



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Communications Policy

2024 - 2025



Written: September 2024
Reviewed: September 2025

Mr Garcia

Love, Learn and Shine Together with Jesus

Statement of Intent

At St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School, we understand the importance of the relationship between parents, pupils and the school.

We have a strong inclusive ethos where pupils have positive relationships with staff members and with each other. This policy sets out the aims of the school with regards to internal and external communication, and the responsibilities of the school, its staff members and parents.

The school aims to promote effective communication between pupils, members of staff, parents, stakeholders and all members of the school community. The school's objectives are to:

- Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which helps to keep parents well-informed about their child's educational progress and any other matters related to their child's overall wellbeing.
- Improve the quality of education by making sure there is a robust process in place for consultation between the school, parents, staff members and pupils on key areas.
- Monitor and evaluate communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parents and members of the school community.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure and protocols to be used when staff use email, text and telephone communications both internally and externally.

Introduction

The use of email both within the school and the wider community is an essential means of communication. In the context of school, email should not be considered private and staff should assume that anything they write or email could become public. Therefore, they should ensure that they are professional, maintaining a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives.

The use of SMS should only be used by the school office, or Communications leader and on authorisation of the Head Teacher. We have introduced School Gateway as an app in which we can send messages which are free to send, receive and for families to reply to, reducing the need for sending SMS messages.

The use of telephone communication should remain professional at all times and notes should be made of conversations held with external stakeholders e.g., parents. The school landline should be used for all communications, however, when staff must use their mobile phones then their number should always be withheld before making the call, this is the case even if the telephone is a school-owned device.

1. Legal framework

1.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

1.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Data Breach Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Social Media Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Bad Weather Policy
- Lockdown Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Acceptable Use Agreement

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Placing key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community
- Communicating the curriculum clearly to parents
- Informing parents of all school events within appropriate timelines
- Regularly keeping parents informed of their child's progress
- Informing parents about the types of data that the school holds concerning pupils, who control the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent and easily accessible; written in a clear and plain language; and free of charge.
- Ensuring that parents understand their right to access information about their child that is held by the school.
- Ensuring that parents also understand their rights to rectification, erasure, restrict processing, data portability and object to processing

- Ensuring that consent obtained from parents, or pupils, regarding the processing of personal data, is freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the individual's wishes. Consent cannot be inferred from silence, pre-ticked boxes or inactivity.
- Ensuring that individuals are informed of their rights to withdraw consent and are provided with easy ways to do so.
- Ensuring that information regarding staff pay and conditions of service is made available to all who are employed at the school.
- Taking steps to ensure parents who do not have access to the internet can still access the information that is included on the school website.

2.2 Staff members are responsible for:

- Ensuring the principles and procedures of this policy are followed
- Communication proactively with parents about pupil progress, and helping parents to support their child's learning
- Ensuring that relevant information is passed on to supply teachers
- Updating classroom planning files with specific pupil information
- Logging any parental communication on CPOMS (including office staff)

2.3 Parents are responsible for:

- Reading the key communications circulated by the school and responding/acting on communications e.g., by attending meetings, completing online forms, etc.
- Engaging with verbal communication, so that they understand the information being communicated to them
- Logging onto the school website for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, school achievements and other useful downloads
- Informing the school of medical conditions or allergies their child has, along with medical documentation relating to these conditions
- Informing the school of child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation
- Raising any issues or concerns they may have with the school office or the class teacher.

3. Internal and External Communications

3.1 Staff are issued with a weekly diary and a briefing takes place every day at 8.25 am

3.2 All staff members are issued with the staff handbook annually and are aware that it is on the staff shared drive should they need to refer to it throughout the year.

- 3.3 Written communications to staff members are delivered via email and CPOMS where appropriate.
- 3.4 Staff member's personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies without their consent
- 3.5 Under no circumstances will staff members' personal details be shared with parents
- 3.6 Staff members will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites, or accept 'friend' requests.
- 3.7 Parents will be contacted through the following methods:
 - Emails
 - Letters via School Gateway
 - Text messages
 - The school website
 - School newsletters
 - Parents meetings
 - Class assemblies
- 3.8 Parents are given a login to Seesaw, ParentPay and School Gateway so that they can access texts, emails and letters.
- 3.9 For general enquiries, parents are required to ring the school office, which is open from Monday to Friday between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm on 0151 226 1871
- 3.10 For non-urgent enquiries, parents are required to email the school using the school email address: matthews-ao@stmatthewscps.co.uk
- 3.11 All emails to the school will specify the member of staff that the query is addressed to and will be delivered via the Head Teacher in the first instance.
- 3.12 All emails to the school will be treated as confidential unless there is a specific reason not to do so.

