

THE WESTGATE SCHOOL

Hampshire's First 4-16 'All Through' School

*"The Westgate School is a community of learners where partnerships inspire success for all:
learning together – achieving excellence"*

Headteacher: Mrs F A Dean, MA (Ed)

Initial Policy date	October 2022	Next scheduled review	July 2025
Governor approved	July 2024	Key person/people	HT/Chair of Governors
Model Policy	Hampshire School's Legal Services	Model localised	
Pupil leadership team review		Y N Y	N/A

The Westgate School's Communication Policy

1. We believe it is important to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for pupils, employees and parents in our school. We encourage clear, open communication links with parents as we believe it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It provides parents with the information they need to support their child's education and helps to build a partnership between home and school. Such communication can be entirely positive and practical for example to seek information, ask a question, clear up a misunderstanding or to draw attention to a matter. Sometimes there is a need to resolve an issue or misunderstanding.
2. We use the term 'parents' in this policy to refer to:
 - Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil
 - Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents or child-minders)
3. The term employee as referred to in this policy includes:
 - Anyone employed by the school
 - Anyone training in a professional capacity at the school
 - Governors (when acting in this capacity)
 - Volunteers at the school (when acting in this capacity)
 - Anyone employed through an external agency, who are acting in a professional capacity on the school site
4. This communication policy aims to set out the methods of communication available to parents for contacting the school and our expectations from parents when visiting our school or communicating with employees at our school.

5. We acknowledge that sometimes there can be situations that can be emotional and challenging for parents and employees to work through. Nonetheless, we expect all our community to show mutual respect. We have clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes employees (through the Code of Conduct) and pupils (through our behaviour policy). We also expect parents to engage constructively with the school and to work together with us in the best interests of our children.
6. We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information on another child. Parents should refrain from referring to other families/pupils or parents and instead, speak solely for themselves. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers then this will be shared with the school's legal advisers.
7. In all instances, parents should contact the Headteacher if they want to raise a concern or complaint that hasn't been addressed by other employees in school. If parents are considering making a formal complaint, there is a link here to the complaints policy: [Policy Documents | westgate-home](#). However, stage 1 of our policy ([Policy Documents | westgate-home](#)) suggests that other forms of communication can often help in resolving issues and we encourage parents to use this route and to contact the Headteacher in the first instance.
8. However, this is not compulsory and does not prevent the use of the complaints policy either straight away or after other forms of communication have been tried.

Communication with the school.

In the case of communications with the school, that are not raising a formal complaint the following guidance will apply.

Meetings

9. Telephone or face to face conversations are generally the best way of communicating with the school at drop off or pick up for quick, short messages.
10. When an employee is not able to speak to you immediately due to school commitments, or a longer conversation is deemed necessary or appropriate, then a request for an appointment can be made to discuss the matter either in person or by telephone, at a later date. The school will aim to arrange that meeting within one school working week unless it is a matter of safeguarding which will receive urgent attention.

11. Outside of teaching hours, all employees have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school so availability of employees outside of teaching hours should not be assumed.
12. Should a meeting be requested the decision of which employee will attend will rest with the Headteacher.

Email

13. Parents are welcome to email the school, contact@westgate.hants.sch.uk about non-urgent issues in the first instance.
14. Emails will be most helpful if they are concise, explaining concerns in a clear way and marked clearly for the attention of a specific employee or role. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.
15. The school will aim to respond **within 3 school working days**. If a response is unable to be provided within this timeline, which can be to ensure a full and considered response, then a revised timeline will be provided and communicated. We ask that parents await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.
16. If parents do not receive an acknowledge of the email within 3 working days, it may be because an employee is part time or, absent from school. In such circumstances, parents should re-send the original email marking it for the attention of the “senior leader with oversight for *[insert area of concern]*”. This will ensure that a senior colleague is aware that a response is awaited by a parent and can offer support if a colleague is unavailable.

Phone calls

17. If a query or concern is time sensitive and urgent the parent should call the school office, who will liaise as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership employees are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments. Parents should avoid coming into school without a prior appointment as colleagues may not be available and this will lead to disappointment.
18. If the query or concern is not time sensitive and urgent then parents should email or call the school office and the relevant employee will aim to contact them within 3 school working days. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time.

19. For general enquiries, please call or email the school office.

Social Media

20. The school will not respond to concerns raised via social media and reserves the right to take action where any employee is subject to anything covered under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 (see attached document). This includes misrepresentation on platforms such as WhatsApp.

21. Where the social media site is run by the school, comments will be removed if they do not meet the criteria of the social media site.

22. Should the school be made aware of any physical threats or abusive behaviour towards employees on social media then the school will consider reporting this to the Police and seeking the removal of this content from the site.

Communication during school hours/ working days

23. Employees will aim to respond to communication during core school hours of 8.30am to 3.20pm or within their working hours (if they work part-time).

24. Parents should not expect employees to respond to their communication outside of core school hours or during school holidays.

25. The School has a clear policy regarding the use of email and employees are not expected to respond to emails between the hours of 5.30pm on a Friday evening and 8 am on Monday mornings. Employees are not required to monitor or respond to parent/carer emails over weekends or during school holidays – with the exception of child protection or safeguarding for which there is a specific communication method for use outside of these times; email: safeguarding@westgate.hants.sch.uk

26. Communication times for our nursery are in alignment with nursery opening hours: 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday during our published calendar.

Types of unacceptable behaviour and communication

27. There are some types of behaviour / communication that the school consider unacceptable. These are as follows:

- Any physical aggression eg. slapping, hitting, punching and kicking;

- Physically intimidating an employee, or pupils e.g., standing very close to her/him; threatening to come to school to insist on a meeting without an appointment
- Spitting at an employee or pupil;
- Shaking, pointing or holding a fist towards employees or pupils;
- Shouting at employees or pupils (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing);
- Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010;
- Threatening or offensive comments about employees or pupil of the school; this can include verbally, via texts, emails, social media, etc.;
- Sending abusive messages to an employee including via text, email or social media
- A large volume of emails in respect of the same matter and/or over a short period of time (please see our Complaints Policy).
- Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed by the school.
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the school, its employees, on social media platforms
- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches)
- Breaching or not conforming to the School's security procedures
- Covertly recording phone calls or meetings with employees
- Any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening or offensive
- Any behaviour or suggestion that an employee is incompetent or unable to fulfil their role and responsibilities

This list is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour which has no place in our school community.

Actions that may be taken by the school as a result of unacceptable behaviour and communication

28. In the first instance, (if the unacceptable behaviour has occurred on site) the school will ask the parent to desist and/or leave the site. If the behaviour is of a serious nature, then the police will be contacted.

29. Thereafter the school (Headteacher/Member of School Leadership team) will gather information on allegations of unacceptable behaviour. This may include talking to the parties concerned or others as witnesses to the behaviour.

30. If unacceptable behaviour is considered to have occurred the following actions may be taken by the school, dependent on the severity/gravity of the behaviour:

- The parent will be told verbally that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
- The parent will be told in writing that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
- Advising the parent that all future meetings with employees will be conducted with a second person present and will be minuted by the School;
- Putting in place a contact plan to deal with any communication between the individual and school. For example, except in emergencies, communication to the school must be in writing only to a named individual and the school can set out timescales for school responses
- A warning letter or an immediate ban from the school site;
- Contacting the Police where behaviour is criminal in nature;
- Seek advice from the local authority's legal team regarding further action.

31. The school will always seek to respond to an incident in a proportional way. The final decision for how to respond to the unacceptable behaviour and communication rests with the headteacher and, where necessary, the Governing Body