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Parental Communications Policy



# Abernethy Primary School

## Parental Communications Policy

**September 2023**

## INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

- 1.1 This policy seeks to define the means by which the school maintains good communications with parents and other stakeholders. It should provide an overview of what parents can expect of the school and, in turn, what the school will expect of parents.
- 1.2 This policy complies with relevant Perth and Kinross Council policy documents, including the [Customer Service Standards](#) (July 2010).

## 2. PARENTAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE SCHOOL

### 2.1 Enquiries

2.1.1 Parents are welcome to raise matters with the school by visiting reception or by telephone 01738 472676. In many cases, including where a message has to be passed to a pupil, such enquiries can be dealt with directly by the school office staff. Where another member of staff is required to respond, the following will apply:

- **Non-urgent enquiries** - In such cases, a message can be left with our office staff who will forward it to the relevant member(s) of staff. When the office is unmanned, the answer machine will be switched on. Office staff check messages regularly. In line with the **Council's [Customer Service Standards](#)**, general correspondence (letters, emails and enquiries) will be responded to within **15 working days**. In many cases, however, particularly where there is a time factor, responses will be quicker.
- **Matters requiring an immediate response** - Where a matter is of such urgency that it requires an immediate response, it will be passed to the most appropriate member of staff who will usually be a member of the school's Senior Management/Leadership Team. In most cases, the member of staff will be available to deal with such enquiries at the time of contact. If not, they will advise you when you will be contacted; usually the same day or within 24 hours.
- **Logging of enquiries** - All enquiries (in person, by telephone, in writing or via email) that require a member of staff to respond to a parent are logged centrally, with details of the time and nature of the enquiry and the member of staff to whom the enquiry has been passed. This allows the school to review communications regularly.
- **Enquiries by email** - All enquiries by email should be directed to the school's generic account: [abernethy@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:abernethy@pkc.gov.uk) This will allow enquiries to be logged for review purposes and for them to be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff, with line managers copied in as appropriate. Parents are asked not to email directly to staff individual email accounts. Staff are encouraged to reply to emails within normal working hours, generally, but not beyond 6pm. Parents are asked not to email about pupil absence, but instead to phone and speak with a member of staff or leave a voicemail.  
Any email to the school will also receive an automated reply confirming receipt and reminding parents of the [Customer Service Standards](#) timescale for responses. This email also advises that the school should be phoned in the event of more urgent enquiries such as relating to Child Protection, absence or pick up details that differ from the norm, health or medical matters.

- 2.2 **Letters to the school** - Parents will often use letters to communicate relevant information, such as reason for a future absence, to a primary class teacher. In general, any letters requiring a response should, in the first instance, be addressed to one of the following: the Headteacher, or Principal Teacher.
- 2.3 **Social Media** – parents should not use social media personal/private messaging to contact members of staff.
- 2.4 **Parental complaints** - Should a parent wish to make a formal complaint about any aspect of the school, this should be addressed to the Headteacher. The school follows the [Perth and Kinross Complaints Procedure](#). Such complaints can be made by email, letter, telephone or in person.
- 2.5 **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: [DataProtection@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:DataProtection@pkc.gov.uk)
- 2.6 **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: [FOI@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:FOI@pkc.gov.uk)

### 3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN GOOD HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Communication between the school and home is at its most effective where parents are clear re what is expected of them. The following are key ways in which parents can support the work of the school in terms of communication:

#### 3.2 Pupil absence

3.2.1 The school’s over-riding obligation is to ensure the safety of the young people entrusted to it, and it is 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 as early as possible by telephone where circumstances are likely to result in their child being absent from school. Please do not email us about absences (on the day of that absence) as this may not be picked up by staff in time to avoid a message (see below 3.2.2)

3.2.2 Where no such notification has been received, parents will be called on the phone asking for such information. Parents are requested to respond to such calls 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. In the past, this has led to the unnecessary involvement of the Police.

3.2.3 It is also very important that parents provide the school with an absence note or email communication, when appropriate, following medical absences.

#### 3.3 Information Returns

3.3.1 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. Whatever the reason, it considerably eases the administrative burden to the school when parents adhere to the deadlines provided.

### **3.4 Updating the school on personal matters**

3.4.1 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 and/or relationships. 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 cases, parents/carers can phone the school to speak to the Head Teacher, Principal Teacher or the Class Teacher. Seesaw may be used to contact the Class Teacher but we advise all sensitive information is shared either in person, via phone or email ([abernethy@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:abernethy@pkc.gov.uk)) When phoning or emailing, please indicate which teacher/member of staff to whom you wish this information to be sent.

### **3.5 Updating the school in the event of change of contact details**

3.5.1 It is very important that the school has current contact details for parents and other relatives. Parents are requested always 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. Please contact the school office in person or by phone or email, to change your contact details.

### **3.6 Use of Social Media**

3.6.1 Consideration should be given regarding the nature of comments made about members of staff on social media platforms. Where a parent has a concern or complaint this should be raised with the school directly so this can be addressed through the complaints procedure (see 2.4 above).

## **4. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND PARENTS/CARERS**

### **4.1 The School Handbook**

4.1.1 A school handbook is made available to all parents through the school website and is updated by December of each year. This handbook meets the requirements of the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and its purposes include:

- providing a welcome for new parents to the school;
- helping parents to choose a school; and
- helping parents to prepare their child for school.

4.1.2 The handbook should serve as a practical guide to parents about school, authority and national policies and how these will impact on their child's experience at the school. It should also give them a good 'feel' for the sort of school that we are.

