

088A Communication - Parents

Responsibility: Assistant Headteacher

Date: March 2018

Next Review: March 2020

Office 365 email platform

The school email system is run via a cloud based platform namely Office 365. All staff and students are provided with an account for internal communication.

Students are able to receive emails from external email addresses however, they are unable to reply or send emails to these email addresses. This means students can sign up to key online learning services in a controlled environment without having communication to the wider web.

Students should use email as a means of brief, professional communication in line with our Acceptable Internet Use Policy and our Student Code of Conduct.

Students usage of the email platform is regularly monitored in line with the student acceptable usage policy. This helps us to ensure Office 365 is a safe and professional working environment.

Staff, in sending e-mails, will use formal address with parents (Mr, Mrs, Ms etc) and we would ask parents do similarly.

Frog VLE

The Frog VLE provides staff and students with a central base for online learning.

Frog is used to log all homework online. This allows staff, students and parents to access their homework instructions and resources from anywhere and on any device. Students can use Frog to seek support for their homework.

Frog is also an area for students to navigate to useful guidance on other areas of their school careers such as work experience and careers information.

School public website

The school public website hosts a parent specific area. This is the central point of useful information and guidance for parents.

My Ed mobile app

The 'My Ed' mobile app is publicly available to download on any Apple or Android mobile device. Through the app anyone can access lots of useful information about the school.

When signing up to the app, if a user is authenticated as a parent, they will also be able to see their child listed under 'My Students'. Verified parents can view their child's timetable, attendance, behaviour record, and achievement data. Parents will also have access to any relevant online forms the school has released.

School Bulletin

Student school bulletins are produced every day and are circulated electronically. The relevant sections are read to student form groups by the teacher taking the register at morning registration, with the exception of assembly day when the bulletin is read out in the hall at the start of the assembly.

Students can also access the daily bulletin via Frog.

Communication to Parents (and Carers)

Newsletters

'Glossy' newsletters are produced each term and are circulated by email to parents, staff and governors and contain items of interest from across the school. 'Hard' copies are available by request and a digital copy is available on the school website. The content of these newsletters is aimed at parents, to keep them well informed of events and activities which have been taking place. They are also a way of departments communicating information from their area to the wider school community.

Parent Bulletin

On Friday of each week, reprographics staff email all parents with a copy of the weekly bulletin. This copies relevant messages from the daily bulletins; information for parents and additional messages from staff to parents can be included.

The parent bulletin is sent out via email at the end of each week.

Letters Home

The school will be using a paperless system to send letters home to parents via email. Where possible letters will be sent home via email; however, there may still be hard copy letters sent home with students for some purposes. Letters are sent to those parents who have 'Parental Responsibility' for a child and where we have email addresses for both parents, emails will be sent to both of them.

Electronic texting

The school uses an electronic texting service. This allows the school to send out a text message to staff and parents in situations such as school closure or event cancellation. The service can also be used to issue reminders about events or to indicate to parents that hard copy letters have been given to children. Any member of staff who needs a text message sending should provide the relevant information to the Headteacher's PA who will seek authorisation and then send out the message.

- The term 'parent' includes any person or body with parental responsibility such as a foster parent, carer, guardian or local authority.

APPENDIX 1

Where parents are separated

It is the case at Holmfirth High School that some of our children's parents are 'separated'. We recognise that this can be a difficult situation and our main aim is not to put any additional stress on the children or parents concerned. The child is our main priority and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child.

This guidance will apply unless the school is made aware of any Court Orders in place and has a copy of the documentation as confirmation. Parents and partners may need to check on who has official parental responsibility and provide evidence of this. We may ask for sight of a child's full, birth certificate on joining the school to confirm parental responsibility.

Evidence shows that after separation children do best when those around them cooperate, provide stability, and avoid conflict. We understand that this can be difficult and parents can become estranged. Our aim is to work with all parties to promote positive family involvement. The information below clarifies what is expected from separated parents and carers, the school and its staff.

