

## Communication with Parents and Carers: Policy and Guidance

Author(s):	MOR/EN
Governors Committee:	C&P
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Review Cycle:	Every Year

Copies of this policy and the policies listed above are available on the school website [www.cedarsacademy.org.uk](http://www.cedarsacademy.org.uk) and from the school office.

This policy applies to all staff, pupils, parents/cares, trustees and partner agencies we may work with now or in the future.

This policy also applies to those students who are educated off site. For example, those students accessing local further education college provision.

### Rationale & Mission Statement

Ours is a community of learning, where secure partnerships create opportunities for students, staff, governors, parents and carers alike to participate and grow to become intellectually, emotionally and socially *fit for life*.

We are a specialist school for young people aged 3 to 19 years with physical, sensory and medical needs, speech, language and communication disorders, autism, and a wide range of other complex needs often associated with emotional vulnerability. It is within this context that we have developed our Communication with Parents and Carers: Policy and Guidance.

At Cedars Academy we believe that it is important to work in partnership with parents\* and that clear communication between school and parents is important to help students benefit as much as possible from their time in school.

We are committed to improving parents' understanding of our school and in encouraging parents to play an active part in their child's education. We welcome discussion with parents on all aspects of their child's education, their personal and social development and care and welfare. This policy describes how staff will communicate with parents about these issues and how we would like parents to communicate with us.

*\* Throughout this document the term parents also refers to carers.*

We will communicate with parents in a variety of ways - these are described below. This forms the basis of our policy for Communication with Parents. However, we are aware that the way that we communicate with you needs to be personalised to meet your individual needs. Please contact your child's tutor/key person to discuss how you would like us to communicate with you.

### Key person

In order to work closely with parents supporting all aspects of the children we work with, Cedars Academy has established a **'KEY PERSON'** system. That is, all parents are allocated a key person who works closely with their child as a **main point of contact in school**. This will typically be a member of your child's tutor team. (More detail of the role can be found in KEY PERSON ROLE: Policy & Guidance in the Policies section of the website).

### Visiting School

Parents are always welcome at school. Because of our large catchment area across and beyond Gateshead we miss the regular daily contact with parents that most mainstream schools enjoy. If you are visiting school to attend a meeting, a member of our Admin team will welcome you and show you to your meeting room or to where you can wait before the meeting.

Parents are always welcome to join us for special events and assemblies that are held throughout the year – you will be invited to these events through the school newsletter or a letter of invitation.

### Contacting School by Telephone

The school office is open from 8.00am – 4.30pm, Monday – Friday. The telephone number is (0191) 4874595. Please contact a member of the Admin team if you would like a message to be passed to your child's tutor/link worker or Access to Learning team.

If you have an urgent enquiry that can't be discussed with your child's tutor/key person, please contact a member of the Admin team and ask to speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Group.

Details of how to contact staff are included at the end of this document.

### Home - School Communication Books

Children will be provided with a home - school communication book or diary/planner. Staff will write in these as regularly as possible. However, it may not be possible or appropriate to write each day. All messages will be dated and include the initials of the member of staff who has written the message. We ask that you let us know that you've read each message in the book by writing your initials at the end of the message.

As students grow older and move up through the school and into KS4 and our Post 16 provision, we will encourage them to become more independent and to take messages home. However, we understand that some students will continue to need a home - school communication book. At any time in your child's school career your child will be provided with a home - school communication book if you request it.

In addition, we would ask that you use the home school communication book to let us know what your son or daughter has been doing at home. Family activities – visits to see family, shopping trips or other visits are useful to know to help us communicate with your son or daughter about their life outside of school.

### School Letters

During the year we will write to you with information about activities that will involve your child – these could be educational visits, sporting activities or special events in school. Please let us know if you would

like this information to be emailed, texted or posted to you rather than sent home with your son or daughter.

### Newsletters

The Headteacher will write a newsletter at least once each term. This will provide general information for parents in addition to items of news and events. Parents will be sent a text message when the newsletter is distributed (see the section on Text Messages). Newsletters will be published on the school website and will be available to download.

In addition, the school publishes a student's newsletter, 'Cedars Times', at the end of each term which has articles and lots of colour photographs about some of the activities that have taken place at school during the term.

### Annual Review EHC Plan Meetings

Each year we will arrange a review meeting to discuss your child's progress, health and well being and agree targets for their educational, social and emotional development. We will inform you of the arrangements for this meeting as soon as possible near the beginning of the school year. If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact the school office as soon as possible and we will arrange an alternative date and time. When we inform you of the date of your child's review we will also ask you if there is anyone in particular that you would like to be invited to your child's review meeting – please let us know as soon as possible. We will invite the other professionals who work with you and your child to attend. If your child has a Child Care Review meeting arranged by the local authority, if you wish we will try and arrange that the school review meeting takes place at the same time as your child's Child Care Review to enable as many of the people who are important to you and child to be together at the same time.

