

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY



JUNE 2019

Review Date: June 2022

Introduction

The school is proud of the fact it is at the heart of its community. It aims to raise standards and, in addition, has a proud history of inclusion. Castleroe Primary School also cares for the whole child and our pre and after school clubs provision are important to us. We believe that involving the family is important to the child's wellbeing. We aim to communicate electronically in addition to responses via letters, through widening participation and bringing families into our school.

Vision

Our vision is to provide a warm, welcoming, secure environment where children will recognise and achieve their full potential. We will prepare children to meet the challenge of a changing world and make a positive contribution to society.

Aims

1. To create a happy, secure, supportive and stimulating environment where children can develop physically, socially and intellectually at their own rate.
2. To provide religious and moral education whereby children will acquire a reasoned set of moral values and beliefs.
3. To provide a broad and balanced curriculum with clearly defined aims developing basic skills, knowledge, concepts, attitudes and values related to the areas of study of the Northern Ireland Curriculum appropriate to each pupil's level of development.
4. To maintain a balance between practical/formal teaching and between integrated/subject based work so providing a variety of experiences.
5. To develop the individual pupil's self-confidence, initiative, independence and self-discipline.
6. To prepare children for life by instilling within them good work/study habits and by creating valuable interests and hobbies whereby each child may achieve success in a variety of contexts.
7. To enable children to respect and value themselves and others so developing within each pupil courtesy, good citizenship and social responsibility.
8. To enable children to appreciate, value and care for their environment.
9. To help each child to become aware of his/her own culture and heritage and provide opportunities to become aware of other cultures and heritages so enabling pupils to appreciate and tolerate the views/traditions of others.
10. To build and foster links between home, school and the community.

Aim of the Policy

To ensure that Castleroe Primary School is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professionally orientated, timely and appropriate.

Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated.

We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation. Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility has been carried out.

Principles

All communications at Castleroe Primary School should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Take account of relevant school policies
- Be compatible with our core values and School Development Plan.
- Written communications with parents and other external contacts must comply with agreed practice.
- Consultation issues, plans and changes which may affect the work of the school is inclusive of all appropriate stakeholder groups.

Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

Senior leadership

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep governors informed of developments and challenges.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

Internal methods of communication

- All staff receive a Staff Handbook, updated annually, providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school.
- All formal meetings should be structured and have minutes and members invited to contribute to the agenda.
- Time put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject leaders' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.
- For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.
- Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information. However, it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required.
- Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffroom, which staff must check daily, handed to staff personally or emailed.
- Staff meetings take place every third week. The main points are emailed to all staff and also placed on the staff notice board. The school diary is accessible on line and all members of staff can access it. Events are discussed in advance at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions. The diary for the coming week is discussed.
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This may be a news board or other type of notice board. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.
- Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day.
- Some communication may take place at the end of collective worship. All staff must be informed of messages given to the children.

External methods of communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner. We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/carers

App: The school has a school app it uses to communicate with parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system must be approved by the Principal.

Email: If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be printed. Staff should forward emails from parents to the Principal and should always do so if the content is a complaint. A hard copy of any email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the school office. The same applies to all internal mail, email transmissions concerning pupil matters. All emails which require an answer should be responded to within 2 working school days.

Telephone calls: Staff should be given their telephone messages each day. A file note will record details of the conversation.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs: Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites.

Written Reports: Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each area of learning. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas for future development. Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress. In addition, parents meet their child's teacher during the year. 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. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly. We will also make 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 communication.

School Prospectus: The school prospectus is being updated. It contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision in our school. The year specific information is updated every year and placed on the website.

School Website: The school website provides information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Letters: We will respond to letters of complaint in line with our Complaints Policy.

All staff should share details of communications with the Principal.

Home-School Communication

A school newsletter is sent to parents/carers each half term through with paper copies to all parents and a version available electronically. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies on the school's app. Parents are also supplied with an internet safety newsletter at the end of each month, that includes topical, relevant advice on internet safety.

Children have a homework diary/record. This enables parents to record a wide range of information about their child's reading and learning.

Children will receive homework that gives parents an insight into learning that is ongoing in class. The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers will arrange to see parents as soon as possible.

We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year regarding curriculum advice and development.

Parents are invited to Parent Forum meetings to discuss various topics. Several meetings for new parents are organised at appropriate times for them to receive information prior to their child starting at the school. With the support of the PTA we hold social events the community.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm; that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that Castleroe Primary School should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and to help any child needing protection. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Teacher for Children Protection, or the Deputy Designated Teacher who may share this information with Social Services