Communications policy – 12-11-14

Owner: AGA/VEM

1.1 Introduction:

Our school has many lines of communication to maintain: within the school, with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between all these groups is essential, and students achieve more when everyone works together. Parents, carers, governors and friends of the school can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

1.2 Aim:

Successful communication is essential to us achieving the highest possible outcomes for our students and the best development and support for our colleagues. We want to inspire, engage, inform, value and listen to all our students, our colleagues, our parents and other stakeholders.

1.2.1 Aims overall
We aim to
- ensure that our communication with each member of the school community makes them feel valued, informed and engaged in school life
- have strong, clear, regular communication about our school activities with colleagues, students, parents and the local community
- be aware that some groups of students, staff and parents need encouraging and to be supported to be involved
- model our values, through communications, including showing high levels of aspiration, respect and courtesy for all members of our school community
- use appropriate means of communication especially dialogue
- have safeguarding in mind when communicating about individuals

1.3 Objectives:
to use communications to develop our positive school culture to ensure that colleagues, students, parents and the local community are always well informed and engaged re:

- key information for them in their role/position – both generic and individual
- the mission, aims and progress of our school
- information about other areas of the school
- timely information re assessments, exams and events
- parents and students receive individualised information which supports the student's education and engagement and that they are effectively consulted and engaged in developments.

1.4 Principles:
Our communications aim to convey a sense of valuing the recipient.

We ensure that our more vulnerable students and parents are fully engaged in our school life, taking additional time if needed.

Generic information is shared widely and transparently.

All members of staff see professional supportive communication as part of their role. Responsibility holders at all levels allow time for engaging communication with their teams: collectively and individually.

We want to be at the forefront of e-communications developments.

We aim to make communications timely, effective and efficient

Parents and carers*, staff and students are well informed about the key means of communication open to them.

We make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font, and add pictures where appropriate. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural and other groups represented in our school and community.

> *From this point on where parents is used, please assume this is parents and carers.

2. Audiences and Outcomes:

2.1 Consultation methods:
Where a key school development is to be launched, and certainly each year, with the school improvement plan the headteacher will ensure all staff, students and parent groups have a chance to discuss and input.

Where a plan requires subject, year or team specific implementation HoDs, YCCs or team leaders will allocate time in team meetings to discuss and take this forward.

2.2 Communication to parents:

In our school, we strive to maintain clear and effective communications with all parents, carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values by keeping parents and the community well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents and members of the community play in supporting the school.

We have various strategies and channels for communicating with parents and the community. Some of our communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement; while others reflect what we believe is important for our school.

For parents:

2.2.1   We send a newsletter in print and electronically to parents every fortnight. It contains general details of school events and activities. Parents expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general or specific nature when necessary. Parents with computers are encouraged to receive information by e-mail.

2.2.2   At the beginning of each year, all YCCs write to the parents of the students in their year groups about key expectations and events.

2.2.3   Students in all classes Yr7-11 have a home school diary. This can be used by parents to record a wide range of information that they wish to share

regularly with the teacher. Teachers use the home-school diary to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents.

2.2.4   The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. This is usually done via the form tutor. Email, appointments or phone calls can be used. If parents have any doubts about who to contact they should speak to Reception staff.

2.2.5   We hold a meeting for new parents prior to their child's entry.

2.2.6   Any residential visit that students make involves meetings with parents regarding the requirements and content of the visit, and a post-visit sharing session.

2.2.7   If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent or carer by telephone on the first day of absence, to find out the reason for the absence. If no contact can be made with any named person, we may contact the Unit Welfare Officer / Families' Officer to ensure the pupil's well-being and safety. See attendance and CP policy.

2.2.8 Best practice in communication in writing to parents is supported by having standard letters for regular events/issues. Standard letters will be available on O drive. Any non standard letters or emails need to be proof read by a members of staff in your line management structure to ensure they meet school standards. Emails are a quick way of communicating. They should always meet the same professional standards as letters although they may be briefer.

2.2.9   Our home-school agreement will be re-launched in September 2015. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the students, the responsibilities of parents, and what the school expects of the students. We ask parents to sign this agreement when their child starts at our school, and to renew it each year. Students have their own agreement to sign.

2.2.10 The agreement covers the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the school, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework.

