



Dunnottar School

Parental Communication Policy

August 2022



1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

- 1.1 We recognise that the relationship which exists between our school and the community is a partnership, and that all good partnerships thrive on excellent effective communication. This policy therefore seeks to define the means by which we are able to maintain effective communications between all stakeholders within our school community in addition to providing an overview of what parents/carers can expect of the school and, in turn, what the school will expect of parents/carers.
- 1.2 This policy embodies the current national priorities around developing increased opportunity for parental involvement and engagement and recognises the importance of including parents/carers in meaningful dialogue relating to our young person's learning.

Within all avenues of communication, we politely request that all members of our school community ensure the tone of communications remain polite, non-confrontational and solution focussed. We seek to develop confidence and trust between parents/carers, children, young people and staff and recognise the importance that the views of all are listened to so that together we can build the best possible experience for our full school community.

- 1.3 This policy complies with relevant Aberdeenshire Council policy documents, including the [Customer Service Charter](#).

2. PARENTAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL

2.1 Enquiries

- 2.1.1 Parents/carers are welcome to raise matters with the school by visiting reception, by telephone or by letter/email. In many cases, including where a message has to be passed to a pupil, such enquiries will be dealt with directly by our school office staff.

Where another member of staff is required to respond, the following will apply:

- **Non-urgent enquiries** – In such cases, please feel free to contact us by telephone, letter or email. Upon receipt of your message our office staff will forward it to the relevant member(s) of our team. As a school, to facilitate effective communication, we aim to acknowledge and respond to non-urgent enquiries within five working days. In many cases, however – particularly where there is a time factor – responses will be quicker.

There may however also be occasions where it is not possible to respond within this timeframe. In these situations, we will acknowledge your enquiry within five working days and respond in line with the Council's Customer Service Standards which state that general correspondence (letters, emails and enquiries) will be responded to within 20 working days.

- **Matters requiring an immediate response** – Where a matter is of such urgency that it requires an immediate response, it will be passed to the most appropriate member of staff who will usually be a member of the school's Head Teacher. Where possible, the member of staff will respond to such enquiries at the time of contact however, where this is not possible, you will be contacted as a matter of urgency within 24 hours (most likely, later the same day).
- **Enquiries by email** – All parent enquiries by email should be directed to the school's generic account: ***dunnottar.sch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk***

This will allow enquiries to be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff, with line managers copied in as appropriate. Parents/carers are advised on the website of broad remit areas within the school in order that they can mark their email for the attention of that person.

- 2.2 **Letters to the School** – Parents/carers are welcome to send letters to communicate relevant information (such as: reasons for absence, appointment times, etc.) to appropriate members of staff within the school. All letters of this nature should be handed in to the school office to ensure effective handling of the information/your enquiry. Should you wish to communicate information of a more confidential or personal nature, letters should be addressed to the Head Teacher and marked as 'confidential'.
- 2.3 **School Holidays** – Any communication received by the school during times of school closure or school holiday will be acknowledged and responded to upon the school reopening. Where communication has been received during a holiday period the timescales for acknowledging and responding to that communication will begin upon the reopening of the school.
- 2.4 **Social Media** – In today's modern world many young people and adults engage in online activities enjoying the convenience offered when communicating via social media. We encourage our school community to participate positively when using any form of social media, *however would politely ask that **parents/carers do not use social media private messaging to contact members of staff.** Communicating with staff in this way breaches guidance issued to teachers by the General Teaching Council for Scotland.*
- 2.5 **Parental Complaints** - Should a parent/carer wish to make a formal complaint about any aspect of the school, this should be addressed to the Head Teacher. The school follows the Aberdeenshire Council Complaints Procedure. Such complaints can be made by email, letter, telephone or in person. Please contact the school office for further information.
- 2.6 **Subject Access Requests (SAR)** – the Data Protection Act 2018 protects individuals from possible misuse of their information, while giving them legal rights to gain access to the information held about them by an organisation or individual within

it. If a parent wishes to access information about themselves or their child(ren) this should be submitted in writing to the Council's Data Protection Team at: dataprotection@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

- 2.7 **Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests** – Members of the public have a legal right under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 to access information held by the Council. If you wish to request information from the Council, please contact the Council's Freedom of Information Team at: foi@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN GOOD HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 Communication between school and home is most effective when all parties are clear of the expectation upon them. The following are key ways in which parents/carers can support the work of the school in terms of communication:

3.2 Pupil Absence

- 3.2.1 The school's over-riding obligation is to ensure the safety of the children and young people entrusted to it, and it is therefore of the highest importance that reasons for any pupil absences are established as a priority each morning.