The following staff are responsible for the organisation of Reviews and can be contacted at any time to discuss your child's Review arrangements:

Juniors: Year 1 - 6 children: Rebecca Smith [rebecca.smith@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:rebecca.smith@cedarstrust.org.uk)

Seniors: Years 7 – 10: Helen Jarvis: [helen.jarvis@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:helen.jarvis@cedarstrust.org.uk)

College: Years 11 – 14: Julie Vincent: [julie.vincent@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:julie.vincent@cedarstrust.org.uk)

### Consultation Meetings

In addition to annual review meetings, we will arrange consultation meetings to discuss key learning priorities for your child. These meetings will be arranged either during or after school on and will provide an opportunity for a consultation meeting with your child's class/tutor team and key person. The meetings will be held during the early autumn term to meet your child's new tutor team, and in the middle of the year to provide an opportunity to discuss your child's progress with their current class team and their progress towards their end of year goals. If you find it more convenient your child's class tutor will telephone you to discuss your child's learning priorities.

### Open Events

At the beginning of each school year and during the year we will hold Open Events for each class. These will provide informal opportunities to meet your child's class and tutor team and to participate in class events, coffee mornings/fundraising activities.

## Email

We are aware that some parents may prefer to be contacted by email rather than use a home school communication book. If this is your preference please discuss this with your child's key person. Emails can be used for general communication instead of using a home – school communication book. Each key person has their own school email account. Staff will check emails during working hours.

## Text Messages

We use 'ParentMail', a text messaging service to contact parents with reminders about school events, the publication of newsletters and urgent information – for example if it is necessary to close the school in an emergency. Please help us by making sure that we always have your correct mobile telephone number. A copy of the information that we have on the school's records will be sent to you at the beginning of each school year – please check this and return the information to school as soon as possible, making any changes that might have taken place, for example your contact details.

## Other Media: BLOOMZ

We use Bloomz across the school for those parents who wish to sign up to it. We find that Bloomz empowers our staff by giving them a single app for communication, coordination and community building. Bloomz is safe and works on any internet-enabled device.

Bloomz enables parents & carers to join their child's teacher and other classroom parents in a closed environment. The child's information's security is paramount to us, so their name and image are protected and teachers control parents' access and verification.

Parents are able to track and manage their child's activities, classroom events, trips and other activities. Bloomz enables communication with parents, teachers and staff individually, in groups or school-wide (eg posts, announcements and messaging).

For more information regarding Bloomz: <https://www.bloomz.net/parents/>

## Website

The school website contains information on the school curriculum, calendar of events, newsletters, school policies, contact points, term dates and other important and useful information. It is regularly updated.

<http://www.cedarstrust.org.uk/>

The school Twitter Feed is: Twitter Feed @Cedars Academy and Facebook Page -cedarsacademy1

## Timetables

At the beginning of each school year your child's teacher will send you a copy of their timetable – this will include symbol support as appropriate. In addition, when there are significant changes to your child's timetable - for example because of subject options in KS4, a revised version of your child's timetable will be sent home when these changes take place.

### Contacting Staff Outside of School

We welcome discussion with parents on all aspects of their child's education, and personal and social development. It is the school's policy that these discussions must take place on the school premises or in other professional settings. This enables us to have the right information available to discuss your child's needs.

Please note that discussions or contact with staff must not take place via any unofficial channels. Please do not contact staff outside of their professional role or by personal communication such as their private email addresses, personal telephone numbers or via social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Staff should not be contacted outside of working hours or consulted in their own homes, as this represents an intrusion into their private life.

### CEDARS ACADEMY

#### Contacting School by Telephone

The school office is open from 8.00am – 4.30pm, Monday – Friday. The telephone number is (0191) 4874595 . Please contact a member of the Admin team if you would like a message to be passed to your child's tutor/key person or Access to Learning (AtL) team.

If you have an urgent enquiry that can't be discussed with your child's tutor/key person, please contact a member of the Admin team and ask to speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Group.

The members of the Senior Leadership Group are:

Headteacher, Martin Flowers: [martin.flowers@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:martin.flowers@cedarstrust.org.uk)

KS1&2 Assistant Headteacher, Joanne Carr: [joanne.carr@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:joanne.carr@cedarstrust.org.uk)

KS3 Assistant Headteacher, Daniel Hearne: [daniel.hearne@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:daniel.hearne@cedarstrust.org.uk)

KS4 Assistant Headteacher, Michelle O'Reilly: [michelle.oreilly@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:michelle.oreilly@cedarstrust.org.uk)

KS5 Assistant Headteacher, Julie Vincent: [Julie.vincent@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:Julie.vincent@cedarstrust.org.uk)

AtL Assistant Headteacher, Liz Neale: [elizabeth.neale@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:elizabeth.neale@cedarstrust.org.uk)

If a member of the senior staff is unable to speak to you when you telephone, we will try to contact you by the end of the school day.

If you need to speak to a member of staff urgently or wish to have a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Group, please telephone the school office to speak to the Headteacher who will arrange for you to see a senior member of staff as soon as possible.

A full list of all our staff and their school contact details can be found on the school website.

**UNCRC Reference:** Articles 3, 5