2.2.11 Boundaries about communication with school
a) Sometimes when there is a complex situation**, one member of staff** will be allocated by the school to be the conduit between home and school
This could be the YCC, the Inclusion leader, a senior leader or a pastoral counsellor.
Parents can expect a **weekly communication** with this staff member,
Sometimes **the school** may decide that more frequent communication needs to happen.
It is always expected that parents will be mindful that interactions with the pupils will take priority over communication with parents.

b) If there are any concerns about the type of communication a parent is expecting with school or if there appears to be a breakdown in communication then staff or parents may refer this to the headteacher. The

headteacher will then arrange to clarify communications protocols with all parties in the best interests of the student.

2.3 Communications to Staff

2.3.1 Weekly bulletin

The weekly bulletin is the key mechanism for communications with all staff. It is the responsibility of every colleague to both read this and use it appropriately and effectively.

2.3.2. How everyone should hear about school developments and decisions

Everyone should hear about developments or decisions which affect them from their line manager or someone in their line management structure. All managers and leaders should aim for this so that colleagues are appropriately informed and can raise comments in an appropriate forum

2.3.3. Briefings

The weekly briefings on Tuesdays and Thursdays are for teaching and student facing staff. An equivalent weekly briefing for office based staff is held on Wednesday at 9am.

2.3.4. Response times
The appropriate time scales for responses to communications are:
a) Office staff to emails and phone calls – within 24 hours
b) SLT and YCCs to emails and phone calls – within 48 hours – more rapidly if judged urgent
c) Other staff – within 72 hours for a phone call or email
d) Out of office notices should be used where a member of office staff, a YCC or an SLT member is out of the office for a day or more.

2.3.6 Staff Handbook

All our systems and procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook and are regularly reviewed at staff meetings.

2.4 Communication to students:

2.4.1 Form tutors and assemblies

The daily form period or assembly provides the key space for communication with students about key events.

2.4.2 Student Voice

The form representatives attend student voice meetings and feedback to their form groups. See student voice guidance.

2.4.3 Student Bulletin

Weekly bulletin specifically for students with upcoming dates, events, trips etc – to be read out by form tutors in tutor time each week

2.4.4 Display

Displays reflect the school priorities, vision, mission and values, the school community and our aspirational culture. Displays must promote equality and high standards for all.

2.4.5 Spotlight/er

Fortnightly newsletter for students & parents with general information about past and forthcoming events. Student reporters to contribute and drive content.

2.5 Communications with other schools and outside agencies:

2.5.1 We recognise that students have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that students may participate more fully. Support comes from other services (such as speech and language therapy), from specialist teams within Pupil and Family Services and other agencies within the community. We will always involve parents by seeking additional advice, help and support.

2.5.2 We recognise that students have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. Outside the family home, we are the people most in contact with our students, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help students. When any member of staff has concerns about the welfare of a child, these will be passed on to the Child Protection team, who may share this information when it is in the child's best interests to do so.

2.5.3 We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

2.5.4 We ensure that information for staff about pay and conditions of service received from HQ SCE and from the People, Pay and Pensions' Agency (PPPA) is made available to all who are employed at our school[1].

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities:

Headteacher: setting standards for communication in all forms for the school; identifying training and development needs overall; follow up where communication falls below expectations, using communication to promote the school vision and to promote aspiration for all, ensuring communication makes school life easier for colleagues

Leadership team: ensuring standards are met in their areas of responsibility and identifying and implementing training and development needs; making and

communicating decisions, using communication to promote the school vision and to promote aspiration for all

Communications manager: support the development of effective internal and external communication channels with staff, students, their parents and members of the wider school community; establish a clear brand identity for the school and build on that image; utilize a variety of media to maximise awareness and support of the school's goals and objectives, to include; print, photography, video & display; develop and maintain our online presence; provide on-going training and support to staff

Team leaders: ensuring standards are met by their teams; implementing developments as necessary; making and communicating decisions

Website manager: ensuring website meets school standards and provides an outstanding source of information for the school
Inclusion and CEAL team: provision of general and individual advice re best methods of communicating with particular parents and students
Reception: ensuring first contact communications with school are always welcoming, engaging and professional

