



St Francis Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Love: for God, each other, our learning, and the world.

Communication Policy

Policy drawn up by SLT in consultation with staff and governors

Version No	Date	Change/Review
V1.0	April 2023	Policy prepared
V1.1	January 2024	Reviewed and ratified
V1.2	November 2025	Reviewed and ratified

Policy Document Version Control Log

Version	Date	Description of changes and person/organisation responsible
V1.1	January 2024	No changes
V1.2	November 2025	Change to school vision

Links to other policies

- Parent code of conduct
- Staff Code of conduct
- Mobile Phone and recording device
- Absence
- Whistleblowing
- Safeguarding

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1. Introduction

At St Francis, we believe that every member of our school community should feel valued, respected and treated as an individual, in accordance with our school vision which states: *'...children are a gift from God. Our school is a diverse community where equality and collaboration are celebrated.'*

To support this, we consider that clear and open communication between all parties is essential and that communication is respectful, clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

2. Definition of communication

St Francis Primary School understands that communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves:

- The management of relationships and the need to involve people.

Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. St Francis Primary School aims to remember the importance of listening. Every staff member has a responsibility to support effective communications. For the purposes of this policy, communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated.

3. Aims

3a. The positive impact of communication for parents/carers

Through clear and open communication, St Francis aims to:

- give parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education;
- help the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers;
- build trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs.

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers;
- setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers;
- helping parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to
- address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible.

3b. The positive impact of communication for staff

We believe that St Francis staff should have a good work-life balance. It is easy and common for school staff to work beyond their contracted hours. Their sense of duty to care and support pupils and parents can often override their own need for time and space to strengthen their wellbeing. The aim of this guidance is to clarify expectations for staff, in terms of communicating with colleagues, external agencies, and parents/carers. In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4a. Headteacher and SLT

The headteacher and SLT are responsible for:

- ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate;
- monitoring the implementation of this policy;
- regularly reviewing this policy.

4b. Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy;
- working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves).

The school office can be contacted between 8.00am – 4.00pm on school weekdays.

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Staff will typically respond to communication during core school hours from 8.00am – 8.30am or after school from 3.30pm – 5.30pm, on their working days. A response may not be sent immediately; this may take up to 48 hours. Staff often work around other responsibilities and commitments within school so they will at times respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so. This is in line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance.

If a staff member feels they are being contacted excessively by a parent they will report this to the headteacher, as this is in breach of the Parent Code of Conduct policy.

If a staff member feels that a parent is being threatening, abusive or unreasonable in requests, this should be reported to the headteacher. This may result in the parent being blocked from contacting that member of staff. (Link to policy: Parent Code of Conduct.)

4c. Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times;
- making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance;
- responding to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner;
- checking all communications from the school.

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with the Parent Code of Conduct policy.

Parents should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours 8:00am – 5:30pm, or during school holidays.

5. How we communicate with parents and carers

The sections below explain how we keep parents up-to-date with their child's education and wellbeing as well as what is happening in school.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

5a. PA Connect

At St Francis, we use PA Connect to keep parents informed about many aspects of school life. Parents benefit most from this technology if they download the app and set up their own account to include all of their relevant contact details.

These are some of the things that will be shared through PA Connect:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for instance, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Events that can be booked (e.g. clubs, lunches)
- School letters
- Newsletters, including online safety
- Payments
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

This app also links parents to the school website, which has a wealth of information.

5b. School calendar

Where possible, in the weekly newsletter, St Francis try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions, including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials.

5c. Phone calls

School may call parents for the following reasons:

- A child is absent from school
- There has been a safeguarding incident which involves a child
- A child has been injured or ill whilst at school
- A child has no lunch or missing equipment
- A child's teacher may have positive feedback
- Discussing a child's progress
- Discussing SEN or intervention needs
- Attendance checks
- Safeguarding checks

Phone calls are our preferred method of communication about personal issues regarding a child.

