



**CRESTWOOD
COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

School Communication Policy

September 2023

**Approved by Governors - July 2023
Review Date - September 2026**

1. We believe it is important to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for pupils, staff, parents and local community members in our school. We encourage clear, open communication links with all stakeholders as we believe it has a positive impact on pupils' learning and our reputation within the community. It provides parents with the information they need to support their child's education, helping to build a partnership between home and school, as well as building strong relationships with other stakeholders . Such communication can be entirely positive and practical, for example to seek information, ask a question, clear up a misunderstanding or to draw attention to a matter. Sometimes there is a need to resolve an issue or misunderstanding.
2. We use the term 'parents' in this policy to refer to:
 - a. Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil.
 - b. Anyone caring for a child (such as grandparents or child-minders)
3. The term member of staff as referred to in this policy includes:
 - a. Anyone employed by the school
 - b. Anyone training in a professional capacity at the school
 - c. Governors (when acting in this capacity)
 - d. Volunteers at the school (when acting in this capacity)
 - e. Anyone employed through an external agency, who are acting in a professional capacity on the school site
4. The term 'stakeholder' as referred in this policy includes:
 - a. A member of the public living in the wider community
 - b. Anyone with an investment or interest in the school
 - c. External partners e.g. Local Authority, Children's Services, Suppliers
5. This communication policy aims to set out the methods of communication available to parents, stakeholders and the community for contacting the school and our expectations from all when visiting our school or communication between all stakeholders in the school setting.
6. We acknowledge that sometimes there can be situations that can be emotional and challenging for parents, stakeholders and staff to work through. Nonetheless, we expect all in our community to show mutual respect. We have clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes staff (through the staff code of conduct) and pupils (through our behaviour policy). We also expect parents and stakeholders to engage constructively with school staff and to work together with them in the best interests of our children and community.

7. We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information on another child. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers then this will be shared with the school's legal advisers.
8. If parents or stakeholders are considering making a formal complaint, the Complaints Policy is available on our website. However, stage 1 of our policy suggests that other forms of communication can often help in resolving issues and we encourage parents to use this route. However, this is not compulsory and does not prevent the use of the complaints policy either straight away or after other forms of communication have been tried.
9. Stakeholders can raise concerns over community issues, such as behaviour of our students within the local community, however, some of these issues are beyond our control as they occur out of school hours. The school cannot be held responsible for every societal occurrence.

Communication with the School

Complaints or concerns should be addressed to the person who was most heavily involved in the situation, unless it is of a very personal nature to do with that staff member, in which case it should be addressed to the Achievement Leader for that Faculty. In the first instance please send communications to: adminoffice@crestwood.hants.sch.uk where it will be redirected to the staff member concerned.

The Headteacher and Senior Team are not always the right people to go to and they will not always respond personally, directing it to more junior members of staff.

In the case of communications with the school that are not raising a formal complaint, the following guidance will apply.

Meetings

1. Face-to-face conversations are generally the best way of communicating with the school. However, for quick, short messages, please call the school on 02380 641232 and leave a message or email adminoffice@crestwood.hants.sch.uk. Please indicate your child's name, campus and who the message is for. This method should not be used for absence reporting.

2. When a longer conversation is deemed necessary and the member of staff is not able to speak to you immediately face-to-face due to school commitments, then a request for an appointment can be made to discuss the matter either in person or by telephone, at a later date. The school will aim to arrange that meeting within 10 working days.
3. Outside of teaching hours, all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school so availability of staff outside of teaching hours should not be assumed.
4. Should a meeting be requested the decision of which staff member will attend will rest with the Headteacher.

Email

5. Parents and stakeholders are welcome to email the school on adminoffice@crestwood.hants.sch.uk about non-urgent issues in the first instance.
6. Emails will be most helpful if they are concise, explaining concerns in a clear way. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.
7. The school will aim to respond within 2 working days. If a response is unable to be provided within this timeline, which can be to ensure a full and considered response, then a revised timeline will be provided and communicated. We ask that parents and stakeholders await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.

Phone Calls

8. If a query or concern is time sensitive and urgent, the parent or stakeholder should call the school office, who will liaise as necessary at the earliest opportunity. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments.
9. If the query or concern is not time sensitive and urgent then parents and stakeholders should email or call the school office and the relevant member of staff will aim to contact them within 5 working days. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time.

