



# HIGHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Communications Policy

January 2019

'The basic building block of good communications is the feeling that every human being is unique and of value.'

Highgate Primary School aims to be an inclusive and supportive school where every member of the wider community feels involved in its activities, are aware of what the school does and the reasons why.

As a school, we use all the different communications tools at our disposal to engage and inform everyone in our immediate and wider community.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all communication from the school is accurate, honest, timely and relevant. The school places a high value on its ability to listen and react to the comments and feedback from all members of the wider community and will constantly aim to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to make this a reality.

### Consistency

The school aims to maintain a consistency of written and visual style and tone of voice. Consistency in the way in which we communicate reinforces the school's brand, which is the emotional connection the school has with its community. Good communication builds confidence, provides reassurance and ensures that Highgate Primary has a strong and recognisable identity.

All members of the school staff strive to ensure that our school is welcoming, friendly, supportive and positive. Our written communications should always reflect this.

To support consistency, all members of staff follow the guidelines communicated within the 'Communication Toolkit'. All correspondence is approved by the Communications Officer to ensure consistency in style and tone of voice.

### Media relations

The school seeks to gain positive media coverage of the work it does in order to raise awareness of the school amongst parents and the local community.

Media relations are the responsibility of the Headteacher and the Communications Officer (where appropriate, in liaison with the Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Communications Committee).

### Reactive media work

All media enquiries should initially be taken by the Communications Officer, who will log the nature of the enquiry, the urgency and the source. All enquiries will then be passed to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will always act as the spokesperson for the school.

The Head will assess the media enquiry on the basis of:

- Opportunity for positive coverage
- Potential for negative coverage
- Likelihood of the story 'growing'

On the basis of this he will decide whether to involve the Chair of Governors and/or Parent Governors in the process.

### **National Media**

In the case of enquires from the national media, where the subject matter is sensitive and there is a possibility of negative publicity, the Headteacher liaises with the Chair of Governors before responding.

### **Proactive media work**

Each term the Communications Officer, the Headteacher and the Governors' Communications Committee identify events in the coming term which they believe will be of interest to the local media. In consultation with the Headteacher, the Communications Officer produces a press release and liaises with the appropriate media. It is the school's policy to develop a positive working relationship with the local press.

### **Cuttings & Website Press Page**

The school keeps an up to date book of press cuttings which is available to Governors at full Governing Body meetings. There is also a Press page on the website with links to press articles.

### **Communication with parents**

The school aims to ensure that parents receive regular and relevant correspondence from the school and the governors. All materials are made available through one or more of the following means as appropriate:

- email (Parentmail)
- texts
- pupil post
- the school website
- school notice-boards
- Headteacher's newsletter
- social media

As appropriate, the Governing Body communicates with parents directly via letter, in liaison with the Headteacher.

Appropriate training and development for all staff is undertaken to ensure that there is a consistency across the school in communication with parents.

- Teachers are provided with support to ensure that they have the time and skills to ensure they are communicating with parents.
- Consideration is given to improving communication with parents with whom they do not have regular contact.

The school works with the PSA to develop a co-ordinated approach to using class reps as a supplementary mechanism for disseminating key pieces of information.

The Communications Committee liaises regularly with parents to ensure that communications methods are useful and relevant.

### **School Website**

The school has developed and maintains a website aimed primarily at providing pupils, parents, prospective parents and the local community with relevant information. The school ensures that it complies with all relevant statutory guidance and best practice related to school-based websites.

The website includes:

- Important information about the school
- Class news and information
- Pictures and biographies of governors and staff
- Key dates for the academic year
- Relevant performance information
- Contact details
- School Policies
- Information about the PSA

The Headteacher and Communications Committee review the content of the website to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

## **Social Media**

The school is now on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. The aim is to share relevant news about our school with our families and community and inform them about forthcoming events. The Headteacher, the Communications Officer and members of the Senior Leadership Team will be able to post content.

Twitter: @HighgatePri

- On Twitter, the school follows relevant figures, organisations and companies who fit with the school's values and interests. The school does not follow parents or former pupils.

Facebook: Highgate Primary School London

- Facebook is a broadcast account only and comments will be monitored carefully.

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is a broadcast account only and comments will be monitored carefully.
- A Highgate Primary Community LinkedIn page has been established for parents, past parents and alumni. The aim is to:
  1. Create a business network community
  2. Open doors and opportunities for our professional community
  3. Share enrichment possibilities for Highgate Primary
  4. Create opportunities for volunteering.

Instagram: highgateprimarylondon

- On Instagram the school follows relevant figures, organisations and companies who fit our values and interests. We will not follow parents or pupils.

All parents are required to sign the Home/School Agreement, where they give or withhold express consent to allow photos or videos of their children to be included on social media/website/newsletter/school publicity material. Group photos may be published on our social media accounts but the school will rarely use individual photos. If a child's name is mentioned, it will only be their first name.

We will follow the rule:

- If the pupil is named, we avoid using their photograph
- If their photograph is used, we avoid naming the pupil

## **Social Media & Social Networking Code of Conduct**

At Highgate Primary we are fortunate to have such a supportive community that recognises the importance of the home/school partnership and appreciates the importance of equipping children with the necessary skills for adulthood.