Please ensure that school has an up-to-date phone number that can be answered during the day. Should a parent be leaving the country for a period of time it is essential that school are aware of this, and it is imperative that school have alternative methods of communication in case of an emergency.

5d. Letters

School send the following letters home regularly via PA Connect:

- Trips and visits
- Weekly newsletter*
- Information that is too long to put in a PA Connect message

Occasionally the following letters will be sent home as a printed copy, either with the child or through the post:

- Attendance letters
- Annual Review paperwork

*The school's weekly newsletter is sent out each Friday. It contains general information of school events and activities. This is shared with parents by PA Connect. A calendar of school events over the coming 2 weeks is included so it is advised that parents check it regularly. Past newsletters are all available on PA Connect as well as the school website.

5e. Homework

Homework and topic planners are uploaded to the school website each term. These can be found under: Children / Class Pages. Staff will also share these and any relevant resources via Seesaw.

5f. Reports

All reports are uploaded to Seesaw for parents to access. Those included are:

- an end-of-year report covering a child's achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance;
- a report on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 SATs tests;
- a statement reporting Year 1 Phonics Screening, which is included within the end-of-year report;
- a report on Year 4 Multiplication Tests.

5g. Meetings

St Francis hold two parents' evenings each academic year. During these meetings, parents can talk with their child's teacher about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum, their child's wellbeing, or any area of concern. Currently there are two options: to meet face-to-face or to attend virtually using Teams. The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

At the end of each academic year, parents are invited to attend a 'Meet the Teacher' meeting where parents can meet the new teaching team for the year ahead. At these meetings, parents will be informed about major events that happen (e.g. swimming, residential visits and assessments) as well as being provided with key curriculum information.

5h. School website

The following key information about the school is posted on our website:

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about before and after-school provision

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

5i. Seesaw

The Seesaw app allows communication between class teachers, children and home. Parents and children will benefit most from this technology if they download the app and set up their own account to include all of their relevant contact details. The app allows school to:

- Upload homework tasks and resources;
- View uploaded homework/news that children have completed at home;
- Share work that a child has completed in school;
- Communicate messages relevant to the whole class/groups;
- Message parents individually.

Seesaw cannot be checked by teachers during school hours as they are busy teaching. Teachers will aim to check messages before school starts, but cannot guarantee this. Therefore, any messages a parent may have that will impact on that school day (e.g. regarding collection) please contact the school office. TAs work alongside class teachers to monitor and share information on Seesaw.

Staff are not expected to, and are discouraged from, checking and responding to communication via Seesaw outside of core school hours 8:00am – 5:30pm. Staff will not monitor Seesaw during school holidays.

During a child's time at St Francis, the use of Seesaw will adapt. As children become increasingly independent and capable of sharing their own learning, staff will decrease the frequency and type of communication. We aim to prepare children for the next step in their education where they are required to take greater responsibility for themselves, e.g. our older children will be set homework differently.

The following information may be communicated through Seesaw:

- Requests for resources and help (e.g. shoe boxes and support for an upcoming school visit)
- Updates of class events
- Reminders of class activities (e.g. forest clothes)
- Homework tasks (pick and mix sheets), links to resources, activities to complete on Seesaw
- Feedback about some homework tasks
- Topic webs
- Photographs, videos and comments about children's learning experiences and activities
- Positive praise
- Photographs of head bump or injury forms (for our younger children)
- Updates about residential (for our older children)

Seesaw will not be used to engage in discussions about a child's academic progress or concerns about their welfare. The conversations may be initiated via Seesaw, but will then take place through a scheduled appointment, such as a face-to-face meeting or phone call.

6. How parents and external agencies can communicate with the school

Parents and external agencies should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address. (See the attendance policy regarding absence.)