It is therefore essential that parents notify the school at their earliest possible opportunity where circumstances are likely to result in their child being absent from school.

- 3.2.2 Where no such notification has been received, parents will be contacted asking for such information.

Parents are requested to respond to such messages as a matter of urgency, as the school will continue to pursue absences until such time as it has established a reason for an absence.

In the past, this has led to the unnecessary involvement of the police.

- 3.2.3 It is also very important that parents provide the school with absence notes, when appropriate, following medical absences.

3.3 Information Returns

- 3.3.1 Throughout the session parents will be asked to make returns to the school by a stated deadline. These could be for a number of reasons, such as information data updates, confirmation of attendance of a pupil on a school trip or activity, feedback on reports etc.

Please note that it considerably eases the administrative burden to the school when parents are able to observe the deadlines provided and we appreciate your help and cooperation in this regard.

3.4 Updating the School on Personal Matters

- 3.4.1 All our pupils can be affected by things going on at home or in their personal lives and these in turn can have an impact on their learning. It is very helpful for the school to be made aware of anything that a young person may be experiencing away from school that could be having an impact on how they are feeling in school. This could be something such as a family bereavement or friendship difficulties.

In such circumstances contact should be made with the Class Teacher.

3.5 Updating the School in the Event of Change of Contact Details

- 3.5.1 It is very important that the school has current contact details for parents/carers and other relatives. Parents/carers are requested to notify the school of such changes, both to their own contact details and those of relatives. This can be a particular problem for the school when it comes to mobile phone numbers.

Changes to contact details should be communicated to the school office.

3.6 Use of Social Media

- 3.6.1 Consideration should be given regarding the nature of comments made about the school or members of staff on social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

We respectfully ask that social media, whether public or private, is not used to voice complaints about the school, staff, parents/carers or pupils or identify/post images/video/comments regarding staff and/or children or young people. When used in this way social media has the potential to cause offence and discredit members of our school community. This can be damaging for both the individuals concerned and our school's reputation within the community.

Where a parent/carer has a concern or complaint this should be raised with the school directly in order that they can be effectively addressed in a timely manner through the appropriate channels.

4. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS/CARERS

4.1 The School Handbook

- 4.1.1 A school handbook is made available to all parents/carers through the school website and is updated by December of each year. This handbook meets the requirements of the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and its purposes include:

- providing a welcome for new parents/carers to the school;
- helping parents/carers to choose a school; and
- helping parents/carers to prepare their child for school.

- 4.1.2 The handbook should serve as a practical guide to parents/carers about school, authority and national policies and how these will impact on their child's experience at the school. It should also give them a good 'feel' for the sort of school that we are.

The school handbook is also available in hard copy upon request.

4.2 Standards and Qualities Report

- 4.2.1 The school is required under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc (Scotland) Act (2000) to publish an annual report including key performance measures such as those relating to attainment and attendance. This report is published on the school website in September.

4.3 General Communications to all Parents/Carers

- 4.3.1 Our school uses a variety of methods to communicate with parents/carers on matters which are of interest to them. These include:

- **Groupcall** – this facility allows the school to send short text and email messages to parents/carers. Text messages are usually used only for matters that require to be drawn to parents' attention urgently such as unexplained absences, school bus or club cancellations or severe weather closures. Email is our preferred means of communication and we hold parental email addresses for almost all children and young people. Where families are unable to receive email communication from the school, we will provide paper copies instead. Should you require paper copies please make this request by contacting our school office.
- **The School Website** – the school website is a very useful resource for parents/carers. As well as providing news updates, the website is the place where parents/carers are most likely to find information they need about the school. This includes the school's calendar of events, the school handbook and other key documents. The school website also provides clear details for parents/carers on how they can contact the school.
- **Seesaw & Social Media** – these electronic tools are particularly useful for providing updates on pupils' achievements and progress both within the school and in relation to extra-curricular activities and wider achievement.

