



# Parent/Carer to Staff Communication



## Principles

At Hele's School we are committed to open, honest and timely communication. We are also committed to communication being respectful, measured, sensitive and constructive.

In adhering to these principles, we aim to strengthen the goodwill and the positive partnership between parents and the school, to enhance the wellbeing and learning opportunities for our students.

## Hele's School will:

- Work in partnership with parents to support their child's learning.
- Collect email addresses from the parents/carers of students upon starting at Hele's. This will facilitate improved communication through use of 'In Touch' to email whole cohort/school messages.
- Create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for students, staff and parents.
- Seek a constructive solution to all issues.
- Model appropriate behaviour for our students at all times.

## We expect parents, carers and other visitors to:

- Respect the ethos, vision and values of our school.
- Work together with staff in the best interests of our students.
- Treat all members of the school community with respect – setting a good example with speech and behaviour.
- Correct their own child's behaviour (or those in their care), particularly in public, where it could lead to conflict, aggression or unsafe conduct.
- Approach the right member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern.
- Inform Hele's School of any change in email address, address, phone number or other contact information.

## In order to ensure that all communications are both positive and productive, we ask parents/carers to respect the following:

1. Be aware that any emails sent outside "office hours" (8am - 4pm, Monday to Friday in term time only) will be dealt with the next *working* day. Staff are not expected to respond to emails out of working hours/out of term time. We **aim to respond to parental emails within 48 hours** but please do understand that teachers may need a *working* day or two to respond to emails as schedules are very busy at School, and the answer may involve meeting with other teachers, staff or students who may have valuable input. Under normal circumstances, staff will look to resolve an issue within 5 working days. More complicated issues may take longer to fully and effectively resolve.
2. Send emails intended for staff to the Hele's School email address: [Heles.School@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:Heles.School@plymouth.gov.uk) or use the [contact form on the Hele's School website](#). The email will then be forwarded onto the appropriate staff member. Please mark your email clearly with both the subject matter and 'for the attention of...'

Alternatively, [a list of staff email addresses can be found on the School website](#).

## The points of communication should be as follows:

| Area of concern                           | First point of contact  |
|---|---|
| SAFEGUARDING                              | Designated Safeguarding Lead/Principal  |
| ACADEMIC                                  | Subject Teacher or Head of Department   |
| PASTORAL (low level)                      | Tutor   |
| PASTORAL (medium level)                   | Head of Year  |
| ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (low level)  | Tutor   |
| ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (high level) | SENDCo  |
| SERIOUS – ACADEMIC or PASTORAL            | Head of Year and/or Senior Leadership Team  |
| ADMINISTRATIVE                            | School Reception  |
| FORMAL COMPLAINTS                         | Principal in the first instance – response may be delegated depending on stage of complaint |

*Send only non-vital messages by this medium.* For example, do not use email to inform a teacher that your child is to wait for you at Reception after school or meet you somewhere when the day ends, since a teacher may not have time to read your message in a timely fashion. Instead, use the telephone to contact the Reception to be sure your message is received and clearly understood.

3. Do identify yourself in the subject line of your email message and, if appropriate, the name of your child.
4. Keep communications focused on your child only. Matters of a personal nature should never be in email but communicated in face-to-face meetings.
5. Be mindful of what you say/write/post about staff in front of children and other parents in order to maintain positive relationships with School. This courtesy applies to online comments as much as to face-to-face.
6. Understand that email responses from teachers may be short due to time constraints, but that teachers will remain open to discuss issues further via telephone or a pre-arranged meeting.
7. Email is for information. If you wish to discuss your child's academic/learning progress, please make contact via telephone or by scheduling a meeting with your child's tutor/teacher/Head of Year, as appropriate.
8. Note that, when agreed between the teacher and the parent following face-to-face or phone conversation, email may be used as a form of regular communication about a student's day at school as part of a broader dialogue about progress.
9. Please refrain from using the blind copying (bcc) of third parties into email communication; the email must address the intended audience.
10. Please do not attend School without having previously made an appointment, as this can be very difficult to accommodate due to teaching schedules and meetings before or after school.

Maintain a courteous and respectful manner when communicating with School staff at all times. It is important to remember that our staff are qualified professionals and that the focus of communications should be on a collegiate approach to advance your child's progress, either academically or socially. Emails should never contain negative comments about any individual. Staff will not respond to abusive or confrontational emails and will forward them to the Principal for follow-up action (refer to the [Safeguarding Staff from Abuse](#) policy on the Hele's School website).

# Appendix 1: Positive Relationships Poster (on display in Reception and shared with parents and carers)

## Welcome to Hele's School



We value positive relationships and encourage close links with parents, carers and the community.

We believe young people benefit when the relationship between Home and Hele's School is a positive one.

We model the behaviour we teach and place high importance on good manners, positive communication and mutual respect.

If you have concerns we will always listen to them.

Every member of our school community has the right to work or be in school without fear of aggression or abuse from visitors; we do not tolerate aggression, abuse or threatening behaviour towards any adult or young person in our community, whether via written communication (including social media and online), on the telephone or face-to-face.

Visitors behaving in this way are likely to be removed from the premises and prosecuted.

**Please treat others as you would like to be treated - with care, consideration and respect.**



# **Appendix 2: Staff Advice - Ways to Calm an Angry Parent**

## **(The Counselling Teacher)**

***If you think a meeting may be difficult, always ensure you have a colleague with you.***

### **1. Model appropriate behaviour**

Use a calm tone and do not allow your voice to raise if they raise their voice. Continue to smile and speak calmly. Use non-threatening body language that shows that you are open to what they have to say.

### **2. Validate their concerns**

Let them know right away that you understand that they are upset and you would like to help. Ask for more information and let them know that you genuinely want to find a solution.

### **3. Let them vent**

Listen and nod while they vent. Sometimes they need someone to listen. Letting them vent without being judged will be therapeutic for them....but remember there is a fine line with becoming abusive or intimidating, so take the temperature regularly and take control of the situation if needed.

### **4. Don't take it personally**

Remember that there are many reasons or motivations behind a parent's anger that often has nothing to do with you. Knowing this allows you to take a step back and remove your emotional reaction. Try to put yourself in their shoes.

### **5. Use positive body language**

Show you are interested in what they are saying. Eye contact and leaning communicated openness. Be careful not to cross your arms or put your hands on your hips as these are seen as negative.

### **6. Set limits and boundaries**

You make the rules for the conversation. If an angry parent is shouting, you can tell them calmly that you will not continue to listen unless they lower their voice. If they do not accept the boundaries, end the conversation and say that you will reschedule a time to talk when they are calm.

### **7. Follow up with a personal phone call**

Text and emails are impersonal. Tone and emotion are often misunderstood in writing, so a personal call is always the best way to communicate with an angry parent. Calling may be a bit more time consuming in the short-term, but this is one of the most effective ways to improve parent communication.