No members of school staff are obliged to check their emails, make or take phone calls or attend meetings on behalf of the school during school holidays, with the following exceptions:

- Safeguarding issues are addressed by staff on a rota
- The School Administration Team work through some of the holidays
- The Leadership Team check only emails, weekly

6a. Email

Parents and external agencies are encouraged to email the school about non-urgent issues in the first instance, such as forgotten lunches or changes to collection. See Appendix 1 to ensure the most appropriate member of staff is contacted.

The school aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 3 working days. Please note that occasionally external emails are redirected to junk. If a response is not received from the reciprocate, then parents and external agencies should call the school office.

If a query or concern is urgent, and a response is needed sooner than this, parents and external agencies should call the school office.

Urgent issues include:

- family emergencies;
- safeguarding or welfare issues;
- appointment changes.

Staff will read emails during term time. Emails will not be monitored by most staff in holiday periods.

The leadership team, school administrator and admin team will monitor their emails more frequently, generally weekly in holiday periods.

6b. Phone calls

Parents and external agencies can leave a message through the office for a member of staff to call them back about a non-urgent issue. It is useful if the topic can be disclosed to ensure the most suitable member(s) of staff is informed. The relevant member(s) of staff will respond within 2 working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. The school aim to make sure parents and external agencies have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 2 days of their request.

If the issue is urgent, parents and external agencies should call the school office. Urgent issues include:

- family emergencies;
- safeguarding or welfare issues;
- appointment changes.

The school office is open term time daily from 8.00am - 4.00pm. Messages can be left on the answer machine outside of these times. This is checked daily in term time, and occasionally in school holidays.

6c. Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email admin@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk or call the school office to book an appointment. The school try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request.

Teachers are available at the beginning of the day to greet children and staff are briefly available at the end of the school day; however, if parents need to speak to a member of staff about more involved issues (e.g. about a child's learning or pastoral support), it is recommended that they book an appointment. These issues are best discussed confidentially in a more private setting at a time that is mutually convenient.

External agencies can either book an appointment through the school office, or if they have the member of staff's direct email address they can contact them directly. This would normally be the case for SEN meetings where external agencies would be in direct contact with the school's SENCo.

6d. Seesaw

The main purpose of Seesaw is for parents to upload homework and any information regarding their child's learning at home (e.g. misplaced reading records, celebrating successes, evidence of them learning a new skill or overcoming a barrier). This generates of journal of a child's learning and progress throughout their school life at St Francis.

The 2-way messaging option within the Seesaw app allows parents to communicate directly with the teaching team in the classroom. Staff will not monitor this during school hours as they are busy teaching. Therefore, messages that will impact on that school day (e.g. regarding collection) should be sent to the school office.

Staff do not expect families to read, respond or action Seesaw messages outside of hours that suit them. Seesaw messaging does not replace face-to-face meetings where discussion is required. We seek face-to-face meetings because Seesaw is not the most effective form of communication for discussion. Staff and parents are discouraged from entering into in-depth discussions about a child's progress or wellbeing via Seesaw. These conversations can be initiated via Seesaw, but then a scheduled appointment will be made where concerns and queries can be discussed in more detail.

6e. Parents' evenings / Meet the teacher / Information evenings

We are delighted that our parents embrace the opportunity to come into school and meet with staff. These are useful opportunities to meet with the teaching team and build relationships as well as gain a deeper understanding of what happens in school.

Parents' evenings are a time to discuss a child's learning and progress, exploring areas of success and development. If parents have urgent concerns, or have questions that need answering sooner, they should contact the office to arrange a conversation or meeting with their child's teacher. The school encourages parents to not let issues build up as we would rather talk through these in a timely manner so actions can be taken as required.

6f. Should parents or external agencies want to make a complaint or compliment

There are times when we feel that we would like to say something about the service or treatment that we receive. If a parent feels they need to complain, they should follow the procedure outlined here:

- In the first instance, parents should speak to their child's class teacher. If still dissatisfied, parents should contact phase leaders as soon as they can by making an appointment through the school office. Following this, contact should be made with the headteacher or assistant headteachers via the office.
- If the matter cannot be resolved, parents should follow the school's complaints procedure, which is set out in the policy: School Complaints. This is available on the school website.
- Parents should be advised that directly contacting individual governors or the local authority is not a short cut to having an issue or concern resolved. The governors' and local authority's role is strategic and any complaints received by them will be directed back to the school to be resolved through the schools' complaints procedure.