The following information has been taken from the document 'Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parents responsibility' DfE, January 2016:

Defining who is a parent:

Parents may be recognised differently under education law than under family law. For the purposes of education law, section 576 of the Education Act 2002 defines a 'parent' as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has responsibility for a child or young person (this could be a step-parent, guardian or other relative);
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

The terms 'resident' and 'non-resident' parents are used to distinguish between parents who do and do not live with a child.

What is Parental Responsibility?

In family law, parental responsibility means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent has in relation to the child. More than one person can hold and exercise parental responsibility for a child. The parental responsibility of one party does not stop simply because another person is also given it. So, in some cases several people may be regarded as being the 'parent' of a child.

General principles:

School staff must treat all parents equally, unless there is a Court Order limiting an individual's exercise of parental responsibility. Everyone who is a parent as defined under education law (whether they are the resident parent or not, with or without parental responsibility, has a right to participate in decisions about a child's education and receive information about the child (even though, for day-to-day purposes, the school's main contact is likely to be a parent with whom the child lives on school days.)

Individuals who have parental responsibility for, or care of, a child have the same rights as natural parents; for example:

- To receive information e.g. pupil reports
- To participate in statutory activities e.g. vote in elections for parent governors;

- To be informed about meetings involving the child e.g. a governors' meeting, an exclusion
- To be asked to give consent e.g. to the child taking part in school trips;

Trip letters

All trip letters are posted on ParentPay and are available for all parents and carers to view, the letters then stay available on ParentPay until after the trip has taken place.

This also applies to all the other items which are available to purchase through ParentPay i.e. Revision Guides, PE Kit and other school equipment.

Where a parent's action, or proposed action, conflicts with the school's ability to act in the child's best interests, the school should try to resolve the problem with that parent but avoid becoming involved in conflict. However, there may be occasions when a school needs to decline requests for action from one or more parents.

In cases where schools cannot resolve the conflict between separate parents, they should advise the aggrieved parents to pursue the matter through the Family Court.

Holmfirth High School will ensure they follow these guidelines and treat all parents fairly by following these guidelines:

- It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school when there is a change in the family's circumstances. We need to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.
- The information provided to school when the pupil was enrolled, detailing whether both parents have parental responsibility, will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school.
- All communication from school will be sent to parents who are held on the school data system as primary guardians. Parents are asked to make clear on their admission form which parent(s) should be categorised as primary guardians – check with MW
- Parents are responsible for providing a correct current email address. Paper letters are sent home with pupils and we expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.
- We will hold one parent's evening appointment per child where both parents are welcome and we expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. These appointments can be set up using the parents evening on-line system.
- We expect parents to liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other instances
- Both parents are entitled to receive reports and review their child's pupil records. Reports will be sent to the parent with whom the child resides with the expectation that he/she will share the report with the other parent. The school will post copies of progress reports to the non-custodial parent if a written request is submitted.
- Both parents are legally entitled to collect their child from school unless a court order is provided that states otherwise. Children's welfare and safety are paramount and, where there are issues over access to children, the parent with whom the child resides should contact the school immediately. Where there is a court restraining order in place, the school will put in place measures to ensure the child is not released to a named individual. In all cases, the school will be mindful of its safeguarding responsibilities and may use its discretion not to send a child home with a particular parent.

Name changes

If a child has a name change, there are two options –

- 1) We can change preferred name and this is how it will appear on registers but all GCSE paperwork will still show legal name.

- 2) Change of legal name - for this we need original legal document - ie deed poll before we can implement the change

A letter is sent to both parents, a note is put on sims in the quick notes section

The welfare of the child is at the heart of all we do and the Headteacher maintains the right to discontinue any of the above if it is deemed to be significantly against the child's best interests. Court orders may also alter the position the school adopts.

If a family feel that exceptions to any part of this policy are necessary they are invited to discuss this with the Headteacher. Where necessary a separate plan will be put into place and agreed by the school and all individuals who hold parental responsibility