



Communication Policy

Including SchoolPost

**Dolphin School Trust
inc. Noah's Ark Nurseries**

Reviewed by:	Lucy Price (Headteacher)
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1. Introduction and Our Approach

At Dolphin School Trust, we believe that strong relationships between home and school are fundamental to children's happiness, wellbeing and success.

We want communication across our community to be clear, accessible, timely, respectful and personal. Parents should know who to contact when they have a question or concern, while staff should be able to focus fully on children during the school day and maintain reasonable boundaries around their working time.

Good communication is a shared responsibility. We recognise the importance of listening carefully, responding thoughtfully and working together in the best interests of every child.

This policy sets out the principles and arrangements for communication between the Trust, parents and carers, staff and pupils. It applies across Dolphin School and Noah's Ark Nurseries, recognising that some communication systems and routines may differ between settings.

The policy has been developed with reference to:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including Part 6: Provision of Information;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018;
- The Equality Act 2010; and
- The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'Trust' refers to Dolphin School Trust, including Dolphin School and Noah's Ark Nurseries.

2. Aims and Principles

The Trust aims to:

- Foster positive, open and constructive relationships between home and school.
- Ensure parents receive clear, accurate and timely information about their child's education, wellbeing and school life.
- Provide accessible and consistent communication channels.
- Encourage direct communication with the staff best placed to respond.
- Reduce unnecessary administrative processes and duplication.
- Maintain appropriate records of significant communication.
- Protect confidential information and uphold professional and safeguarding boundaries.
- Respect the working time and wellbeing of staff.
- Ensure urgent information reaches the appropriate person promptly.
- Promote communication that reflects the Trust's Christian ethos and values of Love, Wisdom and Truth.

3. Approved Communication Channels

The Trust uses a range of communication platforms, each serving a different purpose.

SchoolPost is the principal platform for formal school communications, including newsletters, announcements, reminders, school events and other organisational information.

School email enables parents to contact teachers and relevant members of staff directly about learning, progress, pastoral matters and other non-urgent concerns.

The School Office is the first point of contact for attendance, collection arrangements, administrative queries and urgent messages during the school day.

Engage Parent Portal provides access to school reports, attendance information, timetables, dietary and medical information, parents' evening bookings and other relevant pupil information.

Evolve is used for recording and communicating first aid incidents and medication administration through AccidentBook, obtaining parental consent, payment and sharing information for educational visits through Evolve Trips, and managing extracurricular club bookings and payments through Evolve Clubs.

Tapestry is used within the Early Years to share observations, learning experiences and information about children's development.

Google Classroom is used in the Upper School to share curriculum resources, assignments and learning information with pupils.

Email communication is through registered Dolphin School email addresses.

Other approved systems, including those used for trips, clubs and activities, may be used where appropriate.

Staff must use only Trust-approved systems for school-related communication and must comply with the Trust's safeguarding, data protection and professional conduct requirements.

4. Contacting Teachers and the School Office

Contacting Your Child's Teacher

Parents are provided with the school email addresses of their child's teachers and relevant members of staff and are welcome to contact them directly.

Email is particularly appropriate for:

- Sharing information that may help staff support a child.
- Asking a brief question about learning or school experiences.
- Requesting a telephone conversation or meeting.
- Raising a non-urgent pastoral concern.
- Following up a previous discussion.

In most circumstances, the class teacher should be the first point of contact for matters relating to a child's learning, progress, behaviour or wellbeing.

Where appropriate, the class teacher may involve a subject leader, SENDCo or member of the Senior Team.

Teachers may respond to individual parental emails through SchoolPost where it is helpful for the communication to be centrally recorded and available to authorised members of the Senior Team.

Where a parent remains concerned following discussion with the class teacher, the matter may be referred to the relevant member of the Senior Team and subsequently to the Headteacher where appropriate.

Teachers' first responsibility during the school day is to the children in their care. They are not expected to monitor or respond to emails while teaching, supervising pupils, attending meetings or running clubs and activities.

