

# The Kingston Academy



## **Communications Policy March 2018**

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## Contents

1. Purpose
2. Definition of communication
3. Principles
4. Introduction
5. Aims of the policy
6. Communication with parents and carers
  - 6.1 Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query
  - 6.2 Letters
  - 6.3 E-mail
  - 6.4 Telephone Calls
  - 6.5 Texts
7. Absence
8. Meeting with Parents and carers
9. Social Networking
10. Reports and Progress
11. Accessibility
12. School Website
13. Google Classroom in Google Apps for Education
14. Communication between pupils and staff
15. Communication between TKA staff
16. Dealing with the media
17. School trips, visits and activities
18. Severe weather and emergency closure
19. Prospective parents/carers
20. FoTKA
21. Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

22. Communication with other Schools and outside agencies

23. Investigating incidents

24. Monitoring, evaluation and review

Appendix – To whom should my query or concern be addressed?

## **Communications Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

To promote partnerships between the school, parents and carers, pupils and the wider community through efficient and effective communication.

### **2. Definition of communication**

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflect on the school's reputation. Parents and carers, trustees and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school's reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

### **3. Principles**

TKA uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient.

Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

Staff will always seek to establish friendly relationships with parents and carers but they will ensure relationships are professional and parents will be addressed in a formal manner. Staff are to avoid developing close relationships with parents and carers. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc.

The Communications Policy embraces the principles of the school's Equality Statement and Online Safety Policy (copies available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website) .

### **4. Introduction**

TKA recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents and carers, staff, trustees, the local and wider community outside agencies, etc), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school.

The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and pupils and this Policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective two-way communication between home and school.

Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child's education. The school will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to creating a shared view of their child's needs.

## 5. Aims of the policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between the school, parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders and that there are robust processes to facilitate this.

The school recognises that engaging and working with parents and carers is a vital key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our wish is to involve as many parents and carers in their child's education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

- To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- Signage will be clear, informative and positive.
- All written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly and parents and carers can expect an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- A variety of forms of communication with parents and carers for example, telephone contact, e-mail, post and text.
- Parents and carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Information is given to parents and carers on what pupils will be taught and tips for helping their child will be provided.
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective.

## 6. Communication with parents and carers

### 6.1 Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query

Please see Appendix A which details who to contact and how to progress any query that is not successfully resolved.

### 6.2 Letters

Staff will always reply to a letter from parents and carers as quickly as possible. A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter will be made by telephone, letter or email **within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days**. Letters to parents/carers must be processed through the school administration team and approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting/emailing. Letters/emails being sent out to all parents/carers should be approved by the Deputy Head teacher responsible for communication and sent out using SIMS. Copies of correspondence with parents and carers will be placed on pupil files on SIMS. Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints and Suggestions Policy (copy available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website).

The school will use standard templates for letters where possible.

Whole school information is included in a weekly newsletter, published on Friday each week during school term time. A link to an electronic copy of this is emailed to all parents and carers as well as being published on the school website and on the SIMS Learning Gateway. Hard copies of the newsletter are available from the school upon request.

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication. However, if we are unable to obtain a current email address for any parent or carer, communications will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post.

The correct salutations must be used when writing to or emailing parents/carers/partnerships. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate, therefore all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc and sign off is always full name Ms/Mrs/Mr/Dr Teacher Surname. Any relevant line manager / Head of House / Form tutor must be copied into letters or emails.

### 6.3 E-mail

E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating necessary information and is the school's preferred method of communication. **Emails received will be treated in the same way as letters: acknowledged within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days.** Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter. Any items longer than a paragraph should be attached in word format. A staff contact list is published on the SIMS Learning Gateway.

Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email address is: [enquiries@thekingstonacademy.org](mailto:enquiries@thekingstonacademy.org)

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address.

### 6.4 Telephone Calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

In a non-emergency **a return call will be made within 2 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days.** Staff will make a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer on the SIMS call log.

### **6.5 Texts**

Automated texts from SIMS are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from members of staff and staff should not respond by text to a text message received from a parent/carer (but should respond using an alternative means of communication such as email or telephone if appropriate).

### **7. Absence**

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence, for full details please refer to the Attendance Policy (copy available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website).

### **8. Meeting with Parents and carers**

Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. **This request should be responded to within 2 working days.**

Parents and carers should report to Pupil Services prior to meeting with a member of staff. A member of staff may ask a senior colleague to accompany them.

Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of the parents or carers becoming angry or abusive.

This should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

### **9. Social Networking**

The School has a Twitter account which is used to provide updates to parents and pupils who wish to subscribe to this. It is not compulsory to do so and therefore any key messages will be relayed through formal school communication channels.

### **10. Reports and Progress**

Parents and carers receive an interim progress report and a full annual report to provide information about their child's progress in each academic year. These reports are accessible online through the SIMS Learning Gateway .

In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's subject teachers once a year, at parents evening. Parents and carers should contact the school if issues arise about their child's progress or wellbeing. **The first point of contact should be the child's Form Tutor.**

We welcome the presence of any other adult a parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting for support or to act as an interpreter.

### **11. Accessibility**

We will endeavor to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

The font used in all printed communications is Calibri 11. Documents printed using a larger font can usually be provided and requests should be made via Pupil Services.

If a translation of a document is required, in the first instance parents/carers should access [Google Translate](#) and a link to this will be included in the main languages of the school community in documents sent out to parents. Key school information will be translated into community languages where appropriate and possible and where required a translator provided to ensure effective communication.

Before sending or posting information electronically staff should test to ensure cross platform access.

## **12. School Website**

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including:

- Inclusion information
- Pupil Premium information
- Homework
- Uniform list
- Timetables
- School events
- Holiday dates
- School prospectus

It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

## **13. Google Classroom in Google Apps for Education**

The Google platform is a powerful tool for motivating pupils as it gives them more choice and flexibility about when and where they complete their learning. It also encourages parent and carer involvement in learning, especially with extended learning tasks.

Parents will also have access to data about their child's attendance and progress via the SIMS Learning Gateway.

## **14. Communication between pupils and staff**

Two way communication between pupils and staff is an important aspect of school life. The school welcomes and encourages pupils to engage in conversation with all members of staff within the school.

When communicating with a member of staff pupils should:

- Stand in front of the member of staff they are speaking with and make eye contact;
- Address the member of staff using their formal name e.g. Mrs Smith, never referring to a member of staff by their first name;
- Be respectful, do not talk over, raise voice or walk away before the conversation has ended.

When communicating with pupils staff should use pupils' first names and full names of staff (Mr Surname and Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils. Try to avoid generic terms of: Sir and Miss to convey politeness.

Pupils may also email staff on their school accounts in relation to their learning. All pupils are taught email protocol:

- Complete the subject line
- Use Ms/Mrs/Mr and Surname as salutation
- Use Standard English
- Avoid abbreviations
- Sign off with Thank you or Kind Regards.

Correspondence is to remain professional at all times.

Staff are never permitted to use personal email accounts when communicating with pupils.

Pupils are expected to check their emails daily and delete / archive regularly.

### **15. Communication between TKA staff**

#### Verbal

Staff are to use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of pupils. Avoid generic terms of: Sir and Miss to convey politeness.

#### Email

- consider whether an email is appropriate when face to face communication may be more conducive;
- avoid exclusive email correspondence without requesting or organising a face to face meeting;
- avoid send or reply all unless necessary;
- line managers are to be copied in;
- keep emails concise, use Standard English and bullet points if necessary.
- Staff to check emails twice a day.
- Use group emails as appropriate. Email groups are as follows:
  - All Staff Teaching staff (to include TA/HLTA)
  - SLT
  - Deputies
  - English Depart
  - Maths Dept
  - Science Dept
  - Subject Leads
  - Operations Team
  - Vertical Tutors
  - Year 7 Tutors
  - Going Beyond Teachers
  - Further pupil breakdowns are then available by emailing through SIMS.

Staff should not send non-urgent emails before 8am or after 8pm. Emails should instead be saved as drafts and sent during work hours.

A weekly bulletin will be sent to all staff on Friday afternoon to plan for the following week.

Walkie talkies are to be used by all staff on call and in the Operations team.

Agendas for staff meetings are to be circulated at least five days in advance. The minutes of the meeting to be circulated to all relevant parties where possible within two weeks of the meeting.

## **16. Dealing with the media**

The TKA Times is our main avenue for communicating to our parents/carers, for wider coverage staff must first seek permission from the Deputy Head teacher responsible for Communications. A member of the Operations team will then be able to liaise with local contacts such as The Kingston Guardian for smaller pieces. The Deputy Head teacher responsible for Communications must be the main liaison for bigger pieces or any pieces going to the Surrey Comet, TES or to a national media outlet.

