



Alloway Primary School and EYC



Communications Policy



This Policy is linked to Article 28 of the UNICEF Convention Rights of the Child. - Every child has the right to education.

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Communications Policy – Sharing our message with our school community



Aims

To support Alloway Primary School in its aim to become a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Objectives:

All communications at Alloway Primary and EYC should:

- keep staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- be open, honest, ethical and professional
- use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- be actioned within a reasonable time
- use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- be compatible with our core values as reflected in our school vision and values.

Definition of communication

Good 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. We should also remember the importance of listening. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation. For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message, but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication, but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Methods of Communication with parents:

- Parents Portal - communications from the school office, reporting absence, confirming personal details
- Groupcall Xpressions App – communications from the school office
- Email - communication from the school office when you don't have Xpressions installed
- Parent Pay – online payment for school meals and outings
- Learning Journals – teacher to class information
- Face to face meetings
- Termly flyers
- Class guides
- School website
- School Twitter feed
- School Handbook (published in January)
- Standards and Quality report (published in September regarding the previous year)





How we communicate

We aim to use online communications as much as possible. In order to do this it is vital that we hold correct email addresses for parents and carers. When we require a response we will mainly send online forms. When we do send home written communication we limit this to specific purposes where it is more appropriate. If we require a reply slip we will send home printed, written communication but will keep this to a minimum.

Parent Council

Our Parent Council communicates with parents through newsletters, online communications and posters. Our Parent Council ensure that all communications are relevant and up to date. They communicate with School SLT on behalf of the parent body in relation to relevant whole school issues. Minutes of Parent Council meetings are made available to all parents. All parents are welcome to attend all meetings.

Specific methods of communication :

PARENTS PORTAL 	PARENT PAY 	XPRESSIONS/GROUPCALL 	LEARNING JOURNALS 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Data Checks and updating children’s personal information throughout the year. It will replace the paper Annual Data Check form. • Parents can access their child’s attendance on a daily basis. • Parents can access all apps listed through Parents Portal. • Reporting Absence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordering school lunches. • Paying for and giving permission for school trips etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupcall will still be used for messages and emails from the school. • Parents can message the school using Groupcall . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will use this app to share information about your child’s learning.

Parents Portal

This is a new app for us and should be a one stop shop for parents/carers. Other apps will be in use while we get all parents signed up for Parents Portal. Our annua data check forms will now be live on this app. Parents/carers can now use this to report absence and to see absence rates. All other apps can be accessed through Parents Portal.



Groupcall Xpressions App

(for communications sent out by school office)



This app can be downloaded to your phones or desktops so that you can get messages sent directly to you regarding your children. Once a parent has installed and set up an account for their child/children then all office communication (besides emergency SMS/phone calls) will be delivered via this format (you will no longer get communication via email)

Can more than one parent have the xpressions app?

YES, any parent that has parental rights can download and link their children to the app. As the children are linked to the main carer associated with them upon registration (via mobile number and email) please contact the school office if you would like the second parent to have this access.

Flagging important messages

It is easy to flag important letters for your future reference by simply clicking the “flag” simple at the top righthand corner of the message. This will then save all flagged messages to the “flag icon” located at the top of page.

More than one child at school

Each child that you have linked to your account will appear as an “initial style” icon at the top of the page. These can be used to locate messages sent specifically to your child (example-P1 school trip letter)

Communicating with the school

Additionally, you can send a message to the school office regarding your child (Absence, Late, Request Meeting or General Query) If communicating an absence or late arrival please make sure to include the reason (ie. My child will be off sick with the cold today or has a fever/sickness bug, or he/she will be late due to doctor’s appointment). If you are planning to take your children out of school during term time for a holiday, please inform the office in advance (preferably in writing) as these types of absences are monitored and approved by the Head Teacher.

We may at times need to seek further clarity or information regarding an xpressions reported absences as these are all monitored and classified within our system and we want to get it right. A phone call is still the preferred method for absence but we know that sometimes a message can be easier we just want to make sure your child and family are okay.

ParentPay



(for payment of trips and school meals – operated by school office)

This is the new cashless payment system that has been introduced by South Ayrshire Council. It is for school meals (both payment and pre-ordering) along with school trips etc. This is in replacement of IPAY which is no longer used.

We have issued all children with a username and password for their parent to register with. New pupils enrolling throughout the year will be issued with these details once their information has been uploaded to our system Please note that South Ayrshire uses MYGOVSCOT to sign in with- so you must create a [mygovscot](#) account first before linking with ParentPay.

