

# Communication Policy

**This policy was ratified by Staff & Student Wellbeing Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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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.

Parents also have a login to our Parent Portal to view general school information as well as to view information specific to their child, such as their personal timetable and a record of Behaviour for Learning (BfL) grades in each lesson.

### **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 ~~June~~ and 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. Show My Homework is used to set homework, allowing students and parents to see details of what homework has been set and when it is due. This can be found on the school website.
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 the Parent Portal communicates information specific to individual students, such as reports and BfL grades.
9. Text messages are sent to alert parents when especially important information has been uploaded to the website and these are targeted to the relevant parents wherever possible. **It is important parents ensure the school has an up to date 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 Parents 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 and attached as an appendix to this policy.

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.

## APPENDIX 1: PARENTAL COMMUNICATION WITH SCHOOL FAQs

### ***When should I contact school?***

As soon as you have a concern! If in doubt, please contact us; we would far rather you contacted us for reassurance over something that turns out to be minor than spend time worrying about something.

### ***I know class teachers are very busy. Is it ok to contact them?***

Yes, it is absolutely fine to contact a class teacher if you need to. We only ask that you respect the fact that most teachers teach around 200 students and cannot, therefore, realistically enter into a detailed dialogue over a prolonged period of time with individual parents. The vast majority of instances where parents need to contact teachers can be dealt with via a quick email exchange, so feel free to do this in the first instance. Please also note that, as stated in our Communication Policy, we do not expect teachers to reply to messages outside of working hours.

### ***Can't I just contact the Headteacher if I've got a problem?***

Yes, you are always welcome to contact the Headteacher if you feel you need to (by emailing the Headteacher's PA, Mrs Headon, at [hheadon@lymmhigh.org.uk](mailto:hheadon@lymmhigh.org.uk) or calling (01925 750707)). At the same time, parents will appreciate that in many 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.

### ***How quickly can I expect a response to my queries?***

Please refer to the service standards section of the Communication Policy (on the website) for full details. Ordinarily, you can expect a response within 48 hours.

### ***How do I know who is the best person to contact?***

The table below is intended to help parents with information about who to contact in certain, common scenarios. If you are unsure about who to contact, we recommend you call the main school reception on 01925 755458, where our staff will be able to point you in the right direction. Email addresses can be found at the end of this document.

### ***Is there anything I else I should bear in mind?***

Hopefully this guide, along with our full communication policy, covers what you need. The only other thing we would say is that we understand that sometimes parents or carers may be frustrated about issues that arise and we will always do our best to solve these. At the same time, our staff should not have to put up with communication that is rude, abusive or aggressive. Equally, 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

## APPENDIX 2: WHO TO CONTACT: QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

ISSUE	WHO TO CONTACT	HOW?
Any safeguarding concern	Mrs Ruth Ball is in charge of safeguarding, but Heads of Year will also be able to help.	Phone Student Services on 01925 750711
Concerns about bullying	Any member of staff. Form tutor will usually be the first port of call, but HOYs and Student Services will also be able to help.	We'd hope that the student would be able to speak to somebody in school. They can also use the "TELLUS" text message system. Otherwise, please email or phone.
Reporting absence or other queries relating to attendance.	Phone the Main Office to report an absence. Our attendance officer, Mrs Grimshaw will be able to deal with other attendance- related queries.	Main Office number is 01925 755458 Mrs Grimshaw can be contacted by ringing Student Services or emailing <a href="mailto:kgrimshaw@lymmhigh.org.uk">kgrimshaw@lymmhigh.org.uk</a>
Concerns about your child's progress in a particular subject	Class teacher initially, but please contact the Head of Faculty if this does not resolve the issue.	Email is usually the most efficient way to contact teachers (see website for email addresses). They can always phone you back if necessary. The parent handbook (on the website) has details of heads of faculty for each subject.
Need for information about a particular subject - e.g. the best revision guides to buy or how best to support with homework	The 'Curriculum' section on the website has a lot of information on. Otherwise try the class teacher or Head of Faculty.	See above.
Concerns about the progress of your child generally - i.e. in more than one subject	Head of Year.	Email or phone call.
A complaint about a member of staff	Usually, the Head of Faculty is the most appropriate person, though if it is especially serious, the Headteacher should know. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be made to the Chair of Governors.	The parent handbook (on the website) has details of heads of faculty for each subject.  Complaints to the Headteacher should go to Mrs Headon, who also acts as Clerk to the Governors.
Concerns about friendship issues	The Form Tutor will usually be the best person to approach, but Student Services may also be able to help.	We'd hope that the student would be able to approach the form tutor themselves but, if they feel unable to, an email or phone call would be fine.
Queries about 'Show My Homework'	The website has plenty of information about Show My Homework (under 'Parents' and then 'Homework') and this should answer most queries. If not, try Miss Heeks.  If it's a query about the specific piece of homework, then the class teacher will be the best person to contact.	Mis Heeks' email address is <a href="mailto:eheeks@lymmhigh.org.uk">eheeks@lymmhigh.org.uk</a>  Email or phone call class teachers, as explained above
Questions about uniform	The website has details of the uniform policy - for example, in the Parent Handbook. Student Services or Heads of Year will also be able to help.	See above.
Questions or concerns relating to SEN provision	Mrs Bellers, our SENCo.	<a href="mailto:abellers@lymmhigh.org.uk">abellers@lymmhigh.org.uk</a>

Information about extra-curricular activities - e.g. times of clubs	The website has most of the relevant information, but Student Services can help if not.	See above.
Questions about, or problems with, Parent Pay	Ms Ralph	aralph@lymmhigh.org.uk
Issues relating to finance - e.g. payment for trips	Ms Ralph	aralph@lymmhigh.org.uk
Exam queries - e.g. dates/times of exams	The website usually has all the information you need but if you have problems, Mrs Monks, our exams officer will be able to help.	jmonks@lymmhigh.org.uk
Term dates	These are always on the website, in the calendar and on the term dates page.	
Questions about transport/buses	Student Services will be able to answer most queries	See above
Lost property	Student Services	See above
Something that doesn't fit into any of the categories above	Contact reception or Student Services and they will direct you to the appropriate person.	Main reception number is 01925 755458