



Communications Policy

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Introduction and aims

This policy aims to promote the essential partnership between the school, parents/carers, staff, students and the wider community through efficient and effective communication. Good communication should allow and encourage all stakeholders to participate in the development of the school and support our overarching aim of 'Once an Alder Granger, always an Alder Granger'. Our communications policy has been created by our community, for our community.

The school believes that engaging and working with all stakeholders, particularly our parents/carers, is vital in our role to provide children with an excellent education and a safe learning environment, as well as helping our students become well rounded citizens with a strong set of values. We believe that effective communications underpin our school ethos. We remain committed to being an open and approachable school that engages with our community and puts children at the heart of our decision making. As a school, we also greatly value your support in enabling us to do this in an effective, timely and sustainable manner.

Key Features of Our Communications Policy

There are three key features of Our Communications Policy that we believe should underpin all our communications involving the school:

1. 'Our Communication Statement'
2. Alder Grange School's 'Golden Rules of Communication' guide.
3. 'What to do if I have a concern – a five step approach'.

We hope that they collectively provide clarity and a framework for all that ensures that all communications are both positive and purposeful and place the child at the centre of any discussion or decision.

Our Communication Statement

This statement is displayed in the reception of both of our main school and Sixth Form reception areas:

We strive to be an open and approachable school that remains committed to engaging with all stakeholders. We would like to thank the overwhelming majority of visitors and parents/carers who are consistently pleasant and polite in all their communications with the school. However, it is important to note that we have a duty of care to our staff as well as to our students and we remain wholeheartedly committed to both.

All staff at the school are expected to show respect for everyone that they come into contact with during the course of their duties by being polite and courteous at all times. They will endeavour to deal effectively with any reasonable request they receive from visitors and callers to the school. The school also expects all those who visit or contact our school to treat our staff respectfully and courteously at all times. The same level of courtesy is expected with email communication. We strongly encourage all those who may wish to communicate with our school to do so in a manner that does not discriminate against any member of our diverse community and consistently adheres to our Communications Policy. In particular, any correspondence should have due regard to the 'Golden Rules of Communication' and the 'What do I do if I have a concern - the 5 step approach'.

We take any rude, aggressive or threatening behaviour towards any member of our staff seriously, whether this is during a telephone conversation, email or during a visit to the school. If a caller or visitor's behaviour is deemed discriminatory, rude, abusive, aggressive or if a raised voice is used towards any member of our community, they will be advised to stop their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, we will terminate the call or ask the visitor to leave the premises.

Parents/carers and visitors should be aware that a request for an appointment must be made in advance using our 'Contact Us' Form. We greatly value the support of parents/carers and the wider school community and thank you for adhering to this notice.

Alder Grange School's Golden Rule of Communication:

All communication should be kind, thoughtful and respectful

There is no place for rude, aggressive or threatening behaviour. Those who adopt this manner will be issued with a warning and a reminder of the policy from a member of the senior leadership team. Any further instances would mean the school would not engage with future communications.

Our business hours are 8am-4.00pm

Staff are not expected to be available in evenings or weekends. We strongly recommend using our 'Contact Us' Form for all communications.

We will respond within 3-5 working days

All communications via Reception/website will be reviewed by the next working day and either answered by the reception team, or forwarded to the relevant member of staff. If your query requires a teacher to respond, we aim to reply within 3-5 working days dependant upon the teacher's timetable

We want our communication to be timely as this is in the best interest of our students.

The greatest challenge we face is the high volume of communications. We will prioritise based on need. If there is no reply within this time frame, parents are encouraged to use the contact us facility or telephone school to check if this is related to a staff absence.

Consider which communication method is best for the situation

Some conversations are best face-to-face, whilst others, given their nature, may be quickly resolved over the phone or via email.

Members of our community must book an appointment with a member of staff in advance

This is to avoid disappointment. Many of our staff will be teaching or in meetings during the course of a school day. Anyone arriving to reception unannounced will be advised to request a meeting via the 'Contact Us' form on the website.

What to do if I have a concern - A 5 Step Approach

1. Should I be contacting school? Who might be better placed to help?

The school is keen to play its role in supporting all students but must also acknowledge and accept that it does not have capacity to deal with all issues, particularly those that take place outside of school hours. On a regular basis, the school is asked to resolve issues that would be better placed with another service. We need the support of the Police, the NHS, Children's Social Care and parents/carers to reduce the volume of these communications and allow us to prioritise our workload effectively.

2. Clearly and calmly outline your concern and ask for the school's view prior to making a decision.

We appreciate that emotions can run high when something has happened that may involve your child and we remain committed to supporting students and their families with regard to this. However, it is important that any concern is presented to school in a clear and calm manner and avoids making any assumptions prior to the school being given the opportunity to gain a better understanding of events.