The school also like to know what parents are happy with, so please tell us; we are always very pleased to hear their compliments.

6g. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

We currently make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in English. Seesaw communications can be translated through the app into more than 100 other languages.

We have access to other mechanisms to support parents for whom English is not their first language.

7. Internal communications between colleagues

7a. Emails

Emails should be used to convey non-urgent information to colleagues.

Emails can be sent at any time; however, there must be no expectation for receivers to respond outside of their contracted hours. Using the schedule facility can help to manage work-life balance for staff.

Emails must be professional and courteous. They should indicate the subject overview as this allows staff to prioritise. It should be made clear if a response is needed, e.g. clear questions or stated 'please respond'.

The 'set importance tab' can be used in Outlook.

Email groups have been set up to facilitate communication, and the network manager upon request can set more up. 'Whole school' emails should be used frugally. It should be remembered that a group can be expanded before sending an email in order to delete individual recipients.

Colleagues should be mindful that some staff members receive a large number of emails daily. Teaching assistants must be allowed to check their school emails during their contracted hours.

All classrooms have a laptop or desktop that can be used for this. In term time, emails should be responded to within 2 working days where a response is needed. It is the responsibility of the sender to chase up responses. If there is no response after 3 days, the issue should be escalated if a response is needed in order to proceed.

When urgent information needs to be shared, colleague emails should be followed up promptly with a face-to-face conversation or phone call.

7b. PA Connect

Colleagues are encouraged to download the PA Connect app in order to receive school messages. These may be to inform of school closures, or for staff to be aware of messages sent to parents.

7c. WhatsApp

There is no expectation for all staff to utilise WhatsApp. It is there to enhance communication rather than to be the main form of communication. Responses are not expected outside of contracted hours. This form of communication may be seen as more informal, but it is expected that the tone remains respectful, courteous and inclusive. Careful consideration must be shown towards peoples' privacy. Information about pupils should not be shared through WhatsApp.

The leadership team may use WhatsApp to liaise with each other.

The whole-school WhatsApp group, 'St f staff', is used to communicate non-social messages, e.g. if members of staff are absent/late, or if there is a request for resources etc.

The whole school WhatsApp group, 'St f social', is used purely for social information.

Smaller teams throughout the school may also have their own WhatsApp groups – these must follow communication guidance within this policy.

The headteacher, assistant headteachers or SENCo may WhatsApp staff outside of school hours if urgent information is needed to be passed on. Examples may be informing colleagues that a key member of staff is absent and this may affect a trip.

Staff are encouraged to be mindful that some members of staff will not be part of these WhatsApp groups and so will need to consider when emails or alternative forms of communication are more appropriate.

7d. Phone calls

Most rooms have phones. As the school building is quite spread out, this method of communication should be used by preference for immediate staff-to-staff communication. Personal information should never be revealed about anyone over the phone if there are others present in the room.

Staff should not receive/ accept phone calls from parents or other agencies during their teaching time.

Staff are not expected to make or receive phone calls outside of their contractual hours. If colleagues need to pass on information to other colleagues urgently they should email and/or WhatsApp in the first instance, following up with a phone call if necessary.

Staff should refer to the mobile phone usage policy.

7e. Face-to-face

Urgent information should be passed to colleagues directly. Much more information about an incident, concern or request can be passed on through discussions.

8. School staff contacting external agencies

School staff should respond to outside agencies within 2 working days.

Responses must be courteous and professional.

9. School staff contacting the headteacher

The headteacher can be contacted at any time whilst they are present in school. Sometimes the headteacher is in a meeting which cannot be interrupted. Staff members should be courteous and knock if the door is closed. Outside of school hours, the headteacher and SLT can be contacted via WhatsApp, email or phone if urgent.

