



# Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit

“Nurture, Inspire, Flourish”



# Home-School Communication Policy

Date reviewed	December 2021
Next review date	December 2023

Chair of Board of Governors	Alison Bennington	
Principal	Emma Quinn	

## **Introduction**

Positive communication is an essential element of the aims and vision of Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit. This enables our children and families to feel valued and listened to.

The majority of this communication takes place through the frequent verbal interactions between families and staff as children are brought to and from school as well as Class Dojo, text and email, telephone and video.

## **Aim**

To ensure that Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our children, with their families and with other members of the wider community.

We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are open, honest, respectful, ethical and professional.

## **Objectives**

All communications at Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery Unit should:

- ✓ Keep staff, pupils, parents, and stakeholders well informed.
- ✓ Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- ✓ Be jargon free and 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.
- ✓ Take account of relevant school policies.
- ✓ Be compatible with our core values and School Improvement Plan.

## **Contact details**

The school holds emergency contact details for all children on the School Information Management System (SIMs) and families are contacted on an annual basis to ensure that these are up to date. Families are expected to inform the school immediately in the event that contact information needs to be revised.

Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact families.

## **Communications with Families**

Hereafter the term 'families' will be used to refer to all those individuals who have a role in the upbringing and care of the child. Families are welcome to visit the school to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, and gain support or to have the opportunity to talk about their child/home issues with their child's class teacher first, then Key Stage Leads or specific co-ordinators within the school e.g. Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo / LSC).

Outside of teaching their designated class all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school. These duties will include care of children, organisation of extra-curricular activities or whole-school coordination of a curriculum subject.

We aim to be able to facilitate requests for an immediate meeting, however for the reasons stated above, when this is not possible, staff may not be able to facilitate an immediate, unscheduled appointment but will aim to do so within 5 school days.

Arranging a mutually convenient appointment allows the school time to organise cover to make staff available to speak to the families and to gather any necessary information prior to the meeting. This process will make the meeting much more conducive.

The following list, whilst not exhaustive, covers the main ways in which we will communicate with families. All response times are indicative and where extensions are needed i.e. for further investigation a holding response will be given to the family along with an updated expected response time.

### **Emails and Electronic Information**

The school use Class Dojo, allowing us to attach letters to families. Not only is this more environmentally friendly as it decreases paper usage, it also reduces photocopying and other costs in the school. We urge families to provide us with a valid email address and to download the free Class Dojo app via the App Store or Google Play or other.

Families are asked to use Class Dojo first, as a means of providing a quick, effective way of communicating information about their child or to arrange a meeting with their teacher.

Families are reminded that teachers have little to no time during their teaching day to check messages and therefore requests which require immediate or quick action should be sent via dojo, marked URGENT at the top. This should be followed up by a phone call to the school office, if there is no response. For example, contacting your child's teacher to inform them you will be collecting them for an appointment or to change pick-up arrangements is not appropriate due to the high likelihood that the message will not be read in time.

It is important that families telephone the school office with this information. Staff, if appropriate, may forward queries to the Principal. Staff are not expected to, and are discouraged from, checking and responding to emails/messages outside of their working day.

However, staff are encouraged to work flexibly and respond to emails/messages in a way that suits them to balance their working hours.

Staff do not expect families to read, respond or action emails/messages outside hours that suit them.

Class Dojo and email does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. All staff should seek face to face communications, when email/dojo is not the most effective form of communication.

Staff and families are discouraged from entering into in-depth discussions about a child's progress or well-being via email or online discussion.

Where it is not possible to use email/dojo, most written correspondence is passed on to families through face to face interaction at the end of the school day.

Where this is not appropriate, it is forwarded through the Royal Mail postage service.

## **Home/School Communication Text**

The school has a Text system (SIMS) which is used to communicate with families in an emergency only, if all other means are not accessible. Text messages are sent both Primary and Secondary contacts. This is not a reply service.