3. If necessary, school will look into it and inform you of the timescales.

The school will outline any necessary actions and inform you of the timescales involved. This will depend on existing commitments and the urgency of the situation. Whilst we appreciate that a quick resolution is in everyone's best interests, patience and understanding are a key feature of this step and are greatly appreciated.

4. Discuss findings and agree on the next steps.

The member of staff will discuss the situation having considered all perspectives and seek to outline any necessary support as well as any associated sanction that may be felt necessary. There are likely to be actions for all parties involved. All views will be listened to carefully and form part of the decision making process.

5. School and home/agency to work together. The issue may need to be revisited. It is a process.

Whenever we deal with an incident, we know that the initial interventions may not be enough to resolve the situation on the first occasion alone. We expect all parties to continue to work together, to share information promptly, and remain committed to collectively finding a positive resolution.

Thank you - these simple steps make all the difference.

Communication as a school

How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents/carers up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in school. We recommend that all parents/carers monitor the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

Alder Grange School uses the following communication tools between parents/carers and students, allowing access to a range of information including (but not limited to)

EduLink <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetables • Attendance • Homework • Achievement points • Behaviour points 	Google classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for learning • Curriculum maps • Homework
ParentMail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-urgent notices • Updates • Letters • Information about trips and visits 	Text Message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance alerts
Social Media Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as a positive tool to celebrate school life, events or student achievements.	School website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School times and term dates • School ethos • Admissions • Uniform • Policies • Homework • Pupil Premium information • Sixth Form • Staff vacancies • Important events and announcements • Curriculum information • Important policies and procedures • Important contact information

Meetings

- Virtual parents' evenings via School Cloud
- Face to face parents' evenings
- The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.
- Parents of students with special educational needs (SEND), those who are looked after, or who have other specific requirements may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

Phone calls

We will contact you by phone should we need to speak the same day about your child

Reports

Grade Collection Summaries are given to pupils to take home 3 times per year.

Once per year you will receive a more detailed pastoral report

How parents/carers can communicate with the school

The following communication methods are available to all parents/carers and the advice offered below is designed to support efficient and effective communication for all.

'Contact us' form

If parents/carers need to speak to a specific member of staff about a non-urgent matter, they should use the 'Contact Us' form on the school website. This should be the primary method in which to make contact with the school. Parents/carers should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact.

EduLink

Parents/carers are encouraged to report absences using the EduLink App. This should be done as soon as possible on the morning of the absence to avoid a call being sent. EduLink should also be used to review contact details and notify us of any changes. There is also a range of information available, including, timetables.

Phone calls

We recognise that there may be occasions where a phone call is the most appropriate channel of communication. Where possible, queries will be forwarded to the relevant colleagues in school but it is important to note that many colleagues will have existing commitments that may prevent them from taking the call. If it is not possible to speak to the relevant member of staff (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a mutually convenient time. We aim to make sure parents/carers have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 3-5 working days of the initial request.

Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their child's progress or wellbeing, they should use the 'Contact Us' form feature.

Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school. Parents who need help communicating with the school are invited to discuss any additional support they may need. We will try to identify a family member, a member of staff or where possible, an external agency, to provide the following:

- School announcements and communications being translated into additional languages
- Organising an interpreter for a meeting or phone call

We will endeavour to make any additional arrangements as necessary. Please contact the school reception to discuss these or use the 'Contact Us' form.

Communications with your child throughout the school day

It is important to note that students are asked to not contact their parents/carers directly during the school day. Similarly, we ask parents to contact the school rather than their child throughout the course of the day. This is because we want to avoid any unnecessary worry (a common issue being a child contacting home to say that they are unwell, without having notified school and this prevents us from being able to support your child effectively).

How Students Should Communicate In School

Effective and positive communication between students and staff is an essential part of school life. The school welcomes and encourages students to engage in conversation with all members of staff and we believe that the positive relationships between staff and students underpins our friendly, supportive and productive learning environment. When communicating with a member of staff, students should:

- Address the member of staff with their formal title e.g. Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Sir etc. Students should not refer to staff by their first name
- Be respectful. Students should not talk over, answer back, raise their voice or walk away before the conversation has concluded
- Follow all safe and reasonable instructions at the first time of asking.

Communications with parents/carers during the school day

In line with the school's mobile phone policy, phones should not be seen or heard anywhere on the school site. Provision will be made, where appropriate, for students to contact home.

Communications with peers

In line with the school's 3R's expectations, respect should be a central theme in all interactions with peers. Communication with other students should be polite, kind and thoughtful.

We would expect the same standards of behaviour of all members of our community beyond the school day. We recognise that social media is a communication method that brings with it both positives and negatives. It is not our role as a school to investigate incidents that take place on an evening and weekend and strongly recommend that you adopt the same principles online as you would in school.