10. Contacting staff who are absent

Staff should not be contacted when absent to discuss school issues. If a member of staff needs to contact an absent member of staff, please be advised by a member of the leadership team first.

11. Absent staff contacting the school

If a member of staff is absent due to unforeseen illness, they must contact the headteacher or SLT - see policy: Staff Code of Conduct – as early as possible, but definitely before 7.30am.

Teaching staff must leave cover work for planned absent lessons. If any other information is required, such as a TA who carries out medical activities, or a teacher who is leading a trip, this must be passed onto the relevant persons.

Absent staff must contact the school by 4pm to inform them of the likelihood of their return to work the next day. (See the Staff Absence policy.)

12. Contacting staff who are no longer employed by the school

The headteacher or business school manager can contact employees no longer employed by the school.

13. Contacting members of the governing body

The governing body can be contacted via the clerk to governors, at: clerk@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk.

14. Contacting media on behalf of the school

The headteacher must be consulted prior to any communication with media outlets.

15. If staff have a concern

The school has a clear whistle blowing policy which is to be followed if someone has a concern about another member of staff's behaviour or conduct.

If a staff member has any concerns or queries, their first point of contact would be their phase leader. Following this, they should speak with one of the assistant headteachers or SENCO. Should they feel that the concern continues, or is of a serious enough nature, they should speak with the headteacher who has an open door policy and prefers for staff to come and chat. If the door is shut, please be courteous and knock.

Staff can always email any members of the SLT to request a meeting.

Staff are encouraged to share concerns and queries in a timely manner rather than allowing issues to build up.

16. How staff can receive messages

Staff may receive messages from other staff via emails, WhatsApp, phone calls or face-to-face. All correspondence must be professional, courteous, and timely.

17. Appendix 1

Message, query or concern	Person to contact
A query about your child's learning, class activities, lessons, playtimes, trips etc.	Class teacher, either in person on the gate/playground after school, or by Seesaw.
Homework	Class teacher via Seesaw.
Change to child's collection.	If it concerns <u>that day</u>: talk to the class teacher or TA on the gate/playground, OR contact the office. If it is in <u>advance of the day</u>: Class teacher via Seesaw message, or the class teacher on the gate/playground.
Absences	Please notify the school office by 9.15am each day of absence (stating a clear reason for the absence) by Parentapps Connect (PA Connect), phone, email or in person. Please note that this notification does not guarantee that absences will be authorised. (See policy: Attendance)
Pastoral support	Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher via the school office. If following your discussion you would like more information, make an appointment to meet with the relevant school leader via the school office.
SEN support	Make an appointment with the class teacher via Seesaw or via the school office. Following this, make an appointment with the school's SENCO via the school email admin@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
Requests for absence	App: Parentapps Connect (PA Connect) Email via: attendance@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
School dinners	App: Parentapps Connect (PA Connect) to book meals. Any difficulties contact school office via email on

	admin@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
Chair of Governors	Contact through the Clerk to the governors: clerk@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
Attendance	Email: attendance@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk
Funrise (before and after school club).	Call or text: 07985913899. Call: 01793 727624—select option 4 for Funrise. Email: funriseclub@hotmail.co.uk
School closures	App: Parentapps Connect (PA Connect)
School clubs	Email: clubs@stfrancis.swindon.sch.uk or school office
Information about events, trips etc.	App: Parentapps Connect (PA Connect) Newsletters and school website.
If you would like to discuss something related to your child's teaching team.	Make an appointment to meet with one of the Assistant Headteachers via the school office.
Complaints	Follow the procedure as outlined in 6f, as well as in the school complaints policy. Make appointments via the school office to talk to the class teacher in the first instance, followed by the appropriate phase leader and then one of the Assistant Headteachers.
Dates for term times.	School website.

If having followed the above steps your question or concern is not resolved, please make an appointment through the school office to meet with the assistant headteachers or headteacher.