10. For general enquiries, please call or email the school office.

Social Media

11. The school will not respond to concerns raised via social media.

12. We do not appreciate issues being aired by Social Media, communication should be confidential and between the associated parties. The Headteacher may contact parents or stakeholders where this has been conducted to ask for the posts to be removed.

13. Where the social media site is run by the school, comments will be removed if they do not meet the criteria of the social media site. Parents and stakeholders will be blocked if they do not meet the criteria of this policy.

14. Should the school be made aware of any physical threats or abusive behaviour towards staff members on social media then the school will consider reporting this to the Police and seeking the removal of this content from the site.

Communication during school hours/working days

15. Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours, Monday to Friday 8.00am-4.00pm, or their working hours (if they work part-time).

16. Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours, 8.00am to 4.00pm, or during school holidays.

17. Staff may choose to work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Types of unacceptable behaviour and communication

18. There are some types of behaviour/communication that the school consider unacceptable. These are as follows -

- Any physical aggression, e.g. slapping, hitting, punching and kicking;
- Physically intimidating a member of staff, or pupils, e.g. standing very close to her/him;
- The use of aggressive hand gestures including finger pointing towards a member of staff or pupil;

- Spitting at a member of staff or pupil;
- Shaking or holding a fist towards a member of staff or pupil;
- Shouting at members of staff or pupils (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over virtual meetings);
- Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010;
- Threatening or offensive comments about a member of staff or pupil of the school; this can include verbally, via texts, emails, social media, etc.
- Sending abusive messages to a member of staff, including via text, email or social media;
- A large volume of emails in respect of the same matter over a short period of time;
- Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed by the school;
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments about the school and its staff on social media platforms;
- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches);
- Breaching or not conforming to the school's security procedures;
- Covertly recording phone calls or meetings with members of staff;
- Any other behaviour that is disrespectful, threatening or offensive

This list is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour which has no place in our school community.

Parent and stakeholder Code of conduct:

These standards apply to written and verbal complaints.

- Inflammatory comments or statements should be avoided and the tone should be courteous at all times – emotive and accusatory words such as 'disgusting', use of capitals or defamatory statements should not be included. The communication should reflect the information you have currently received; the assumption should be that you have one version of the matter which is a concern, rather than concluding you have the totality of the information.
- Each complainant will represent their own views and should not seek to present themselves as self-appointed spokesperson for others.
- We aim to deal with all concerns seriously and work to resolve them, there is no need to threaten staff with the governors, LA or Ofsted as a means to fast-forward your complaint.

- Meetings will be arranged where and when it is deemed necessary. Concerns around safety or child protection will be dealt with immediately otherwise appointments will need to be made in advance to be seen by a staff member, you cannot turn up unannounced.
- Any concerns and complaints which are received which do not comply with our expectations will be returned unattended until the communications meet the expectations outlined above. Parents who breach the terms will be subject to restricted access to staff.

Actions that may be taken by the school as a result of unacceptable behaviour and communication

19. In the first instance, (if the unacceptable behaviour has occurred on site) the school will ask the parent or stakeholder to desist and/or leave the site. If the behaviour is of a serious nature, then the police will be contacted.
20. Thereafter the school (Headteacher/Member of School Leadership team) will gather information on allegations of unacceptable behaviour. This may include talking to the parties concerned or others as witnesses to the behaviour.
21. If unacceptable behaviour is considered to have occurred the following actions may be taken by the school, dependent on the severity/gravity of the behaviour:
 - a. The parent or stakeholder will be told verbally that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
 - a. The parent or stakeholder will be told in writing that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
 - b. Advising the parent or stakeholder that all future meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and will be minuted;
 - c. Putting in place a contact plan to deal with any communication between the individual and school. For example, except in emergencies, communication to the school must be in writing only to a named individual and the school can set out timescales for school responses and how many will be responded to in the case of persistent complainants.
 - d. A warning letter or an immediate ban from the school site;

- e. Contacting the Police where behaviour is criminal in nature.
- f. Seek advice from the local authority's legal team regarding further action.

22. The school will always seek to respond to an incident in a proportional way. The final decision for how to respond to the unacceptable behaviour and communication rests with the headteacher and, where necessary, the Governing Body.