The school handbook is also available on the school's website or in hard copy upon request.

## 4.2 Standards and Qualities Report

4.2.1 The school is required under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc (Scotland) Act (2000) to publish an annual report including key performance measures such as those relating to attainment and attendance. This report is typically emailed to all parents in June, at the end of the school year, and published on the school's website.

## 4.3 General Communications to all parents

4.3.1 The school uses a variety of methods to communicate with all parents on matters which are of interest to them. These include:

- **Groupcall** – we use the email facility on Groupcall which allows us to send messages to parents and is usually used only for matters that require to be drawn to parents' attention urgently such as school bus or club cancellations or severe weather closures. Groupcall provide an App called **Xpressions**, linked to their message system. This service is available for parents to ensure communication between the school and yourselves is easier and more effective. This appears as a 'text message' on the App. This App is free and easy to use on a mobile phone. Parents can choose whether this communication is received by 'text' or 'email' on downloading Xpressions.
- **Phone** – is how we will get in touch about absences (before 0930) Staff may also phone you to discuss matters pertaining to your child's learning and wellbeing in school.
- **Email** – the school holds parental email addresses for almost all pupils and is increasingly moving towards this as the means of communication in preference to paper.
- **Newsletter** – the newsletter is published monthly and provides parents/carers with an accessible and informative overview of the school's activities. We regularly update parents/carers with a calendar of key events/activities through the newsletter.
- **Seesaw** - this is an online App which allows us to share with you what your child is learning in class and as a communication tool to send home school information. Seesaw creates a personal online learning journal and both your child and teacher will capture the work they are doing as each term progresses. This may be in the form of a photo, video, drawing or pdf document that your child may want to share with you.
- **The School Website** – the school website is a useful resource for parents. As well as providing news updates, the website is the place where parents are most likely to find information they need about the school. This includes the school's calendar of events, the school handbook, school newsletters and other key documents. The school website also provides clear details for parents on how they can contact the school. <http://abernethyprimaryschool.schoolwebsite.scot/>

- **X (formerly known as Twitter) account** – this is useful for providing updates on achievements both within the school and in terms of extra-curricular activities. Whilst we use X (Twitter on occasion), we are moving more towards sharing learner achievements and experiences on Seesaw, ensuring a personal touch. You can find us on X (formerly known as Twitter) at [@abernethyps](#)

#### 4.4 Communication regarding the curriculum/learning and teaching

- **Nursery** - 'New starts' to the Nursery begin with a meeting with parents to discuss the child's needs and create a personal plan – this is known as 'All About Me'. Matters discussed at this meeting are reviewed at parent contact appointments which take place twice annually, or sooner if required. A detailed written report is provided towards the end of the session for all children who access a full time place. For all other children, a shorter report can be provided. Nursery staff are usually available for informal discussion at the beginning and end of nursery sessions, but formal appointments can also be arranged if required. Parents are also provided with a curriculum overview at the beginning of each term, and the parental noticeboard is updated regularly. Seesaw is the key means of communicating progress and achievement within the Early Level curriculum.
- **Primary** - There are two parent contacts sessions per year for primary pupils. An interim written report is issued to parents twice a year and a detailed written report towards the end of the session. Primary staff are usually available for brief, informal discussion at the end of the school day, but formal appointments can also be arranged if required. Parents are also provided with a curriculum overview at the beginning of each term. Again, Seesaw is the means by which we share learner achievements and progress as the year develops.

## 5. SEEKING PARENTS' VIEWS

### 5.1.1 The Parent Council

5.1.2 The Parent Council, which meets 4 times a year (once termly) and is attended by the Headteacher, is a key vehicle for parents to share their views with the school leadership. These meetings are also used by the school leadership to provide parents with updates on a wide range of issues, ranging from small changes to procedures to very significant government policy changes. The school is committed to harnessing the potential of the Parent Council as a key forum for interaction with parents and will always seek to support initiatives raised through this body. All parents/carers (known as the Parent Forum) are welcome to join Parent Council meetings, whilst only those who are Office Bearers or appointed as PC members, will have the right to vote on any matters requiring voting rights. You can contact the Chair of the Parent Council using their email address: [abernethypc@gmail.com](mailto:abernethypc@gmail.com)

### 5.2 Parental Involvement in school self-evaluation and annual planning

5.2.1 The school is also keen to involve parents, as well as other stakeholders, in its annual processes of self-evaluation and planning. Parents' views will be sought throughout the school year on matters of curriculum development and self-evaluation.

### **5.3 Consultation on proposed change**

5.3.1. The school is committed to consulting parents wherever possible, particularly in cases where significant changes in policy or procedures are under consideration. As well as pupils themselves, parents are key stakeholders within the school community and their views are valued and will be taken into consideration in the making of decisions.

### **5.4 On-going evaluation of events**

5.4.1 The school is also committed to seeking regular feedback from parents on activities such as parent contact sessions and we will often issue evaluation forms to seek parents' views on how such events might be improved.

### **5.5. Annual parental survey**

5.5.1 In addition to these methods of seeking parental views, the school also conducts formal parental surveys, covering a wide range of the school's functions. This could be completed on paper but increasingly using a Microsoft FORM questionnaire which is online.

## **6. SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS:**

- Email Address: Abernethy@pkc.gov.uk
- Phone No: 01738 472676
- Website: <http://abernethyprimaryschool.schoolwebsite.scot/>
- Twitter: X (formerly known as Twitter) at @abernethyps
- Address: 76 Main Street, Abernethy, PH2 9LA