



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Aspiration – Respect – Excellence

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

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Introduction

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre is committed to creating a partnership with parents; communication between home and school is key. Throughout this policy, 'parents' refers to all those with parental responsibility, including guardians and carers. We appreciate that everyone wants what is best for students, that teachers have full teaching timetables and parents are extremely busy. It is important that communication is efficient, structured and manageable. Communication must remain polite, professional and with the primary focus to be about a student's education and welfare.

People available to help parents:

- Mentor – First point of contact for all routine issues and concerns
- Head of Achievement – For issues concerning achievement, attendance, behaviour and uniform
- First Aider – For any medical issues or concerns
- Curriculum Leader – For subject-specific information or concerns
- Attendance Officer – To support students, parents and teachers in matters of behaviour and attendance
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator – To support those children with SEND
- The Star Centre – To support students who need emotional support
- Senior Leaders – To support all aspects of school life

Policy Aims

- Outline methods for communication between school and parents
- What to do if the communication expectations are not met

Communication Methods

Staff will communicate with parents to praise a student as this is often a positive experience for both staff, parents and students. Staff and parents might need to communicate regarding a student's behaviour and/or safeguarding concerns. Refer to our Behaviour Policy and our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Alternatively, staff may need to discuss a behaviour incident and it is important to remember that consequences are intended to have a specific impact so that a student learns not to repeat that anti-social or unsocial behaviour and to reinforce the expectations of prosocial behaviour in line with the core values of the academy.

Staff will aim to respond to parent queries at their earliest opportunity but have limited time to do so due to their teaching or other commitments and responsibilities which may extend beyond the classroom. Staff are not expected to respond to queries outside of the school day. Staff are expected to respond within 1 working day.

We request that all communication will remain calm and polite. Refer to our Highdown Handbook for the Home-Academy Contract and 'People available to help parents'.

We expect parents to keep the academy informed of changes of contact details to allow for effective communication.

Class Charts (online system) and email are our primary routes for sharing important information with parents.

1. Email:

- **This is our preferred method of communication for parents communicating with the school.**
- Parents should use office@highdown.reading.sch.uk to communicate with school.
- Our administrative team will direct your query to relevant/appropriate member/s of staff.
- It is acceptable to continue conversations with teachers via this method but we ask parents to use office@highdown.reading.sch.uk for any new questions or issues so that it can be tracked and routed accordingly.
- Parents may contact Heads of Achievement, Assistant Heads of Achievement, Curriculum Leaders and Senior Leaders directly via the links on our Key Contacts web page.
- Parents should check their emails regularly (including their Junk/Clutter email folders) as staff will send reports, parent newsletters, headteacher letters, trip information, and more, via this method.

2. Telephone:

- Parents may contact the school via the school's main office on 0118 901 5800.
- The member of staff you wish to speak to might not be available straight away, they will get back to you as soon as possible.

3. Face to Face Meetings:

- Meetings should always be prearranged – It will not be possible to speak to a particular member of staff without an appointment as they may be teaching, have other commitments at that time, and may not have the relevant information required for a productive meeting at the time.
- Appointments can be booked via telephone or email so that a time can be booked that is convenient for all.
- The school may be able to set up virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams, where appropriate or necessary.
- Parents should let the school know, in advance, if they are unable to attend a scheduled meeting.
- If the matter is urgent, for instance there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone the office staff who will do their best to find an appropriate member of staff to see you.

4. Class Charts:

- Parents should have access to Class Charts, either online or via the parent app. The school will provide parents with an access code.
- Staff will set home learning using Class Charts which can be monitored by parents and students using their activation code (our administrative team can support if required).
- House and consequence points, as well as same day after school detentions, can be tracked.
- Well-being can be tracked and recorded by staff, students or parents.
- Staff may wish to use 'Announcements' to communicate with parents and/or students.

- 'Announcements' on Class Charts is used to share our school newsletter.
- Parents should use Class Charts to inform the school of their child's absence from school.

5. Highdown's website:

- Parents can find our information on our website - <https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk>
- This includes:
 - Key contacts.
 - Our calendar, including upcoming events, and term dates.
 - Our uniform suppliers SWI Schoolware - <https://www.swischoolwear.co.uk>
 - Useful information and financial payment on ParentMail - <https://pmx.parentmail.co.uk/#core/login>
 - Subject evening bookings - <https://highdown.schoolcloud.co.uk>
 - Parent newsletter - <https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/parent-newsletter>

6. Social Media:

- We use our social media platforms to share with parents regarding:
 - Key events
 - Student or staff achievements
 - Subject information
- Our school accounts:
 - Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/emmergreen/>
 - Twitter – @HighdownSchool and our sixth form @Highdown6thForm
 - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/highdownschool/?hl=en>
- Specific subject accounts, or areas of the school, for example:
 - Highdown School Library on Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/highdown_library/
 - Highdown PE on Twitter - @HighdownPE
 - Highdown Performing Arts on Twitter- @HighdownPARTs
- We do not monitor direct messages so will not respond to parents or students this way. To contact the school, please use another method of communication.
- We aim to keep our social media platforms up to date.
- When on trips, we will provide updates as soon as possible when they are received by the school. Please refer to the Offsite Activities Policy for more information.
- Our social media platforms have their own terms and conditions regarding posts and comments which mean we have the right to remove any unacceptable posts on our platforms.
- Some members of staff may have their own social media presence. These will represent their own views and not those of the academy. Parents should not contact staff using this method.
- Parent groups may initiate their own online forums linked to Highdown School. However, parents should be mindful that these are not administered or governed by the academy and therefore, will provide the views of, and/or information from, individuals and not from the school. Parents should access official communication routes for accurate information pertaining to the academy.

Communication Standards Below Expectations

- If you have had no response within a reasonable timeframe, please contact office@highdown.reading.sch.uk with your concerns and the original date of contact and content.
- The academy is committed to working with parents and will always seek to find resolution where communication standards are below expectation.
- If a solution cannot be found, please ask for a meeting with the member of staff and their line manager to find one.