Contacting the School Office

The School Office remains the first point of contact for operational and administrative matters, including:

- Attendance and absence.
- Changes to collection arrangements.
- Appointments or messages affecting the current school day.
- Clubs, trips and activities.
- Payments and administrative queries.
- Urgent messages that need to reach a member of staff.

Parents may contact the Dolphin School Office at receptionist@dolphinschool.org.uk or by telephone during office hours.

Parents of children attending Noah's Ark Nurseries should use their setting's established office contact arrangements.

Urgent matters should not be sent solely to an individual teacher by email, as the message may not be seen until later in the day.

5. Response Times and Staff Working Hours

The Trust aims to respond to routine parental emails within two working days during term time. In many cases, a response will be provided sooner.

Some enquiries may require consultation with colleagues, further investigation or the gathering of information. Where a full response cannot reasonably be provided within this timeframe, staff should acknowledge the communication and indicate when a further response can be expected.

Parents may choose to send emails at a time convenient to them. However, there is no expectation that staff will read or respond to routine emails outside their normal working hours, including evenings, weekends and school holidays.

An email sent outside working hours will ordinarily be considered on the next working day.

These arrangements are intended to support effective communication while recognising the importance of staff wellbeing and allowing staff to focus on their responsibilities during the school day.

Urgent safeguarding or welfare concerns must be communicated through the appropriate immediate contact arrangements rather than relying on routine email response times.

6. Professional Communication and Email Etiquette

Communication between parents and staff should reflect the positive, respectful relationships that the Trust seeks to foster.

We ask all members of our community to ensure that communication is:

- Courteous, respectful and professional.
- Clear, accurate and reasonably concise.
- Directed to the person best placed to help.
- Focused on the child's needs and the matter being discussed.
- Mindful of confidentiality and the privacy of others.

Parents are encouraged to avoid copying multiple members of staff into emails unnecessarily.

Likewise, staff should communicate with parents professionally, respectfully and with appropriate regard for confidentiality.

Email is not always the most effective way to resolve a complex or sensitive issue. Where correspondence becomes lengthy, emotionally charged or requires detailed discussion, a member of staff may suggest a telephone call or meeting.

The Trust will not tolerate abusive, threatening or discriminatory communication towards staff, parents or pupils. Such matters will be addressed proportionately and, where necessary, through the appropriate school procedures.

7. Academic, Pastoral and Safeguarding Communication

Academic and Pastoral Matters

The Trust encourages open communication about pupils' learning, development and wellbeing.

In most circumstances, the class teacher will be the first point of contact, as they know the child and their day-to-day experience best.

Significant or ongoing correspondence concerning a pupil's progress, curriculum, behaviour, SEND or wellbeing should be appropriately recorded within the Trust's approved systems.

Teachers may respond to individual parental emails through SchoolPost where it is helpful for the communication to be centrally recorded and available to authorised members of the Senior Team.

Where a parent remains concerned following discussion with the class teacher, the matter may be referred to the relevant member of the Senior Team and subsequently to the Headteacher where appropriate.

Formal complaints will be addressed under the Trust's Complaints Policy.

Safeguarding and Urgent Welfare Concerns

Safeguarding concerns must always be treated as a priority.

Parents who have an urgent concern about the safety or welfare of a child should contact the School Office or nursery setting directly and clearly explain that the matter is urgent, so that it can be passed immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or appropriate member of the safeguarding team.

Staff must follow the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy when receiving or responding to safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding information must be recorded in the appropriate safeguarding system and must not be managed solely through routine email correspondence or SchoolPost.

Where a child is believed to be at immediate risk of serious harm, emergency services or the relevant statutory safeguarding agencies should be contacted without delay.

8. SchoolPost and Formal School Communications

SchoolPost may be used to announce or remind parents about trips, clubs and other activities. However, where consent, bookings, medical acknowledgements or payments are required, parents will be directed to the relevant Evolve platform.

Wherever possible, general messages, notices and reminders will be grouped into stacked notifications and sent at 5pm on school days. This helps reduce the number of separate notifications parents receive and allows information to be accessed in a consistent and manageable format.

