, Higher Education Evening for Y13).
6. Communication about student progress takes place formally through both a full and interim report. Parents will receive one full written report and two interim reports on their daughter per year.
7. Details about events at the school are published in the calendar on the website, on the school's Twitter feed, or via Schoolcomms email to whole school or specific groups of parents. Queries about events at the school may be made by phone to the school or by email.
8. The school website is a key vehicle for communicating in a variety of ways, along with the weekly parent bulletin and termly Head's letter: alerting parents and students to forthcoming matters; celebrating the life of the school; petitioning for parental views; publishing the results of consultations, etc.
9. The school has all newsletters, events and key information on an up-to-date website including an A-Z Directory. Copies of letters sent to parents are also available on the secure parents' area of the website.
10. Parents have access to the email addresses for all staff via the secure parents' area of the website and in the students' planners.

Consultation

Consultation between the school, parents/carers and students takes place in the following ways:

1. Consultation processes address key service areas such as the school curriculum, changes to the timing of the school day, uniform, the framework for parental consultation evenings, homework, the school's reporting system, primary school transition, and the quality and accessibility of the school's materials, etc.
2. Questionnaires are issued to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (ie, through electronic surveys, email). The annual Parents Questionnaire is issued

- following May half-term. An overall Parent Perception report is produced in the second half of the summer term and is communicated to parents via Schoolcomms.
3. All Governors' Committees include Parent Governors and all meet at least once a term. They are consulted on a wide range of issues. Parent Governors can be contacted through the school.
 4. School reports are issued with a reply slip inviting parents to comment on the report they have received.
 5. The elected House Councils and Student Executive are consulted on a range of key issues relating to the school. Meetings take place at least every half-term, with additional meetings for specific issues.
 6. Members of the Senior Leadership Team and other members of staff undertake Quality Assurance Reviews regularly and discuss learning with students as part of this exercise.
 7. As part of the school's system of Departmental Self-Review, students are encouraged to be involved in Student Voice feedback to review the teaching and learning within departments and contribute their own thoughts on departmental strengths and areas for development.
 8. Students are encouraged to be constructive about how the school can improve provision and are actively engaged in projects such as visits to other schools or conferences with students from other schools to compare culture, ethos and organisation.
 9. Consultation between external agencies takes place with a view to improving the service provided by the school; for example, the school is an active member of the South Warwickshire Education Partnership (SWEP) which includes the Area Behaviour Panel (ABP). The school is also an active member of the Successful Selective Girls' Schools network (SSGS) and the Grammar School Heads' Association (GSHA).

Part Two: Staff

Internal Communications

The school recognises that finding the time to respond to communications can be challenging for teaching staff, especially when they have a busy teaching day. Nonetheless, timely communications are important for a school to be able to function effectively and this policy aims to set out the standards on which we can rely for communications within the school.

Bulletin, Briefings and Meetings

Where possible the school will attempt to group communications into a single source for ease of staff access. The main communications route is the weekly Bulletin which is emailed to staff as early as possible on the Friday of the preceding week. Items for inclusion should be sent to the Head's PA by Thursday lunchtime. Please be mindful of the confidential nature of communications in it – do not print copies unless absolutely necessary, and do not leave copies where students or parents/carers can access them. There is a weekly Briefing at 8.45am on Tuesdays in the staff room. All staff in school on a Tuesday morning are expected to attend. For reasons of brevity only SLT make announcements, although staff are free to approach SLT for announcements on their behalf. Notes from Briefing are circulated by email as soon as is practicable following the meeting. The staff room Noticeboards (SNB) are also used to circulate information. There is a schedule of meetings which is published for the year. This includes a rotation between staff meetings, MLT, Head of House meetings and department meetings.

Email: internal

The school relies on efficient and effective communications, and provides an IT network, including laptops, for all staff to support electronic communications. Staff should therefore ensure they are familiar with the school's policies (*ICT: Acceptable Use Policy – Staff (Technology)*); *ICT: Acceptable Use Policy – Staff (Social Networking and Internet Sites)*; and *Staff Protection Policy*

(Code of Conduct) with respect to the exclusive use of their school email address for communications and other guidelines.