Social media and social networking bring huge opportunities to engage and communicate in positive and effective ways. Equally important however is the need to appreciate these opportunities bring certain risks which we hope to minimise through our code of conduct.

Our Code of Conduct states that:

- All members of the school community are encouraged to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner at all times.
- Other than their own children, parents must only post photos of pupils with the express consent of their parents.
- Parents should not create social media accounts which appear to be endorsed by the school
- Parents should voice concerns through official school channels, rather than through social media or social networking sites.
- Parents and children should not post malicious comments about any member of the school community.
- The school may report any inappropriate comments to the network and consider legal action if comments are put into the public domain that are libellous, defamatory or are likely to adversely affect the school, pupils and staff.

## **Dealing with breaches of the Code of Conduct**

Everyone in the school community is welcome to discuss any concerns in line with the school's complaints procedures, rather than use social media or social networking sites.

If any member of the school community becomes aware of any negative feedback or discussions, either online or in person, we encourage you to use the following wording to help the person/persons involved:

"If you have any negative comments about the school or members of our community, it is always best to follow the correct protocols and address your issue directly with a member of staff, in writing or in person. You will find the school's complaints procedures on the school website."

## **School Signage and In-school displays**

The school strives to maintain up-to-date, clear signage and displays in order to make the school and its environment easy to navigate and allow parents and children easy access to relevant information. Signage is reviewed every year to ensure it is accurate, easy to use, clear and accessible.

## **Notice Boards**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring notice-boards are clear and easy-to-use. The School maintains parents' boards in the playground which contain:

- key date information
- news about forthcoming events
- important reminders

## **In-coming communication**

The school strives to ensure that all of its community members have appropriate opportunities to feed in their views and comments. The school also attempts wherever possible to respond appropriately to suggestions and comments.

The school:

- Maintains a feedback box and cards in the reception area, which it regularly promotes
- Ensures that opportunities for informal communications through different channels e.g. governors' desks, specific 'open door' time with the head teacher, are at all relevant school events
- Parents can email [communications@highgate-pri.haringey.sch.uk](mailto:communications@highgate-pri.haringey.sch.uk) at any time with their feedback or comments

Teachers are provided with a mechanism through which to record comments and suggestions and pass them on to the Senior Leadership Team.

The Parents Survey is used to review the quality of school communication.

## **Resources**

The school allocates a budget line for communications and an appropriate level of funding will be used to support all school communications.

## **Complaints Procedure**

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. Highgate Primary School is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of maintaining positive relationships and avoiding unnecessary formal procedures.

However, a complainant may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than a year it will not be investigated.

The prime aim of the school's Complaints Procedure is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

## **The Complaints Policy has four main stages.**

In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with a staff member
- Stage 2 – Complaint is heard by the appropriate member of staff
- Stage 3 – Formal Complaint is heard by Headteacher
- Stage 4 – Complaint is heard by Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

### **Stage 1 – Raising a concern**

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that in the first instance the complainant makes their first contact with the child's class teacher. Where appropriate, the member of staff will discuss the concern with their line manager.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with other members of staff. If this is the case the complainant will receive an informal but informed response within 5 school days. The majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

### **Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the appropriate staff member**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they should either write to, or make an appointment to speak to the appropriate member of staff (which may be the Headteacher). Any correspondence should state the nature of the complaint and how the complainant would like the matter to be resolved.

An informal meeting will be arranged to discuss and hopefully resolve the issue. The school will write to clarify the outcome of the meeting within 5 school working days.

### **Stage 3 – Formal Complaint heard by Headteacher**

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complaint needs to be escalated to a Formal Complaint to the Headteacher. This needs to be made in writing using the appropriate form (Appendix 1). This form is available on the school website and from the school office.

The Headteacher will consider the complaint and may arrange further investigation. The Headteacher will offer to meet with the complainant within 10 school days. A formal written response will be provided within 5 days of this meeting.

### **Stage 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Appeal Panel**

If the matter has still not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 3, then the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors, providing full details of the complaint and including all previous correspondence. This should be done within 10 school days of receiving the Headteacher's Stage 3 response. The Chair, or a nominated Governor, will convene a Governors Complaints Panel. The hearing will normally take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written request for a Stage 4 investigation.

The aim of the Governors Complaint Panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within three school working days of the date of the hearing.

The local authority is no longer able to review complaints to individual schools. The Governors Appeal Hearing is therefore the last stage of the school's complaints process.

### **Complaints against the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Body**

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body, the member will be informed of the complaint.

### **Support and advice**

At any stage of the process, complainants are welcome to speak informally to a member of staff or a school governor who may be able to advise on how best to proceed with the complaint. However they should be

aware that individual governors with prior knowledge of the complaint would be unable to sit on any Appeals panel.

### **Relevant Policies**

Please see the following policies on the website for more information:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Complaints Procedures
- Online Safety policy
- Safeguarding Policy

### **Policy Monitoring and Review**

A copy of this guidance is available to all staff and parents and is published on the school website. This policy is reviewed annually by the Governors' Communications Committee.

### **Procedures for policy monitoring and evaluation**

The Communications committee will review the policy statement every four years. All members of staff and governors will receive a copy of this policy. Copies are available to parents on request and a short summary is included in the school prospectus.

### **Staff Responsible**

William Dean (Headteacher)

Claire Ashworth (Communications Officer)