Messages may include:

- School announcements and reminders.
- The weekly newsletter, *Word on the Street*.
- Homework information and curriculum notices.
- Sports fixtures and activities.
- School trips and residential visits.
- Concerts, performances and other events.
- Clubs and booking information.
- Administrative notices.
- Individual communications requiring a response or acknowledgement.

Urgent or time-sensitive messages may be sent outside the scheduled notification time.

Staff creating SchoolPost messages are responsible for ensuring that recipients are correctly selected, information is accurate and the content is appropriate.

Parents are encouraged to activate their SchoolPost accounts, enabling them to access, search and review previous communications.

Moderation and Oversight

Routine communications do not ordinarily require prior approval by the Senior Team.

However, staff should seek guidance where communication is sensitive, complex, potentially contentious or relates to significant pupil welfare concerns.

The Senior Team may review communications made through approved school systems where there is a legitimate safeguarding, professional, educational or operational reason to do so, in accordance with data protection requirements.

School reports and other formal documents will continue to be subject to the Trust's established review and approval arrangements.

9. Other Communication Platforms

Word on the Street

The weekly newsletter, *Word on the Street*, remains a principal source of information about forthcoming events, school news, achievements, reminders and developments across the Trust.

Where additional information or reminders are required between newsletters, these will normally be communicated through SchoolPost.

Engage Parent Portal

The Engage Parent Portal provides parents with access to relevant pupil and school information, including reports, attendance records, timetables and booking systems.

Parents are responsible for keeping their account details secure and notifying the School Office of any difficulties accessing the system.

Evolve - First Aid, Educational Visits and Clubs

The Trust uses Evolve to manage and communicate a range of important information relating to pupils' health, safety and participation in school activities.

Evolve AccidentBook: First aid incidents and medication administration are recorded through AccidentBook. Parents receive relevant notifications and, where appropriate, may be required to acknowledge information relating to their child. Where an incident or medical concern requires immediate parental attention, staff will contact parents directly by telephone rather than relying solely on an electronic notification.

Evolve Trips: Information relating to educational visits, including relevant arrangements and parental consent requirements, is managed through Evolve Trips. Parents are responsible for reviewing the information provided and completing any required consent, payments or information forms within the specified timeframe.

Evolve Clubs: Extracurricular club information, bookings and associated payments are managed through Evolve Clubs. Parents should use the platform to register their children for activities and complete any required payments.

Parents are encouraged to ensure that their Evolve account details are up to date and that they regularly review notifications and requests for action.

All information recorded or communicated through Evolve will be handled in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding, data protection, first aid, administration of medicines and educational visits policies.

Tapestry and Early Years Communication

Within Noah's Ark Nurseries and Reception, Tapestry is used to share observations, learning experiences and developmental information with parents.

Staff will continue to communicate directly with parents at appropriate points during the day, recognising the particular importance of regular dialogue during the Early Years.

Organisational announcements, events and wider school information will normally be shared through SchoolPost or another approved setting-specific system.

Google Classroom

Pupils in the Upper School use Google Classroom and their school-managed Google accounts to access curriculum materials, assignments and learning resources.

Communication through Google Classroom must remain educationally appropriate and comply with the Trust's safeguarding and acceptable-use requirements.

10. Emergency and Time-Sensitive Communication

Where a child experiences a serious accident, illness or incident requiring immediate parental attention, the Trust will telephone parents or carers in the first instance.

If contact cannot be established, staff will continue to make reasonable efforts to reach parents or authorised emergency contacts using the information held on the pupil's record.

In the event of a school-wide emergency, closure or incident requiring urgent parental action, the Trust may communicate through text message, telephone, email or SchoolPost, depending on the circumstances.

Where trips or sports fixtures are significantly delayed, parents will be informed through an appropriate direct communication channel.

Urgent communications will not be delayed to coincide with the scheduled SchoolPost notification time.

11. Communication with Separated Parents and Those with Parental Responsibility

The Trust recognises the importance of communicating appropriately with parents who are separated or living in different households.

Subject to any relevant court order, legal restriction or safeguarding consideration, the Trust will seek to ensure that those entitled to receive information about a child's education and welfare have appropriate access to school communications, reports and relevant information.

The Trust will not automatically assume that communication with one parent is sufficient to inform another.