## **Telephone calls Inbound**

All telephone calls will be answered by staff in the main office. It is our policy that office staff do not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency. Messages are taken and forwarded to the relevant person.

If the call requires a response from a member of staff, we aim to do this within 3 working days.

## **Outbound Telephone**

Outbound Telephone calls will be made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for injuries or accidents. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed.

Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact and so forth. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible.

## **Class Dojo**

Class Dojo connects the school and families through building virtual classroom communities. It enables staff to share photos, videos, announcements and celebrations as well as messaging between school and home.

As with emails, staff are not expected to, and are discouraged from, checking and responding to Dojo messages outside of their working day.

However, staff are encouraged to work flexibly and respond to Dojo messages in a way that suits them to balance their working hours.

Staff do not expect families to read, respond or action Dojo messages outside hours that suit them. Dojo messaging does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required.

All staff should seek face to face communications, when Dojo is not the most effective form of communication.

Staff and families are discouraged from entering into in-depth discussions about a child's progress or well-being via Class Dojo.

## **School Facebook Site**

Staff are advised not to communicate with families via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". Our Facebook feed is designed to highlight positive aspects of our school only.

Any negative comments or complaints will be deleted and the school reserves the right to 'block' any user from the school's page.

School does not provide a response to messages on Facebook.

## **School Website**

The school website <https://rathcoole-primary-school-and-nursery-unit.secure-primariesite.net/> provides an opportunity to share information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

## **News**

Our News is updated on the Class Dojo School story and does not go out to individual parents. Important reminders, dates and messages for the term ahead. Families are strongly encouraged to read these.

## **Written Reports**

Once a year, we provide a full written report to each child's families on their progress. This report identifies areas of strength and next steps.

Pupils are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress.

## **Pupil Progress Meetings**

All families are provided with two, 10-minute meetings each academic year, either face to face or via telephone appointments.

Families are asked to sign up for an allocated date and time.

Should an appointment day not be suitable, families are asked to contact their child's teacher who will make every effort to arrange a more mutually convenient time.

Families are encouraged to request additional meetings should they have a concern regarding their child's progress or well-being. Likewise, staff will arrange additional meetings if necessary.

## **Annual Reviews for Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan**

All children with an Education, Health and Care Plan will have an Annual Review each academic year to discuss their progress in relations to the aims and objectives of their plan and half termly review meetings are held to ensure provision and support is appropriate.

## **Personal Learning Plans**

Children on the Special Educational Needs Register, have an updated Personal Learning Plan (PLP or IEP) every half term which is provided to families.

Each Personal Plan offers practical advice to families on how they can work with school staff to support their child in achieving targets to assist the child's progress.

## **Child Protection and Safeguarding**

We recognise that children's protection is a shared responsibility, and that Rathcoole Primary School and Nursery should provide a safe and secure environment. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Safeguarding Team (Designated Teacher) who may share this information with Social Services.

## **Complaints**

All formal letters of complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the school's separate Complaints Policy.

All formal letters to families must be approved by the Principal before they are sent.

If families communicate with the school using email and letter with a formal complaint or a matter of concern, a copy should be stored digitally and a printed copy placed in the child's file for Years Nursery – Primary 7.

Formal correspondence with families will be kept in the child's personal folder in the School Office and held for a period of time in accordance with our Disposal of Records Schedule.

The school does not accept or act upon anonymous communication unless in relation to matters of serious Child Protection.

## **Requests for Information**

Please refer to our Data Protection and GDPR Policy for copies of children's records, freedom of information and Subject Access Requests. This will detail procedures and protocols, including timings.

When communication becomes inappropriate, aggressive, vexatious, persistent or disproportionate and the school deems it is unacceptable, then actions will be put in place in accordance with school policy.

## **How will this policy be monitored and evaluated?**

This policy will be monitored through on-going school self-evaluation. The Principal will use a variety of methods to evaluate this policy with staff, parents.