South Ayrshire Council would like all pupils to be registered regardless of FSM status as this is also for payment/booking of school trips and they are encouraging pre-ordering (up to 3 weeks in advanced) of school meals. Please note that a school meal must be pre-ordered before 8am on the day the meal is required (making sure sufficient funds are in the account in order to confirm booking)

If you have forgotten to order for your child on a particular day please know that the class teacher will be able to see if your child has not been booked in for a meal and will help them select their choice or tick that they have a packed lunch from home

Could we kindly ask you to discuss with you child what you have ordered for them in the morning so they know what to expect come lunch time-the kitchen will be catering for exact numbers ordered as to cut down on waste-and they will need to check ordered meal against meal the child asks for at the till.

School trips and outings will be opened for payment on ParentPay. Parents can pay up rather than paying the full amount at once.

Learning Journals **(for teachers to share learning with parents/carers)**

Learning Journals is a simple way for teachers and students to record and share what's happening in the classroom. It gives students a place to document their learning, be creative and learn how to use technology. Parents are only notified about their own child's work, and all data is safe and secure. The app will also provide an opportunity to communicate with the class teacher and share news in an environmentally friendly and secure way. This app will be used to upload posts about pupil's learning and achievements and for staff to send reminders to parents about events etc. We will also be using Learning Journals as an online profile for each child this session. Parents can set up the app on their personal devices and access their child's posts. Learning Journals is private; you will only see posts created for your child. In order for this communication to be successful we respectfully ask parents to follow the Guidelines set for the use of Learning Journals. The main aim of this app is to provide staff with a vehicle to share learning with parents.

Learning Journal Guidelines:

- All absence must be phoned into the school office and not sent in via Learning Journals as the school office need to officially record all absence.
- Please only contact teachers **during working hours (8.30-4.30pm)**. Learning Journals will not be accessed outside working hours so we ask you not to send messages during this time.
- We would ask parents to only talk about their own child. Teacher's will not engage in discussion about anyone else's child.
- When there is an issue or concern, it is easier to have a conversation than have it via text. If a parent has something that they wish to discuss with a member of staff please call into the school office to make a phone appointment.
- We ask that you do not share photos or videos from Learning Journals on social media.
- Each child will be issued with their own personal invitation and QR code to access their Learning Journal.

How parents/carers communicate with us

Parents/carers are welcome to raise matters with the school by phoning the school office and requesting a phone call or appointment with their child's class teacher, Principal Teacher, Depute Head Teacher or Head Teacher. 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 as soon as we can, however this may not be on the same day due to staff diaries and timetables. Class teachers will not be able to take calls during the school day.

All parent enquiries by email should be directed to the school's generic account: mail.alloway@south-ayrshire.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.

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 emailed 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'.

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 do not have our own social media messaging page, however would politely ask that parents/carers do not use social media private messaging to contact members of staff regarding school business. Communicating with staff in this way breaches guidance issued to teachers by the General Teaching Council for Scotland. We do however use our school Twitter feed to share information about the school. 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.

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 South Ayrshire Council Complaints Procedure. Such complaints can be made by email, letter, telephone or in person. Please contact the school office for further information.

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: [Make a subject access request - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/parents-and-carers/subject-access-requests)

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: [Make a request for information - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/parents-and-carers/freedom-of-information)

Pupil Absence

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 by phoning into the school office.

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.

Information Returns

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.

Updating the School on Personal Matters

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.

Updating the School in the Event of Change of Contact Details

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.

Responsibility of school staff:

- To communicate in a timely fashion with parents and carers
- To ensure communication is current and correct
- To use agreed methods of communication
- To respond to communication in a timely manner

Responsibility of parents/carers:

- To ensure school has an up to date email address and contact details
- To read and respond to communication sent by the school
- To inform school office if they feel they are not receiving communication from the school

Responsibility of Parent Council:

- To communicate in a timely fashion with parents and carers regarding their work and events
- To ensure communication is current and correct

- To signpost parents with any specific issues with communication to the school

At Alloway Primary we strive to ensure good, open lines of communication between school staff and families. Your first point of contact should be the class teacher, then senior management team. Should you have any concern that remains unresolved, please do not hesitate to contact the Head Teacher. You will be treated with courtesy and respect by our staff. Please treat our staff with respect in return. South Ayrshire 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.

Please note that we are committed to providing an excellent level of service.



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