Parents are asked to keep the Trust informed of relevant changes to family circumstances, contact arrangements or court orders affecting communication or the collection of children.

Where there is uncertainty about parental responsibility or entitlement to particular information, the Trust will consider the circumstances carefully and seek appropriate advice where necessary.

12. Accessibility and Inclusion

The Trust is committed to ensuring that communication is accessible to all members of its community.

Where reasonably required, alternative formats, translated information, additional explanation or other appropriate communication arrangements will be considered for parents with disabilities, English as an Additional Language or other communication needs.

The Trust recognises that some families may require additional support to access digital systems or understand information being shared.

Staff should approach such requests sensitively and seek to remove unnecessary barriers to effective communication.

13. Confidentiality, Record-Keeping and Data Protection

All communication must comply with the Trust's Data Protection Policy, safeguarding requirements and records retention arrangements.

SchoolPost, school email and other approved communication systems must be used responsibly, with particular care taken when sharing personal or sensitive information.

Staff must check recipients carefully before sending messages and ensure that confidential information is shared only with those who have a legitimate need to receive it.

Communications containing significant information relating to a pupil's education, behaviour, SEND, welfare or safeguarding must be appropriately recorded or linked to the relevant school record.

Records will be retained securely for the period appropriate to their content and purpose, in accordance with the Trust's Records Retention Schedule.

Staff should be mindful that written communications may form part of a pupil's or employee's record and may need to be disclosed in response to a lawful request, including a subject access request under data protection legislation.

14. Professional Boundaries and Personal Communication

Staff must use school-approved communication channels for all school-related correspondence with parents and pupils.

Staff must not use personal email accounts, personal telephone numbers, WhatsApp, social media direct messages or other unauthorised messaging services for school-related communication with parents or pupils.

Any exceptional communication arrangements required for educational visits, emergencies or other school activities must be approved by the Senior Team and appropriately documented.

Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times, including where staff have separate personal or family relationships with parents.

Staff must not use informal or personal communication channels to discuss confidential pupil, family or staffing matters.

School-approved staff communication groups may be used for legitimate operational purposes, subject to appropriate safeguards and confidentiality requirements.

15. Parent Community Groups and POD Communication

The Trust values the contribution of parent representatives and the Parents of Dolphin (POD) community in supporting school life.

POD WhatsApp groups and other parent-led communication channels are intended primarily for community activities, reminders and social arrangements. They are not official channels for communicating school policy, safeguarding concerns or significant operational information.

Official announcements and important information will be communicated directly by the Trust through approved school systems.

Where appropriate, POD representatives may be briefed in advance of a significant school-wide announcement to support effective communication, provided that confidentiality is maintained.

16. Meetings and Conversations

The Trust values face-to-face communication and recognises that many questions or concerns can be resolved through a brief conversation.

Parents are welcome to speak to staff at appropriate times, although staff may need to arrange another opportunity where they are supervising children or undertaking other duties.

For matters requiring privacy, detailed discussion or significant time, parents are encouraged to arrange a telephone call or meeting.

Where a meeting concerns a significant academic, pastoral, behavioural or welfare matter, staff should ensure that an appropriate record of the discussion and any agreed actions is maintained.

17. Responsibilities, Monitoring and Review

All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that communication is professional, appropriate and consistent with this policy.

The Senior Team is responsible for overseeing communication practice, supporting staff where difficulties arise and ensuring that significant concerns are appropriately managed.

The Trust will periodically review the effectiveness of its communication systems, taking account of feedback from parents, staff and pupils where appropriate.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes to legislation, safeguarding guidance, school systems or operational arrangements make this necessary.

18. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Trust's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Retention Schedule

- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policies
- SEND Policy
- Educational Visits Policy

Our Commitment

The purpose of this policy is to foster positive, open and collaborative relationships between parents and staff.

By providing clear and direct access to the people who know children best, using our communication systems consistently and setting reasonable expectations around responses, we aim to make communication simpler, more transparent and more personal.

We know that good communication is central to strong relationships between home and school. We will continue to listen, learn and refine our approach so that every family feels known, valued and connected.