

# Communication Policy

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## **Communication with Parents and Students Policy**

### **1. Rationale**

Lymm High School recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (students and parents/carers, governors, Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies, etc), and is committed to being open and accessible to all who have an interest in the school. The key stakeholders for a school are parents and students and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and school.

The school policy is to create an environment of openness and ease of access for parents, students and the community to the Headteacher, Staff and Governors. By adopting this approach we aim to prevent minor issues becoming more serious and to ensure that major concerns are dealt with promptly and fairly.

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone) or written (through letters or email). Occasionally a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary.

Surveys indicate that the majority of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the two-way communications they have with school. However, this does not mean that the school always gets things right and this policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively and clearly.

Class Charts is the system we use to communicate with parents and each parent has their own specific login for this. This allows parents to receive 'Announcements' and view information specific to their child, such as their personal timetable, their attendance record and their behaviour record shown as positive and negative points.

### **2. Aims of the policy:**

1. To improve the quality of service given to students at Lymm High School by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, students and other stakeholders.
2. To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the school, parents and students on key service areas.

### **3. Communication**

Communication between the school and parents operates in the following ways:-

1. Prospective parents are invited to Open Evenings, usually in the October preceding the year of entry to the school. All prospective parents receive a school prospectus.
2. Prospective parents are invited, along with students, to an induction evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented.
3. The Parent Handbook (available on the school website) contains a wide range of information including that about the curriculum, where to buy uniform and details of staff members.

4. Parents are invited to a Year 7 Tutor Evening in September to meet the student's form tutor and review how the student has settled into the school.
5. Parents are invited to attend parents' evenings each year to meet teachers and review the academic progress of the student.
6. We also hold appropriately themed IAG (Information, Advice & Guidance) evenings at various points; for example, one for Year 9 options and another for Year 11 parents and carers to find out how they can support their children during the GCSE year.
7. Class Charts is used to set homework, allowing students and parents to see details of what homework has been set and when it is due.
8. The school website is the primary form of communication with parents. It provides access to a range of school communication and documents as well as providing a forum for celebrating the successes of our students:
  - a) At a whole school level, the website provides fortnightly updates in a bulletin from the Headteacher, monthly newsletters and access to a whole range of school documents, such as enrichment opportunities, examination results, Ofsted reports and policy documents.
  - b) There is also a Parent Communication page for each specific year group, providing information about upcoming events or relevant issues.
  - c) At a personal level Class Charts shows specific information to individual students including attendance data and behaviour points.
9. School notices are sent via the 'announcements' function via Class Charts, we recommend parents have their notifications on so they do not miss important information. **It is important parents ensure the school has an up to date email address and mobile phone number for them for this purpose.**
10. The school has an official Twitter account, which provides information about school events, celebrates our students' successes and links to other relevant information.
11. The school also has an official Facebook account, which provides further information about school events, celebrates our students' successes and links to other relevant information.
12. Communication about student progress takes place formally for each student: through progress reports, which are usually issued 3 times a year.
13. Queries about events at the school may be made by phone to the school or by e-mail. There is a quick reference guide below for who is likely to be the best person to contact for certain issues, but if in doubt, we advise parents to call Student Services and they will be happy to assist.
14. The school has published the following service standards to ensure a prompt response for communication requests by parents.

#### **4. Service Standards at Lymm High School**

We aim to respond to all parental communication as quickly as we can. Our aim is to ensure that:

- Emails and phone calls will be treated promptly with an initial response within 48 working hours (even if this is just to acknowledge receipt and to promise a full response by a certain date).
- Letters receive either a verbal response (usually by phone) within 48 working hours or a written response within 5 working days.

- All complaints or suggestions will be cleared or resolved in 5 working days (please see our complaints procedure for more details of how complaints will be handled).
- In exceptional circumstances where it is impossible to meet these deadlines, then the initiator will be contacted to explain why there has been a delay and when a full reply will be made.
- Please bear in mind that messages sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays should not expect a reply until term-time.
- We are happy for parents and carers to contact individual class teachers when there are concerns or queries about particular lessons; indeed, we encourage this. However, when doing so, we ask parents to bear in mind that most teachers teach hundreds of students at any one time and it is therefore impossible for them to undertake an extensive, ongoing dialogue with the parents of individual students over any significant period of time. We reserve the right for teachers to refrain from further contact where the demands for information become unrealistic.
- Emails that are abusive or unnecessarily unpleasant are very unlikely to receive a response unless there is a clear safeguarding concern. Likewise, staff are encouraged to put the phone down if they are faced with abuse.

## **5. Consultation**

Consultation between the school, parents and students operates in the following ways:-

1. Questionnaires are issued to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email). They may be accessed through the website, distributed at specific parental events or via "student post".
2. The consultation process via questionnaires addresses key service areas such as the school curriculum, changes to the timing of the school day, uniform, the framework for parental forum evenings, homework, the school's reporting system, primary school transition, the quality and accessibility of the school's materials etc.
3. The Headteacher holds regular Parent Forum events, where parents are invited into the school to give their views on what is currently working well in the school and what needs improving. They may also focus on specific issues that require more detailed consultation, such as those mentioned in the previous point.
4. The Governing Body (including parent governors) meets regularly and is consulted on a wide range of issues. One of the sub-committees specifically focuses on staff and student well-being.
5. The Parent Teachers' Association meets once a half term and is used by the Headteacher as a further means of gathering parental views.
6. A series of student councils (Form Council, Hall Council and School Council) are consulted on a range of key issues relating to the school. Meetings take place at least every half term, with additional meetings for specific issues.
7. Student Voice activities take place annually where members of SLT meet with a cross-section of students across all year groups to consult with them on a range of issues.
8. Members of the Leadership Team undertake "Learning Walks" regularly and discuss learning with students as part of this exercise.
9. Consultation between external agencies takes place with a view to improving the service provided by the school, for example, there is a multi-agency meeting each term hosted by the school.

10. The Special Educational Needs Department works closely with individual students, parents/carers and external experts and meetings are held frequently to discuss best practice and provision for individuals and groups.

## **6. Advice for parents**

If parents are unsure about who to contact with a specific issue or query, please refer to the “*Who to contact? FAQs*” document which is on the [school website](#).

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage. This can be done through a variety of means:

- A letter via their child’s tutor
- An email or phone call to the school office (details are on the school website)
- A phone call to Student Services
- An email or phone call to their child’s Head of Year
- By making an appointment to meet a member of staff
- At Parents’ Evenings
- An email or phone call to the Headteacher’s PA ([hheadon@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:hheadon@lymmhigh.org.uk))

Whilst the Headteacher is very willing to receive both suggestions and enquiries, parents will appreciate that in some circumstances it may be more appropriate for another member of staff who has a more detailed knowledge of the issue to respond in the first instance. However, if the response does not answer your concerns, then you are very welcome to contact the Headteacher directly.

We understand that sometimes parents and carers may be frustrated about issues that arise and we will always do our best to solve any problems. At the same time, our staff should not have to put up with communication that is rude, abusive or aggressive. In addition, we would much prefer parents or carers to contact us directly with concerns rather than raise them on social media before we have had the chance to respond.