



Notting Hill Preparatory School

5.2 Policy for Communication with Parents (EYFS & KS1-3)

Reviewer responsible: **Head DHP**
Reviewed by: **SK HF**

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POLICY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Background

For community

NHP was founded as a collaborative enterprise between parents and school. That spirit endures and thrives.

However, the school's evolution and expansion have demonstrated to us the enhanced need for modes of communication which are structured and streamlined, without impairing the community spirit which makes NHP special.

Parent Partnership

Notting Hill Prep recognises the pivotal role parents play in the education of their children and encourages them to be actively involved in their child's education and the life of the school.

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents, keeping them fully apprised of their children's achievements and the workings of the school. To this end we have introduced strategies to ensure effective communication between our parents and the school.

1.1 Prospective parents

The school website and open mornings are the principal ways in which we advertise the school to prospective parents. They are warmly encouraged to arrange to visit the school on a designated Open Day, or make an appointment for an individual tour.

Open Days take place approximately six times per term. A short talk outlining the ethos and workings of the school is given by the Head followed by a tour with the Head and/or some of the pupil ambassadors.

Prospective parents may also request a registration form.

Once a registration form and fee have been received, an acknowledgement is sent with confirmation of the ballot procedure (see **Admissions Policy**).

Once places are confirmed, but before children start at the school, parents of new children are given:

- The NHP Parent Handbook
- A 'Settling in Guide, R-Y3'
- A 'Curriculum Handbook Y4-Y8'

1.2 Parents of children new to Reception

Close to the end of the Summer Term all the children are invited to a 'new class party' before they join us. While the children are enjoying the parties in their classrooms, the parents are given tea in the School Hall where they are welcomed by the Head, staff, some Upper School pupils and sometimes the Chairs of the Parent Committee.

1.3 Parents of children who join in Year 1 and above

The machinery which enables new pupils to join the school after Reception is detailed in the **Policy for Admissions**.

Communication between school and existing parents

The school is committed to developing effective methods of communication with parents, which allows parents to play an active role in the life of the school and their child's education.

2.1 Practical Information – School Intranet

We have designed the school Intranet to facilitate the hassle-free flow of practical information to parents. Via the Parent Portal, they are able to select what they want to know, and find it instantly, using the device of their choice (see **Appendix 2**).

2.2 Personal Information about children – Meetings and Parents' Evenings

Parents' Evenings are held throughout the school year (see **Policy on Assessment, Recording and Reporting**). Parents meet their child's class teacher and subject teachers to discuss progress and outline next steps. The meetings are arranged on an appointment system.

Parents with severe obstacles to attending a Teacher/Parent Meeting will be provided with an appointment as soon as a replacement meeting can be arranged, and the school will undertake to care for their child/children as is required.

Parents not living with their child are given an appointment on request.

Formal meetings with the Head - or members of SMT - may be arranged by appointment for those parents who are concerned about their child's education (see also **Policy for Complaints**). As part of her 'open door' approach, the Head is also very happy to see parents on an informal basis.

Meetings outside parents' evening slots are also held on a needs basis between parents and teachers to discuss concerns. These meetings are supplemented by a range of less formal exchanges: in the playground, at the school gate, and via info emailed to parents by Form and/or Subject Teachers (**see Appendix 2**). All these contribute to information-rich relations between parents and teachers.

However, it is stressed to parents that it is of the utmost importance that they do not try to have a conversation with a Form Teacher on a matter of concern at drop-off or collection time as the teachers' first responsibility at these times is for the care of their class, ie settling them in the morning and ensuring a safe handover at the end of the day. An appointment can be made for a meeting at a mutually convenient time through one of the secretaries (OB, JCB or PGB).

The Learning Support Departments (Reception-Y3 and Y4-Y8) communicate on a regular basis with parents of children on the SEN Learning Register or those who are being supported and/or monitored by the department (for further details see **Policy for Special Educational Needs**).

If a parent requests a meeting with the Head or a member of staff, every effort will be made to arrange the meeting as quickly as possible. A record will be kept of every meeting and stored on Pass as appropriate.

A range of curriculum meetings/presentations are held during the year covering issues such as:

- Pastoral and Academic expectations – e.g. Meet the Teacher mornings in September
- Supporting Literacy and Numeracy
- Thinking School strategies
- Preparation for residential visits and school trips
- Advice about next school entrance procedure (11+ and 13+) and the curriculum machinery which supports it
- Internet safety
- Pastoral care/wellbeing talks

2.3 Personal Information about children – Reports

Parents are kept fully informed of their children's personal development and progress and attainment in all subjects. The schedule for reporting at NHP can be found in the **Policy for Assessment, Recording and Reporting** and guidance for teachers in the **Monitoring and Staff Monitoring including CPD Policies**.