Our main Twitter account uses the handle: @DunnottarSchool

4.4 Communication regarding the curriculum/learning and teaching

There are two parent's events and a written reports throughout the year. Primary staff are usually available for brief, informal discussion at the end of the school day (not at the start of the school day when transition into school is the priority), but formal appointments can also be arranged if more in depth discussion is required. Parents/carers are also provided with a curriculum overview at the beginning of each term via class teacher newsletters.

There are termly 'Sharing Our Learning' events when pupils showcase their learning to parents/carers around their classroom, via assembly or community café.

Should parents/carers wish to discuss their child's progress, contact should be made in the first instance with the Class Teacher.

5. SEEKING PARENTS'/CARER'S VIEWS

5.1 The Parent Council

The Parent Voice, which meets termly and is attended by the Head Teacher, is a key vehicle for parents/carers to share their views. These meetings are also used by the school leadership to provide parents/carers with updates on a wide range of issues, ranging from small changes to procedures to very significant government policy changes. The school is committed to harnessing the potential of the Parent Council as a key forum for interaction with parents/carers and will always seek to support initiatives raised through this body.

5.2 Parental Involvement in School Self-Evaluation and Annual Planning

5.2.1 The school is also keen to involve parents/carers, as well as other stakeholders, in its annual processes of self-evaluation and planning. Parents' representatives are invited to take part in the annual strategic planning session, which takes place towards the end of each academic session.

5.3 Consultation on Proposed Change

5.3.1. The school is committed to consulting parents/carers wherever possible, particularly in cases where significant changes in policy or procedures are under consideration. As well as pupils themselves, parents/carers are key stakeholders within the school community and their views are valued and will be taken into consideration in the making of decisions.

5.4 On-going Evaluation of Events

5.4.1 The school is also committed to seeking regular feedback from parents/carers on activities and we may issue evaluation forms to seek parents' views on how events might be improved at appropriate times of the session.

5.5. Annual Parental Survey

5.5.1 In addition to these methods of seeking parental views, the school may also conduct a formal parental survey, covering a wide range of the school's functions, towards the end of an academic session. These questions largely remain the same each year which allows the school to note trends – either positive or negative – in terms of parental responses. A summary of this survey is shared annually with the Parent Council and, where appropriate, their views on next steps sought.

6. WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

6.1 Should you wish to discuss any aspect of your child's experience at Dunnottar School please contact the relevant member of Staff. An up-to-date list of staff names can be found on the school website.

We have summarised some common reasons parents/carers need to contact us below and have indicated who the most relevant contact would be in each case.

Nature of Enquiry	Main Contact
General e.g. Attendance/Absence, Medical, ParentPortal, Extra-Curricular Activities	Office Staff
Class related e.g. Progress, Homework, Reporting, Relationships/Behaviour	Class Teacher
Additional Support Needs, Child Protection Concerns	Head Teacher
Special Family Circumstances, Formal Complaints	Head Teacher

Should you have any concern that remains unresolved, please do not hesitate to contact the Head Teacher.

- 6.1.1 Please note that we are committed to providing an excellent level of service. You will be treated with courtesy and respect by our staff. **Please treat our staff with respect in return.**
- 6.1.2 Aberdeenshire Council has a zero-tolerance approach to violence and aggression towards its staff. Unacceptable behaviour is not always aggressive or verbally abusive, but can also be defined, for example, by unreasonable persistence, constant contact or refusal to accept explanations or decisions.

7. SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

Dunnottar School High Street, Stonehaven AB39 2JN

Email Address: **Dunnottar.sch@aberdeenshire.gov.uk** Phone No: **01569 690505** Website: **[Dunnottar School](#)** Twitter: **@DunnottarSchool**