The Deputy Head for Communications must approve every piece before it is sent externally and in each case there must also be an equivalent article written for the TKA Times.

All media enquiries must be directed to the Deputy Head responsible for Communications.

## **17. School trips, visits and activities**

The school will endeavor to publish all proposed trips, visits and activities on the school calendar at the start of each academic year. Parents and carers will be notified by letter of trips, visits and activities that their child/children may wish to participate in as early as possible, and within at least six weeks of the proposed trip, visit or activity. Occasionally opportunities arise during the academic year to offer pupils additional trips, visits or activities that were not known or available when the school calendar was published. The school will always ensure parents and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events. (See also the separate trips Policy, copy available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website)

## **18. Severe weather and emergency closure**

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via text or email. Parents and carers should also tune in to local radio and check the school website and social media channels (e.g. Twitter).

## **19. Prospective parents/carers**

The school prospectus is published on the website. Prospective parents and carers may request a printed copy.

Prospective parents and carers are invited to an Open Evening in the October of the year preceding their child's year of entry to the school and to attend published tours to enable them to see the school operating.

Prospective parents and carers are also invited, along with their child, to an induction evening in March where the main channels of communication are outlined, and important information will be shared.

## **20. FoTKA**

Friends of The Kingston Academy is our equivalent to a Parents Association. This is led by current parents and their focus is to provide a social forum for parents of TKA and to run events and activities. Fund raising is an important aspect of their work but is not their sole focus. Parents may contact the FoTKA committee by emailing [fotka@thekingstonacademy.org](mailto:fotka@thekingstonacademy.org)

## **21. Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The school recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of all pupils with additional needs. The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and carers and user-friendly information and procedures. All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents and carers.

All staff within the school are expected to help parents and carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to.

When pupils who have special educational needs are making less than the expected progress or if they are experiencing behavioural difficulties, we would expect to meet with parents and carers more regularly. Parents and carers are encouraged to communicate immediately where they have a concern about their child's needs being met and should also refer to the [Inclusion section of the website](#).

## **22. Communication with other Schools and outside agencies**

Prior to pupils joining Year 7, pupils are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to TKA. We recognise that children have diverse needs, and where required we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals including medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare and the local authority Children's Services Single Point of Access. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment (see the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy copy available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website).

We hold information on all pupils in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. All personal data is held and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (for full details see our Data Protection Policy,

copy available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Team Drive or on the [policy page](#) of the school website)

### **23. Investigating incidents**

When investigating an incident involving pupils, school members of staff interview all pupils involved and ask them to complete a written account. The school will only share any information that would identify any pupils in accordance with data protection regulations and legislation and our policies (a copy of our data protection policy is available on the policy page of the website or in the Whole School Team Drive).

### **24. Monitoring, evaluation and review**

A member of the senior leadership team and the Kingston Educational Trust will review this Policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The Policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

The next review is due: March 2021

Signed 12: March 2018:

Sue Conder, Chair Pupil Welfare and Community Committee

Sophie Cavanagh, Head teacher

## **Appendix – To whom should my query or concern be addressed?**

If you have a general query or concern, not specific to your child, please contact Pupil Services on 0208 4656200 or email your child's Tutor.

If your query or concern is about your individual child please follow the communications route applicable to your specific question below.

### **My query is about my child's learning:**

**Subject Teacher**

**Subject Lead**

**Assistant Head Teacher for that Curriculum Area**

**Deputy Head Teacher, Teaching Learning and Assessment**

**Head Teacher via PA [jfree@thekingstonacademy.org](mailto:jfree@thekingstonacademy.org)**

If, following the communications route above you are still dissatisfied with the response you may complain to the school, please refer to the school's [Complaints and Suggestions Policy available on the school website](#)

### **My query is about my child's wellbeing, behaviour or non-compliance:**

**Form Tutor**

**Head of House or Progress Leader**

**Assistant Head Teacher**

**Deputy Head teacher, Personal Development, Behaviour and Wellbeing**

**Head Teacher via her PA [jfree@thekingstonacademy.org](mailto:jfree@thekingstonacademy.org)**

If, following the communications route above you are still dissatisfied with the response you may complain to the school. Please refer to the school's [Complaints and Suggestions Policy available on the school website](#)