

**Kircubbin Integrated Primary School**



# **Communication Policy**

<b>Reviewed/Updated</b>	<b>Date</b>
Created	September 2023
Review	August 2026

## **Introduction:**

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. Communication includes not only the message, but also how the message is communicated. Good communication promotes partnership.

## **AIM:**

At KIPS, we aim to have clear, effective, high quality communication among staff and with students, parents, governors and members of the wider school community. We want to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate. All communication should reflect our school vision statement – *'Learn to Love, Love to Learn'*.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- Keep staff, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- Be honest, ethical and professional
- Be easily understood by all
- Be actioned within a reasonable time
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context and audience
- Take account of relevant school policies
- Reflect the school ethos

# Forms of Communication

## Telephone Calls

Many matters can be resolved quickly by having a conversation over the phone, and will be the first preference for communication from school to home to address any issues raised, even those raised via a letter or email sent to school. Email correspondence is discouraged due to its impersonal nature.

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school. Teachers are generally teaching full-time. Teachers have some availability after school, but only when they are not attending staff meetings or training, meeting with parents, running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school.

Parents and carers may be frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call. Equally when staff call parents, they may not get an immediate response, but where possible a message will be left by the caller so that parents know who has called and who to ask for when returning the call. The office staff may not know who has called you as each teacher has their own phone in their classroom for dialling out. Therefore, please check your messages before returning a missed call.

**In a non-emergency a return call will be made as soon as possible but no later than 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within an agreed time period by both parties.**

Staff are advised to keep a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer when deemed appropriate to do so.

Phone lines will be open:

Monday to Friday from 8:45 am to 3:15 pm

Calls will be redirected to the school hall after 4.00pm (KIPS Care staff).

**As a school we will endeavour to ensure there is at least one person able to answer the phones during these times, but illness and the busyness of a school means we cannot always guarantee this.**

## School App

As a school we use our app as the main method of regular communication to parents.

All parents are expected to download the app and ensure that notifications are switched on. This will ensure all important messaging is received in a timely manner.

Any user experiencing difficulties with the app should contact the School Office as soon as possible.

The app will be used for letters for information, important messages such as transport issues, health and safety notices, etc and may also be used to seek permission from parents on class trips or booking forms for interviews.

## **Letters and E-mails**

Communication works best when it is face to face. When this is not practical a telephone conversation is always the preferred option. However, if it is a very quick request a note provided for the teacher is the best means.

Where appropriate, and when staff feel it is a matter that can be quickly resolved through a conversation, they will respond to a letter from parents and carers, via a telephone call and if necessary thereafter a meeting will be arranged with the parents/carers to discuss it further.

Letters to parents/carers must be approved by the Principal or in his absence a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting/emailing/notifying. Copies of correspondence with parents and carers will be kept by the member of staff.

Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedures Policy (copy available on the school website)

The school will use standard templates for letters where possible.

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication. However, if we are unable to obtain a current email address for any parent or carer, communications will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post.

The correct salutations must be used when writing to or emailing parents/carers/partnerships. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc. All relevant parties must be copied into letters or emails.

Under no circumstances will staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address or mobile phone (unless Caller ID is deselected).

## **Texts**

Automated texts may be sent from SIMS to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from members of staff. Staff should not respond by text to a text message received from a parent/carers (but should respond using an alternative means of communication such as telephone or email if appropriate).

## **Absence**

On the first day of absence parents may contact the school. On the third day of continued absence and there has been no contact from the parents, a standard phone call of enquiry should be made by the school.

Parents should provide an explanation detailing any absence, at first registration, on their child's return to school. Parents may use the Absence Form available via the school app for this purpose or send a note in with their child.

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept by the teacher for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil which may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period (see Attendance Policy).

## **Teacher Absence**

### **Planned Absence**

- All absence must be authorised by the Principal

### **Unplanned Absence**

- Staff should **phone** the Principal (or in his absence, Vice Principal) regarding any unplanned absence. If contact cannot be made please phone the School Office after 8am.
- Absent staff should phone school by 3.30pm, regarding plans for the following day if possible.
- On return to work it is the teacher's responsibility to contact the school office to complete the necessary forms and arrange a return to work interview.

## **Meeting with Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment (see Appendix 1 for Parents' Communication Guide). Parents and carers should report to the reception office prior to meeting with a member of staff.

A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them if necessary. Staff will call a meeting to a close in the event of the parents or carers becoming angry or abusive. This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, which in turn will be reported to the Board of Governors and recorded in the minutes of their next meeting.

## **Social Networking**

The school has a Facebook account which will mostly be used to share events in school and to celebrate the work of the school and our pupils. It is not compulsory for parents to sign up to Facebook and therefore key messages will be relayed through formal school communication channels such as the app and website.

Comments and messenger linked to our Facebook page should not be used for communicating with school, or for questions/discussions about events in school. All such communications should be addressed via the methods mentioned before. The page is monitored for inappropriate and negative comments which will be deleted.

All members of the school community are expected to behave appropriately online on both official and unofficial school related channels such as WhatsApp groups. It is important that any issues are brought to the attention of the correct person/s in order for the correct action to be taken where appropriate and not addressed via social media. This will ensure all stakeholders are upholding the school ethos.