Some internal emails will be sent for general information only, and these will not necessarily require a reply. For emails which do require a response, a prompt reply (generally within two working days) is encouraged and appreciated to ensure that important information is received in good time, and staff are able to act on it. It is helpful to colleagues if emails requesting the return of information have a deadline for that return and thought is given to other's workload at the time of the request. If you are copied in on an email (cc) no reply is expected.

It is good practice to use auto replies to indicate (eg over holidays, or during residential) that replies should not be expected until a specific date – or until school is open.

Staff are also encouraged to use the boomerang app so that they can choose their own working hours, ie late evenings or weekends, but show an awareness of the work day times for others.

Staff are also encouraged to indicate the school's working hours or their preferred working hours as part of their email signature.

Communications with Parents

When staff write letters or messages to be sent to groups of parents via Schoolcomms, these should be sent to the Headteacher's PA in the first instance, via email. These should be sent as a word file.

With communications with individual parents, it is important for your Head of Department, Head of House/ Head of Sixth Form, or SLT line-manager to be copied in, to ensure effective information flow. Emails to parents should follow the same formal style and tone as letters. If a member of staff is in any doubt as how to respond to parents, advice should be taken from the appropriate line-manager or member of SLT.

All letters sent to groups of parents are listed on the bulletin and copies can be found in the W drive, Letters sent home folder.

Consultation with Staff

Open communications are encouraged within the staff. Members of SLT all operate an open-door policy, and welcome discussions with staff. Communications with staff also include formal staff consultations when appropriate. The views of staff are systemically sought through the following ways:

- meetings are run in such a way as to encourage discussion whenever possible
- a middle leader is seconded to SLT on an annual basis and can provide a channel for communication
- staff governors provide a link between the staff body, SLT and governors
- staff surveys are conducted on matters which are of concern to all staff
- the Workload and Well-Being Group provides a forum for discussion and also communication with SLT.
- There is a suggestions box in the staff room.

Part Three: Students

Staff-Student communication parameters

Staff are keen to promote communication between the school and its students, especially when linked to learning and the development of the school. However, it is important that students

understand that staff are not required to respond to communications from students outside of normal school hours and the working week.

Communications via email between staff and students

Students are encouraged to talk with members of staff, rather than email them. If emailing is helpful or necessary then it must be done from the student's school email account (...@sggs.org.uk) to the member of staff's email account. Personal email addresses will not receive a response.

Emails should be addressed appropriately, eg Dear Mr Giles, and signed off with the student's name, ie Thank you, Jill Smith. The email should be worded appropriately and not in text message language, or too 'chatty', ie please email as if you were speaking to the member of staff.

Staff are strongly encouraged to email the correct student or number of students, ie not a blanket email to all of Year 7 about work for their specific teaching group. If staff are emailing students about work, sufficient time should be given between the email being sent and the work expected ie, two working days (term time only).

Staff should aim to respond to emails either by replying by email or verbally within two working days (term time only).

Students should not email staff (and vice versa) outside of school hours (8.45am to 4.30pm), at weekends or during the holidays. Staff are not required to answer outside of school hours. If you receive a reply it is because the member of staff is able to and has chosen to. This is not the school's expected practice nor should it be an expectation that students have.

Missed work due to illness

If a student is off school due to illness, they should, in the first instance, ask a friend for the work they have missed WHEN they are better. Students should NOT email staff on the day they are off asking for the work they are missing. Staff are not expected to respond to such emails. On return to school, a student should talk to their teacher/s about what they have missed, rather than email them.

If a student is off for more than three days, their parents/carers should contact their Head of House/ the Head of Sixth Form to arrange for work to be sent home if appropriate.

Missed work due to a pre-arranged absence

Staff want to support students who have absences due to trips or events. If a student knows they are going to miss school/lessons for a pre-arranged trip/event, they should give their teachers two lessons notice that they will be absent and indicate which lessons they will be missing (NB: a double lesson on one day counts as one lesson). Telling the teacher in the last lesson prior to the absence or emailing them on the day of the absence or after departure is not acceptable. Staff are not expected to respond to such requests. Students need to be prepared and organised. Students in lower years can ask their Tutor or Head of House for support in collecting work if they are unsure what to do.