4. Continuous Home-School Communication

- 4.1 Each week, year group teachers will write to parents detailing the work that has been covered, this will be detailed in the weekly newsletter.
- 4.2 The school regularly updates parents on ways in which they can support pupils' development and progress through activities to be completed at home
- 4.3 The school subscribes to electronic communication systems, Seesaw, School Gateway and ParentPay, which are utilised to achieve effective and consistent communication with parents. The school will ensure that:
 - If any changes are made to the service, or manner in which data is processed on the system, parents are informed and consent will be renewed.
- 4.4 Any parents who cannot be contacted via the messaging system will be contacted via another method set out in this policy.
- 4.5 All homework is online, accessible via SeeSaw, this is to be completed in the child's homework book. There is no requirement to print any sheets, children can simply write their answers.
- 4.6 Class teachers will be available to discuss pupils' progress and any concerns with parents at a pre-arranged appointment time.
- 4.7 A meeting will be held by the pastoral lead for new parents before their child's entry into school.
- 4.8 If a pupil is absent from school, and the school has no indication of the reason for the absence, the school will contact a parent on the first day of absence, to find out the

reason for the absence.

- 4.9 If no contact can be made with any named parent, the school has the right to contact the education welfare officer to ensure the pupil's well-being and safety.

5. Email Communication

- 5.1 Email and internet access will be used in line with the school's Data Protection and Data Breach Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement.
- 5.2 All members of staff will have their own email account.
- 5.3 Emails will not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Staff members will consider the best way to communicate according to each situation.
- 5.4 Staff members will not engage in personal correspondence with pupils/parents.
- 5.5 Communication between pupils and parents with staff members will be carried via the school email address: matthews-ao@stmatthewscps.co.uk, the class teacher will send their response to the office staff who will then email the parents.
- 5.6 Chain emails will not be allowed
- 5.7 Staff will ensure that the sending of attachments is limited to only work-related emails.
- 5.8 Under no circumstances will adverts be embedded into emails.
- 5.9 Parents will only use the school office email addresses to contact staff directly.
- 5.10 Parents will be aware that teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day.
- 5.11 The school aims to respond to all email enquiries within 5 working days. Staff and parents are aware that part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule.

6. Managing Emails

All staff will be given a school e-mail account which should only be used for school business. This is to minimise the risk of receiving unsolicited or malicious emails and avoid the risk of personal contact information being revealed. The following rules apply:

- 6.1 School emails should only be accessed on school devices, no personal devices should be used under any circumstances
- 6.2 Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils, parents or conduct any school business using their personal emails
- 6.3 It is the responsibility of each account holder to keep their passwords secure
- 6.4 If any issues/complaints are involved then staff are advised to cc the Head Teacher.
- 6.5 The standard disclaimer (Appendix A) should be attached to all emails sent externally.
- 6.6 All emails should be written and checked carefully before sending.
- 6.7 Emails created or received as part of your school job will be subject to disclosure in response to a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 6.8 Internal emails should be acknowledged on receipt by staff and not ignored even if only replying 'Thanks', 'Ok' or using the 3 button replies at the bottom of the emails.
- 6.9 All emails from the Head Teacher should be acknowledged and replied to.
- 6.10 Staff should try to send emails between 7 pm and 7 am although with the introduction of only using school devices it is up to staff if they choose to open or send emails after this time. This also applies during weekends and school holidays. During weekends and school holidays, it is the staff's choice on whether to answer emails but they should be aware that this is the school method of communication during school closure so should read them regularly even if not immediately replying.
- 6.11 If staff do not have an immediate answer to an external email, then the email should be acknowledged with an expected completion time.
- 6.12 Emails should be organised into folders and frequent housekeeping should be carried out on all folders and archives.
- 6.13 Emails of short-term value should be deleted.
- 6.14 When you access your emails all school ICT and e-safety policies should be applied.
- 6.15 Staff must immediately inform the Head Teacher or SLT if they receive an offensive email.
- 6.16 Any suspicious emails should be reported to Liverpool IT Services and should not be opened.
- 6.17 When composing your message to a parent or non-staff member you should always use formal language, as if you were writing a letter on headed paper
- 6.18 Christian names of staff and parents should not be used when emailing parents.

