

Christ Church School, Hampstead
Communications Policy and Standards

1. Introduction

Effective communication is a vital part of the successful running of a busy school. At Christ Church School we pride ourselves on effective communication between all groups of the school community: pupils, parents, staff, governors, Camden Local Authority, LDBS (London Diocesan Board for Schools), volunteers, visitors and the local community.

Communication with the school takes many and varied forms, including face-to-face and telephone conversations and meetings between parents and staff members, staff meetings and written briefings for staff members, information emailed out to parents and/or governors, emails and letters between the school and parents, as well as our school website for the wider public.

This policy does not seek to cover or regulate all forms of communication that take place in school except to set out that we believe that all communication should be timely, courteous and helpful. School staff will endeavour to be courteous and professional in all communications and will expect all communications with them (in person or written) also be courteous and civil. School staff are not expected to respond to communications to them which are not courteous or civil.

All enquiries from the press will be directed in the first instance to the head teacher.

This policy was initially written by the head teacher in January 2013 in consultation with staff and governors and with advice from Camden's complaints/communications adviser. It should be read alongside the school's mission statement and other school policies including the Complaints, Freedom of Information and Data Protection Policies. It is reviewed regularly and at least every three years to ensure it a reflection of current best practice in the school.

2. Standards when responding to telephone contact

- We will explain to the caller what action we are taking and make sure they understand why.
- We will speak in plain English and avoid using jargon.
- We will ring the caller back if we promised to do so.
- We will tell the caller that they can contact us again if their query isn't dealt with.
- We will send the caller the information we promised within 3 school working days for standard information (leaflets and standard letters) and 10 school working days for all others (see below).

3. Standards when responding to written communication (letters and emails, this includes notes in home school diaries)

- We will reply to requests for standard school information within 3 school working days.
- We will reply to all other correspondence within 10 school working days.
- We will reply in the same format in which we received the correspondence, unless there is a good reason not to do so (e.g. legal obligations).
- We will deal with all the issues in the person's query. If it is not our area we will consult with the appropriate member of staff to give as full a response as we can in a single letter/email.
- If we cannot reply within 10 school working days, we will send an acknowledgement following the guidelines below.

4. Acknowledgements

- If it is going to take us more than 10 school working days to respond in full, we will send an acknowledgement letter/email and update.
- The content of the acknowledgement letter/email will include:
 - when we received the letter/email

- who is dealing with the enquiry (including full contact details) and
 - when a full reply will be available.
- We will then send a fuller response by the date given in the acknowledgement letter/email.

5. Response times

The receipt date will be the school working day on which the communication was originally received and day 1 of any response timescale will commence on the following school working day (i.e. day 3 or 10 will count as the third or tenth school working day after the communication is received).

Other policy or legislation may apply to communications (e.g. requests covered by our publication scheme, requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, subject access requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 or correspondence with forms part of our agreed Complaints Policy) and in those circumstances we will defer to the timescales in the legislation/policies.

6. Sharing contact information

- Email communications from parents and members of the public should be addressed to members of staff via the admin@cchurchnw3.camden.sch.uk email address. The school will not share staff members' individual email accounts with parents or members of the public.
- The admin email address will be checked at least once every school working day and emails forwarded to relevant members of staff.
- Members of staff do not have to respond to emails sent by parents directly to their individual email accounts.
- Staff members will under no circumstances be expected to share their personal telephone contact information with parents or pupils.

7. Confidentiality

- Letters marked 'confidential' will not be opened by admin staff and will be passed directly to the member of staff to whom they are addressed.
- Emails marked confidential in the subject line will be forwarded directly to the member of staff to whom they are addressed. Any documents labelled confidential will not be opened by admin staff but forwarded directly to the member of staff to whom they are addressed.

Ratified by Governing Body, March 2013

Reviewed and ratified with minor amendments by Governing Body, June 2016

Reviewed and ratified with minor amendments by Governing Body, October 2017