## **Reports and Progress**

Parent – Teacher meetings are time-tabled twice a year. These are an opportunity for parents and carers to meet with their child's teacher to discuss individual progress, and specific targets being set for their learning. A final written report, highlighting each child's progress over the year and ideas for continued development, is distributed to all parents and carers in June of each year. These reports are saved on the school system. We welcome the presence of any other adult a parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting for support or to act as an interpreter.

## **Accessibility**

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

The font used in all printed communications is Arial 12. Documents printed using a larger font can usually be provided and requests should be made via email at the [info@kircubbininteps.newtownards.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@kircubbininteps.newtownards.ni.sch.uk) account.

If a translation of a document is required, in the first instance parents/carers should access Google Translate and a link to this will be included in the main languages of the school community in documents sent out to parents. Key school information will be translated into community languages where appropriate and possible and where required a translator provided to ensure effective communication. Before sending or posting information electronically staff should test to ensure cross platform access.

## **School Website**

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including important curriculum information and policies for the school. It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

## **Communication between pupils and staff**

Two way communication between pupils and staff is an important aspect of school life. The school welcomes and encourages pupils to engage in conversation with all members of staff within the school. When communicating with a member of staff pupils should:

- address the member of staff using their formal name e.g. Mrs Smith, never referring to a member of staff by their first name;
- be respectful, do not talk over, raise voice or walk away before the conversation has ended.

When communicating with pupils, staff should use pupils' first names, and full names of staff (Mr Surname and Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils. Staff are never permitted to use personal email accounts when communicating with pupils.

## **Communication between KIPS Staff**

### **Verbal**

Staff are to use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils.

### **Email**

- consider whether an email is appropriate when face to face communication may be more conducive;
- avoid exclusive email correspondence without requesting or organising a face to face meeting;
- avoid send or reply all unless necessary;
- line managers are to be copied in;
- keep emails concise, use Standard English and bullet points if necessary.
- Staff to check emails at regular intervals in the day e.g. first thing in the morning, at break time or lunch-time and at the end of the day.
- Use group emails as appropriate.

Staff should not send non-urgent emails before 8am or after 4pm. Emails should instead be saved as drafts and sent during work hours or scheduled for the agreed hours above. Staff are not expected to respond to emails outside of their working hours.

Minutes of all staff, Key-stage, curricular and SLT meetings are to be emailed to staff within 2 weeks of the meeting and saved to the Staff/Private Folder on the school network.

### **School trips, visits and activities**

Parents and carers will be notified by letter of trips, visits and activities that their child/children may wish to participate in as early as possible (a minimum of two weeks where possible). The school will always ensure parents and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events.

### **Severe weather and emergency closure**

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via the school app. Parents and carers should also tune in to local radio and check the school website and social media channels i.e. website and Facebook

### **Prospective parents/carers**

Prospective P1 parents and carers are invited to an Open Morning in December of the year preceding their child's year of entry to the school.

Parents wishing to move their child to our school should phone to make an appointment if they want to view the school in operation.

### **Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The school recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of all pupils with additional needs. The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and carers and user-friendly information and procedures. All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents and carers.

All staff within the school are expected to help parents and carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to.

When pupils who have special educational needs are making less than the expected progress or if they are experiencing behavioural difficulties, we would expect to meet with parents and carers more regularly. Parents and carers are encouraged to communicate immediately where they have a concern about their child's needs being met.

### **Communication with other Schools and outside agencies**

Prior to pupils joining Year 1, or moving to their post-primary school in year 8, it is customary for schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to and from KIPS.



We recognise that children have diverse needs, and where required we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals including medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare.

We also recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment (see the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy copy available on the school website).

We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (for full details see our Data Protection Policy and Privacy notice on the school website).

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

This Policy was created in collaboration with KIPS Parent Council and will be reviewed at least every three years to assess its implementation and effectiveness. The Policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

The next review is due: August 2026

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chair of Governors)

## Appendix

### KIPS Parents' Communication Guide

In reference to...	Relating to...	Contact Person
My Child	<p>Their learning                      Their progress                      Their friendships                      Their difficulties                      Their habits                      Their homework                      Any other problems you may be having with your child at home                      A change in pick up arrangements                      An issue that is happening in class or in the playground                      Any other concerns about how they are getting on?</p>	<p><b>The teacher MUST be contacted in the first instance to address any of these issues.</b>                      Either phone the office or email the school to arrange for the teacher to return your call or to make an appointment to meet face to face at an appropriate time.</p>
	<p>Personal and confidential information in regards to changes in family circumstances, safeguarding or child protection concerns</p>	
My arrangements	<p>Change in home address, contacts and contact numbers                      To make an appointment to see someone                      To arrange for payment of e.g. school dinners, breakfast club etc                      To talk about open enrolment                      To hand in important documents or letters</p>	<p><b>THE OFFICE</b>                      The Secretary, is normally available to receive phone calls during normal school hours. Messages can be left via the school answer machine service if no one is available and you should receive a response as soon as possible.</p>

It is important that any issues are brought to the attention of the correct person/s in order for the correct action to be taken where appropriate and not addressed via social media. This will ensure all stakeholders are upholding the school ethos.