Shipbourne School

Home-school Communication Policy

September 2026

Template: The Key

Version control: version 3 – reviewed with single change to reflect use of Google calendar

1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and families has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives families the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the school communicates with families
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication
- Helping families reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible
- Avoid misinformation, confusion or distress

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy

- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information

Staff will aim to respond to communication during core school hours (Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm) or their working hours if they work part-time. In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Directing communication appropriately as outlined in this policy
- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Checking all communications from the school
- Responding to communications from the school in a timely manner
- Ensuring that no negative comments about the school are made on social media, including What's App groups, even anonymously

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our parent code of conduct.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours and wherever possible, should not attempt communication during school holidays, unless it is urgent.

3. How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child and their engagement in school activities.

A range of school staff will be available on the lower gate at morning drop off and at the end of the day. Please do feel free to use this time for quick catch-ups, queries, updates or clarification wherever appropriate.

3.1 Class Dojo

The majority of our whole school communications will be via Class Dojo.

3.2 Email

We will use Bromcom (MCAS) messaging and Bromcom email to send:

- Communications from external agencies
- Specific 1:1 communications
- Detailed communications not suited to Class Dojo

3.3 School calendar

Our school website, Google calendar and Class Dojo include a full school calendar for planned events. Class Dojo will issue reminders at set times ahead of events.

Where possible, we will try to give parents at least two weeks' notice of any events or special occasions, including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials.

3.4 Phone calls

School staff will call parents if a specific issue needs to be discussed, if a child is unwell or in response to a request to make contact.

3.5 Letters and reports

We will only send letters home for certain official communications:

- Annual reports
- Test results
- Certain consent forms
- Where requested by external agencies

3.6 Reading records

Reading records are solely for recording home reading progress. They should not be used for home-school communications.

3.7 Meetings

We hold two parents' evenings a year. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing. Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, will be invited to attend further meetings to review provision.

3.9 School website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- School times and term dates
- Dates of events
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Information about before and after-school provision and school meals
- Information about school uniform
- Information about inclusion, pupil premium and sports funding

Parents should always check the website, MCAS and/or Class Dojo before contacting the school about arrangements.

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Communication should be reasonable, proportionate and respectful at all times. We reserve the right to restrict communication to a single point of contact and specific frequency limit if it becomes unreasonable, vexatious, malicious or could be categorised as targeted harassment.

We ask that the website, MCAS and Class Dojo are viewed before approaching staff with an admin query. Should contact be necessary, we encourage face-to-face discussion where possible and will

always ensure that staff are available at the beginning and end of a school day, and by appointment where required.

4.1 Email

Where messages need to be sent, we ask that email is the primary method of communication, using the addresses below as appropriate:

Administration: office@shipbourne.kent.sch.uk

Safeguarding and leadership: terri.daters@shipbourne.kent.sch.uk

Learning and wellbeing: MCAS messaging

Governing board: chair@bournepartnership.org

We aim to acknowledge all messages within the same working day, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within five working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school office.

4.2 Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should message via MCAS and the relevant member of staff will contact them by the end of their next working day.

If this is not possible, someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within three days of a request.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should MCAS message or call the school office, depending on urgency, to book an appointment at a mutually convenient time.

While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day, if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

4.4 Class Dojo

Class Dojo should not be used to message school staff or ask questions. Comments, when enabled, should only be used to add information or give positive feedback.

4.5 What's App groups

These may be set up independently of the school, for example for PTA or year group communication. These are not governed by school policies, but we ask that you remain respectful, in keeping with our school values and ethos.

5. Accessibility

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

5.1 Parents with additional communication needs or English as an additional language (EAL)

We aim to make communications accessible to all. All communications will be written as clearly and concisely as possible, and measures taken to ensure that the number of communications is reasonable.

Parents who need help communicating with the school can request reasonable adjustments, such as:

- School announcements and communications in accessible formats
- Interpreters or advocates in meetings
- Written translations where possible

Please contact the school office to discuss these or any additional arrangements if necessary.

6. Record keeping and confidentiality

In line with good safeguarding practice, as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), and to ensure a thorough, proactive approach to ensure your child's effective education and wellbeing, staff may record notes during or after meetings and conversations, however informal, and share these with other staff, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Headteacher. We will always endeavor to share meeting notes with you, but this will not always be possible, necessary or appropriate. Communication logs will be stored automatically on a pupil's record on Bromcom. We will always adhere to confidentiality when storing these records but may share them with the Local Authority upon request or if legal summons is served or if a Child Protection referral is required. Consent will be sought where appropriate, but it is not required. In the event of a Subject Access Request or request to view your child's educational record, these notes may not be shared, but you will be informed of the reasons why. Our secure child protection records, kept on Bromcom safeguarding platform, will not be shared with parents in the event of such a request, but these may be viewed by other school staff, the Local Authority or Ofsted. They will always be passed to your child's next school in line with KCSIE requirements. Information about third parties will be redacted.

6. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher has written this policy with approval by the Chair of Governors. It will be reviewed annually.

7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Parent code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Home-school agreement
- Staff wellbeing

- Social media policy
- Child protection policy
- Data protection and privacy policies

Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Message via MCAS
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) in the subject line
- We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff

Remember: check our website or Class Dojo first, much of the information you need is posted there.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT…	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
Learning/class activities/lessons/homework/ wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's class teacher – this can be direct at pick up or arranged via MCAS messaging.
Payments	Headteacher
School trips	Class teachers
Uniform/lost and found	Class teachers
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, please do so via MCAS If you want to request approval for term-time absence, please use MCAS online 'absence request'
Bullying and behaviour	Headteacher
School events/the school calendar	Class teachers
Special educational needs (SEN)	SENCo senco@shipbourne.kent.sch.uk
Before and after-school clubs	Headteacher
PTA	Shipbourne-pta@outlook.com
Governing board chair Governing board professional clerk	chair@bournepartnership.org Headteacher
Catering/meals	Headteacher or Caterlink