- 6.19 Keep the number and relevance of email recipients, particularly those being copied, to the minimum necessary and appropriate
- 6.20 Do not send whole school emails unless essential for school business – we have a whole school briefing each day at 8.25 am which staff should attend to keep up to date with happenings in school.
- 6.21 Do not send or forward attachments unnecessarily. Whenever possible, send the location path to the shared drive rather than sending attachments
- 6.22 Emails should be checked regularly throughout the day
- 6.23 If appropriate, activate your 'out-of-office' notification when away for extended periods
- 6.24 Never open attachments from an untrusted source
- 6.25 Do not use the email system to store attachments. Detach and save business-related work to the appropriate drive/folder.
- 6.26 Setting to automatically forward or delete is not permitted. Staff are expected to manage their accounts.
- 6.27 Assess whether the information can be sent by other secure means
- 6.28 Always use encryption on sensitive data

7. Meetings

- 7.1 A program of all staff meetings will be set out in the school calendar.
- 7.2 All formal meetings will be minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda
- 7.3 Time will be set aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in teamwork and to contribute to the school's reflection on priorities, activities and plans
- 7.4 For all formal meetings, minutes will be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff members
- 7.5 Minutes of meetings will be saved on the staff shared drive, in a marked subject folder.
- 7.6 When parents wish to organise meetings with members of staff, they will first contact the school office to request a mutually convenient time.
- 7.7 Lessons will not be interrupted to accommodate parents needing to speak to a teacher
- 7.8 For non-urgent meetings between parents and members of staff, the school will aim to meet parents within 5 working days.
- 7.9 The school will determine the level of urgency in requests for meetings, which will aid in managing multiple demands.

8. School Prospectus

- 8.1 The prospectus and school website will be utilised to communicate information to the school community.
- 8.2 The school prospectus will be updated each Summer Term
- 8.3 The content of the prospectus will complement the work of the school, as well as contain information about the most recent activities and successes of the school, including progress, priorities and performance.

9. Emergency Communication

- 9.1 All parents will ensure that the school has their latest contact details, including their address, telephone number and email address so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency.
- 9.2 If a pupil is seriously ill or injured, the school will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contact(s) via telephone.
- 9.3 Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or text message directing them to a special message posted on the school's website.
- 9.4 If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or similar problems, an update will be posted on the website at least once a day.
- 9.5 The local radio station, Greatest Hits Radio and BBC Radio Merseyside will broadcast a closure announcement in the event of the school closing due to adverse weather or another emergency, under the Bad Weather Policy.
- 9.6 In the event of a serious incident, the school will follow its Lockdown Policy

10. Accessing Information

- 10.1 Under an individual's right of access under the GDPR, personal information (such as educational records), confirmation of data processing, and other supplementary information will be shared with individuals who request access.
- 10.2 The procedure below will be followed in terms of SARs:
 - The request will be made in writing to the business manager and will be responded to within one month of receipt.
 - The period of compliance may be extended by a further two months where the requests are complex or numerous. If this is the case, individuals will be informed within one month of receipt of the request, with an explanation of why an extension is required.
 - A pupil, or the parent of a pupil, will have the right to access the information that the school holds about the child in question

- Individuals have the right to access their personal data free of charge
 - Where requests are manifestly unfounded or excessive, a reasonable charge for the administrative costs of providing the information will be applied, or the request will be refused.
 - If any request is refused, the individual will be informed of their right to complain to the supervisory authority and to a judicial remedy without delay within one month.
- 10.3 Under the GDPR, remote access to a secure self-service system will be given to provide individuals with direct access to their personal information.
- 10.4 In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, private data and public records can potentially be accessed by lodging an FOI request.
- 10.5 The procedure below will be followed in terms of FOI requests:
- The requests will be made in writing to the school, stating the name and address of the requester, as well as a description of the information requested.
 - Successful FOI requests will be responded to within 20 working days from receipt of the request unless the request does not comply with the procedure set out in the school's Freedom of Information Policy.
 - The school holds the right to charge the requester a fee if complying with the request would cost the school over £450
 - Certain information will not be shared, such as that explained in Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

11. Monitoring and Review

- 1.2 The efficiency of this policy will be continuously monitored throughout the year by the Communications Lead.
- 1.3 This policy will be reviewed every year.
- 1.4 The next scheduled review date for this policy is July 2025.

Appendix A

The information in the e-mail is confidential and intended solely for the purpose to whom it is addressed. If this message is not addressed to you, please be aware that you have no authorisation to read the rest of the e-mail, to copy it or furnish it to any person other than the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail, please bring this to the attention of the sender and destroy the original message. St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School does not guarantee that the e-mail is free of viruses, interceptions or interference.