Spotlight/Spotlighter editor: ensuring that both publications reflect the school ethos and promote the school to a wide audience including students, staff and parents

Display oversight around school: ensuring visual communication via display promotes school values and equality of high aspiration for all

Governors: reviewing standards of communication each year together with evaluation from staff/students and parents about communication

All staff: adhering to school standards for communications

All parents and students: adhering to school standards for communication

3.2 Procedures:

Schedule of communication for each year: Communications manager
Training – Headteacher and colleagues overseeing training
Assemblies – standards - Headteacher
Standards and expectations – Headteacher
Ensuring engagement of all their teams – All line managers
Ensuring engagement of all student groups – All responsibility holders and teachers
Website – Website & communications assistant
Spotlight/Spotlighter – Website & communications assistant
Emails and texts – Reception
Letters – Reception
Advice re EAL students and parents – CEAL team
Advice re SEN students and parents – Inclusion team

3.3 Existing methods of communication include:

- Assemblies

- Contributions to Spotlighter and Spotlight

- Digital signage

- Emails

- Face to face briefings

- Face to face meetings – bilateral and group meetings

- Form time and feedback sheets

- Governors' Meeting Minutes

- Headteacher's report to Governors

- Individual letters

- Individualised reports

- Induction packs for new staff

- Informal meetings between staff

- Letters for particular issues

- Notice-boards – in public areas and in classrooms

- Open days

- Parents' Evenings

- Parents' Handbook

- Phone calls

- Phone calls to and from parents

- Planners

- Students talking to advisers

- Students talking to TAs, learning support staff and other adults in the school

- Questionnaires/surveys

- Reports to parents

- Representation at Meetings

- School Council

- School Improvement Plan

- School Prospectuses

- School Website

- Self Evaluation Form (OfSTED)

- SLT and behaviour mentors at the gate

- Staff / governor development time and induction training

- Staff meeting minutes

- Suggestions boxes

- Texts

- Twitter

- Vimeo (video hosting website)

- Website

- Word of mouth

4 General Communications:

5 School Prospectus

5.1 The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. We update this each summer term.

5.2 The School Profile complements the work of our school and contains information about the most recent activities and successes of the school, including progress, priorities and performance.

5.3 Information is published on our school website, which has details of staff, school operations, the current Ofsted report and school policies.

6 Public Access to Documents

6.1 The school makes a range of documentation available to parents. Items include minutes of GOVERNORS meetings, and all school policies, including those that the GOVERNORS are required to ratify in relation to the following matters: sex education, health and safety, curriculum, performance management, admissions, and action planning following an inspection. There is also a range of UK national, Agency (SCE) and Local Authority documentation. We make copies available on request and through our web site.

7 Use of Photographs and Names

7.1 Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes, including displays, records of practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and records of important school events. Photographs of students will only be used if they add value to a pupil's or group's work.

7.2 We may use photographs of students or their work when communicating with parents and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus, on the school website, or in the GOVERNORS[2] report to parents. The local or national press may on occasions publish photographs of students participating in events at school, for example the Arts Mark Awards: permission is sought in these cases.

7.3 Parental permission will always be obtained before using photographs of students or their work as detailed in 7.2 above. Lists of those students for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

7.4 Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable (photos of students in swimwear would be unsuitable, as would individual and close-up shots).

7.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with students' names.

8 Electronic Communications

8.1 We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have a school website. Parents are required to give permission when they register their child for him / her to use the Internet in school. A record of those who do not have permission is held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

8.2 All school members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our Internet policy. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by software, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.

8.3 The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs through the use of the SCE Virtual Learning Environment – or Grid for Learning.

8.4 Our school website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate our work with the worldwide learning community. It complies with the SCE Policy on school websites.

8.5 Members of staff, classes as a whole, and individual older students will all have their own school-provided e-mail accounts.

8.6 The school will filter access to **social networking sites.**

8.7 **Newsgroups** will be blocked unless a specific use is approved for school use.

8.8 Pupils will be advised never to give out personal details of any kind which may identify them or their location.

8.9 Pupils and parents will be advised that the use of social network spaces outside school is inappropriate for primary aged pupils.

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[2] School Governance Committee

9 Monitoring and review

9.1 This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed in conjunction with the School Governance Committee in Summer 2017 or earlier if required.