

HOLYWELL SCHOOL

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*A Church of England School
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Update Letter 18th October 2022

Parent/Carer - School Communication

Dear parents and carers

One of the actions in our School Improvement Plan is to further develop our communication with families. Following some recent discussions with parents, I thought it would be useful to explain some of our key methods of communication.

In general, we use an App and software programme called 'WEDUC' to manage our direct communication with parents/carers. The programme enables us to send both direct emails and 'in-app' messages. You can download the App and receive messages. Please make sure that we have an up-to-date email contact for you.

WEDUC Messages

WEDUC messages tend to be short messages and we use them when we have something urgent or significant to communicate with parents. They usually have a single focus and are short 'information-only' communications. As not all parents have signed up for the App, we also send these messages via email to make sure everyone receives them.

Update Letters

We started sending out 'Update Letters' during the pandemic and they were used to communicate key information as well as a way of keeping in touch with families. We had really positive feedback on these letters and have continued to use them when we have something to say or 'just to keep in touch'. We don't have the capacity to do these on a weekly basis at the moment and we don't always have anything to communicate each week. These will continue to be 'as-and-when' but equally, we would appreciate it if families read these carefully as they often include key pieces of information.

Holywell News

This is our half-termly newsletter which is sent out electronically at the end of each half-term. It has key information, dates and updates from different subject areas. It is a review of the half-term and often includes items by and about student achievements or activities.

Parental Behaviour Policy

At Holywell we welcome enquiries from parents or carers about any matter. Teachers and staff are happy to explain our practices and policies. The vast majority of concerns will be handled by the form tutor, the Head of Year or by the subject co-ordinator. To make an enquiry, please contact the School Office and they will guide you to the most appropriate person to help you (01234 750 381) or via email: school@holywellschol.co.uk. There is also a list of direct contacts on our school website: <https://holywellschool.co.uk/contact-us-2/>



Headteacher: Mr MG Simpson MA, NPQH

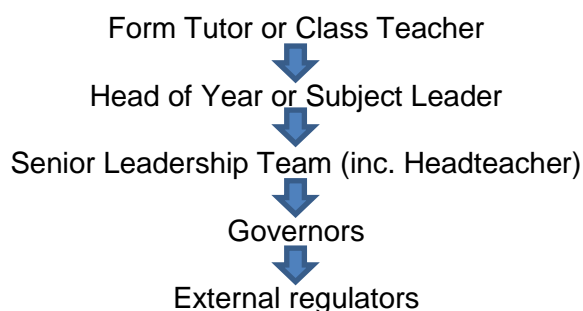
Deputy Headteacher: Mr S Van Der Merwe – Deputy Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs J Davies

Assistant Headteacher: Mr James Ulph – Senior Leader: Mrs M Purves – SENDCo: Miss Amanda Stepney

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Most of our communications with parents/carers are both supportive and respectful. We handle a vast array of enquiries – some are very sensitive and personal and we aim to be as understanding and as helpful as possible.

Some enquiries are about difficult situations and we appreciate that when students have an unpleasant experience (whether this be a learning issue, falling out with friends, difficulties on the school bus, or more serious issues), it can be distressing for parents/carers to see children upset. We ask that issues are raised directly with us so that they can be addressed effectively and fairly. Sometimes parents/carers will immediately ask for the complaints procedure, refer the issue straight away to the headteacher or threaten to report things to the local press or to Ofsted; there is a process for dealing with all issues and we respectfully ask parents/carers to use and trust in that process. The communication process is as follows:



External regulators will always check that 'due process' has been done. The one exception to this is where there is a genuine safeguarding concern – this is where we would ask for clear and immediate communication with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the headteacher or the Chair of Governors.

There is always a 'back-story' to be investigated and we will do our best to look into issues quickly and thoroughly. Form Teachers, the Pastoral Team and the Senior Leadership Team all have teaching responsibilities, in addition to any leadership commitments and, especially when issues arise at the end of the school day or prior to the weekend, we often need time to review and investigate situations. We may not always agree on the way forward, however, we can all disagree well and we can seek to be peaceful problem-solvers, ever open to and appreciative of each other's points of view.

All members of our school community deserve to be treated kindly and respectfully. In the majority of cases, our interactions with parents are respectful, kind, open and transparent and we usually arrive at an agreed way forward or a common understanding. In collaboration with our governing board, we have put together a document which details how we will deal with situations where the home-school communication is overly aggressive, threatening or inappropriate. It details the type of behaviour that will not be tolerated and summarises what actions will be taken where expectations are not met. The document can be accessed from our school website: [Parental Behaviour Policy](#) and we have attached a copy for your information.

Social Media

We don't use social platforms such as twitter, facebook and WhatsApp. This may be something we explore in the future, however, at the moment, we will continue to use the WEDUC App and programme. We ask that parents do not comment about any issues relating to school on these social media platforms. Please contact us directly in order to enable us to investigate and resolve any issues.

Satchel One

For communication about homework, we do use a separate App: Satchel One. Originally, this was called 'Show My Homework' and it was developed by teachers, parents and students for teachers, parents and students. Over the last few years, the company has developed the product so that they encompass other aspects of school life such as attendance and behaviour. We are exploring adding these functions to our current provision and will be in touch when these features 'go live'. We are aware that there were some unusual 'glitches' with Satchel One at the start of this year – thank you for your patience – it is a useful app once it is installed and working!

Attainment and how students are doing at school

Each year, parents/carers receive three data reports. These reports will be sent home on a termly basis so that you can track the progress of your son/daughter through the year. The report has details of the current teacher assessment of attainment for your son/daughter. It includes the end-of-year target and an effort grade for each subject area. We also enclose details of our assessment system which we have developed over the last few years and we hope that this will enable you to put the data into context. The first report is sent out in January, the second is sent out just before the Easter break and the final data report is sent out in the last few weeks of term (July).

We also communicate through Parent consultation evenings and full reports. These are scheduled as follows:

- Autumn Term: Tutor Pastoral Consultation Evening (a short 'check-in with form tutors)
- Spring term: Subject Consultation Evening (an opportunity to talk with English and Maths teachers and up to 4 other subject teachers of your choice). This has been done via video-call over the last few years and, based on parental feedback, we will continue to use this format.
- Summer Term: Full written report

There are annual reviews for students with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and we regularly review the provision for Students with Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as well as for students with Behaviour plans.

Students will have regular assessments and updates on their progress in their lessons and you are always welcome to contact staff for additional information about how students are doing.

... and finally ...

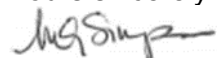
We are aware that The Covid-19 pandemic required us to communicate more remotely and that some parents/carers have not had the opportunity to come into school to meet staff and be reassured about our approaches and even our integrity. A recent survey of KS2 parents/carers at the Tutor Consultation Evening was overwhelmingly positive – including about how we communicate with parents/carers. We know we can still do more. We hope to create some opportunities for this to happen and we will endeavour to further develop our communication strategy with you – a recent meeting of volunteers to help with the PTFA was a great opportunity to hear parental perspectives. Governors are also keen to develop more opportunities to communicate with parents/carers.

Thank you for your continued support for your children and for us as a school. We will continue to be guided by our school vision:

Please continue to communicate with us and remember that 'we can talk with someone about anything, even if it feels awful or small'.

Have a good week and look out for the Holywell News on Friday.

Yours sincerely



Mike Simpson
Headteacher

PS A reminder that it is a non-uniform day on Friday in aid of the Bishop of St Albans Harvest Appeal.