2.4 Communicating with parents who are not living together

Every effort is taken to ensure parents receive all relevant information about their child, and have the same access to teachers, and will not be disadvantaged by difficult circumstances.

Where a parent is not living with their child, the school aims to ensure that both parents receive all information relating to the child's education and welfare, unless there is good reason not to do so: a Court Order, Data Protection etc.

Information of a more social nature, and not directly relating to the child's education, eg class address lists, are provided to the resident parent only, unless the latter requests such information also be sent to the non-resident parent.

2.5 Communication between parents and governors

The Board of Governors, led by two joint chairs, oversees the efficient running of the school and is *de iure* responsible for the implementation of policy. The Board's ultimate aim is to promote the school's ethos and thereby secure the best possible education for present and future pupils.

A typical Board composition would be several Education Governors (acting or past Heads and/or Registrars from other Prep Schools and Senior Schools), ex-NHP parents, one or two current parents and members of the community invited to join for their expertise and commitment to the ethos of the school.

The Board of Governors meets at least three times a year, during term time. The Chairs of the Parents' Association may be invited to attend some Governors' meetings to enhance communication between parents and Governors.

The full Board sub-divides into several committees which oversee given aspects of the school according to the members' expertise in that aspect. Thus we have a Communications Committee (chaired by a Governor and composed of parents and members of the Senior Management Team (SMT)). The Committee acts as a conduit for information between parents and school. They also advise the school on the effective communication of school decisions.

Consultation

The Head and Governors may consult the parents when changes to school routines are planned, or to discover their opinions on specific matters; for example, issues such as parking, delivering and collecting procedures. Lunches might require a questionnaire before decisions as to the most effective course of action are taken.

2.6 Lines of communication between parents and staff

Parents are requested to contact Form Teachers to give them vital, personal information relating to pastoral, medical or wellbeing matters. The Form Teacher is the first point of call for these. If the issue is highly sensitive or requires higher-level intervention, the Form Teacher may refer it to the Head, Deputy Head Pastoral or another a member of the SMT.

If a parent has a subject-specific academic concern, they can communicate this to the subject teacher at Parents' Evening or via the NHP Diary (see **Appendix 1**). If they have a broader concern about academic matters, they are requested to email the Admin team who will pass the concern on to the relevant member of SMT.

An information sheet for parents on the suggested procedure for the most efficient modes of communication is included in the Parents' Handbook (further information can be found in **Appendix 1** of this policy).

2.7 Email

Email can be a hugely efficient channel for information exchange between parents and school. However, it should also be used prudently to ensure that:

- busy teachers are not submerged by emails which require time away from core teacher duties to attend to them
- difficult and emotive subjects are discussed face to face or by phone rather than by email, where words are subject to misinterpretation and a delicate situation may become inflamed
- teachers and Admin staff are not clogged by emails seeking information which can easily be found elsewhere (such as the school Intranet)

Detailed guidance for teachers on emails to/from parents can be found in the **Lower School, Middle School and Upper School Handbooks**. Guidance can also be found in **Appendix 2** of this policy.

3.3 Concerns/Complaints

A vital aspect of working in partnership with parents is that we need to know when things are, in the view of parents, not going well. Most concerns will be dealt with by the Form Teacher (or Subject Teacher if the concern is about a particular subject).

If, however, the matter cannot be resolved at this level, an appointment can be made with the Head or a member of the SMT.

To make an appointment with any of the above, parents are requested to do so through the Head's PA for a meeting with the Head or through the members of the Admin team who work in a PA capacity for the members of SMT.

We take all expressions of concern seriously and follow them up courteously and promptly. The School's **Complaints Policy**, which is available for all parents to read on the school website, details a staged procedure for complaints.

(For definition of concern, complaint and allegations and how they are managed, please refer to the **Policy for Complaints** and the **Policy for Managing Allegations against Staff**).

Appendix 1

Lines of Communication between Parents and Staff

Channels of communication also include:

- Weekly Whole School Newsletter (sent via email and via Parent Portal of school Intranet)
- Weekly Class Newsletter (Reception to Year 4)
- Reading Journal (Reception to Year 2)
- NHP Diary and/or Homework Planner (Year 3 to 8)
- Curriculum Handbooks
- Email correspondence
- Direct telephone calls (as necessary)
- Meet the Teacher meetings
- Curriculum meetings including school transfer events
- Termly reports
- Parents' Evenings
- School Intranet

Communication between Form Teachers and Parents in OB

Reception-Year 2

- The **Reading and Home Link Journal**, in addition to being the vehicle for communication about reading, is also a means of conveying short messages – either in the space provided at the end of each page or on a post-it note. This Journal is checked daily

Communication between Form Teachers/Subject Teachers and Parents in Year 3-8

- All children in Years 3-8 are issued with an NHP Diary which they are expected to carry with them around school. They use this as a homework diary, in which they are expected to log their homework accurately. Class teachers must give all children enough time to write in homework tasks during the lesson and are encouraged to plan accordingly so as to avoid leaving it to the end of the lesson, thereby vitiating the chances of this happening and the tasks being understood. Teachers are also expected to have a system for checking that homework has been written in properly, for instance by circulating around the classroom or asking children to hold up their books (see **Middle and Upper School Handbooks**)
- Form teachers in Years 3-8 are expected to ask for and sign the NHP Diary regularly. They thus become a 'second line of checking', affirming that homework has been written in and done. There is also space for children to log their reading; this log is also checked. Parents are expected to sign the book every homework night, and as children move up the school they are expected to assume responsibility for taking the book to parents. The Form Teacher also checks that the parents are signing the book regularly (see **Homework Policy**)
- Beyond the logistics referred to above, the NHP Diary is a vital artery by which teachers and parents communicate. If parents have a concern which it is appropriate to write in the book, and which they wish to transmit to the Form or Subject teacher, they are warmly encouraged to write it in the book
- The **NHP intranet** may also be used by teachers as a place for posting homework or other helpful resources related to their subject/s. Those teachers will often ask the children to write a brief note in their NHP Diary, such as 'English – on intranet' as a reminder
- In addition, those teachers may send a copy of the work to the parents of a class by email; this negates any issues such as 'my internet connection doesn't work' and also informs parents keen to know what the children are doing

Appendix 2

Information for parents on level and nature of correspondence between parents and staff

There are two fundamental aspects of the NHP ethos that we wish to preserve: the sense of being a family community, mutually supportive and open to the needs of all members of the community; and following on from this, efficient and productive correspondence between parents and school.

The inclusive spirit of the 'open door' policy, a founding principle when we opened the school with 57 pupils, remains undimmed. However, in order for it to be effective in a much larger NHP spreading across three sites, we recognise the enhanced need for structured communication.

Communication via the Intranet

The Intranet (Firefly) not only allows you to access all the information you need concerning your child at any one time at the press of a key, but will also benefit you in reducing email correspondence from teachers and in restricting your email correspondence with Form Teachers to the sharing of vital personal information: medical, pastoral and wellbeing matters. If your email concerns medical information, the admin staff in the respective buildings and the School Nurse should also be copied in.

Lines of communication

Form Teachers (OB) and Subject Teachers (JCB and PGB) will communicate with you about academic matters at strategic points during the school year: 'In a Nutshell meetings' at the beginning of each academic year, termly reports, parents' evenings, full written reports. If Form or Subject teachers have any concerns about your child, pastoral or academic, at other times, they will of course bring this to your attention.

Broader questions about Academic matters should be addressed to Admin (headed 'academic matters') and will be dealt with by the appropriate member of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

If you have a concern relating to Learning Support, this may be sent directly to either one of the SENCOs.

Meetings about senior school choices will be arranged with the Head or Deputy Head (Academic).

Benefits of good communication

With streamlined communication of this kind, we can work together to liberate teachers to do what they do best: providing first rate pastoral care and planning and delivering high quality lessons, using their expertise to assess and feedback so that the children know precisely what they need to do to make progress.

Manner of communication

NHP staff are expected to conduct all communication with parents with courtesy, empathy and professionalism and we would request that parents treat staff with a similar degree of respect. There have been occasions, happily very few, when parents have treated staff in a rude or condescending manner which can have a corrosive effect on the confidence of a teacher. In such circumstances there is a school protocol which requires staff to refer the matter to a member of the Senior Management Team who would take the matter further. In all instances our first concern is that the children's interests are being served but also that the member of staff is protected.

I hope this helps to clarify lines and manner of communication which ultimately will ensure the best outcomes for the children. If you wish to talk to the Headmistress at any time, her door is open; please contact her PA, who will arrange a convenient time to meet.