

# St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy

*Part of the Newman Catholic Collegiate*



## Policy on Communications

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Chair of Academy committee:	
Principal:	

## St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy



### Communications Policy

(see also Use of Photographic and Video Images)

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The academy has many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, with other schools and academies, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the academy. Good communication between the academy and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. Parents and carers can naturally help more if they know what the academy is trying to achieve.

#### 2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 In our academy, we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents and carers well informed about academy life. This reinforces the important role that parents and carers play in supporting the children and academy.
- 2.2 We have various strategies for communicating with parents and carers. Some of our communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement, while others simply reflect what we believe is important for our academy.
- 2.3 We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font (Comic Sans), and add pictures wherever appropriate. 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.

#### 3 Home-school agreement (Appendix 1)

- 3.1 Our current home-academy agreement has been in place since September 2003. It explains the academy's aims and values, the academy's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents and carers, and what the academy expects of the children. We ask parents and carers to sign this agreement when their child starts at our academy, and to renew it each year.

3.2 The agreement covers the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the academy, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework. Our academy committee and board of directors review the agreement annually.

#### **4 Annual written report to parents and carers: children's achievements**

4.1 Every year, we provide a written report to each child's parents or carers on the child's progress in the various National Curriculum subjects. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. In our academy, we ask the children to comment on their own progress, and we ask parents and carers to make a similar comment. We also give children in Year 2 and Year 6 the details of their performance in the national tests/assessments, and details of national comparisons.

4.2 As well as receiving the annual written report, parents and carers meet their child's teacher each term for a private consultation. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Parents and carers are able to see their child's work during these meetings.

We encourage parents and carers to contact the academy if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.

4.3 When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents and carers more regularly.

4.4 We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to a academy meeting to act as interpreter and or offer support. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our academy, or to receive and understand a communication.

#### **5 Academy prospectus**

5.1 The academy prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents and carers a full picture of provision at our academy. We update this for each academy year.

#### **6 Public access to documents**

6.1 The academy makes a range of documentation available to parents and carers. We keep a master set in the academy office, and we make a copy of this available on request. It contains minutes of academy committee meetings, and all academy policies, including those that the board of directors are required to draw up in relation to the following matters: charging and remissions, sex education, health and safety, curriculum, performance management, admissions, and action planning following an inspection. It also contains a range of national and LA documentation.

#### **7 Home-academy communication**

7.1 We send a newsletter to parents and carers at the end of each week during term time. It contains general details of academy events and activities. Parents and carers

expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary.

- 7.2 At the beginning of each term, all teachers write to the parents or carers of the children in their classes with details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming term. We invite parents and carers to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home.
- 7.3 Children in all classes have a home-school diary. This enables parents and carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. The home- academy diary (KS2)/Reading Log (KS1) is used to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents and carers.
- 7.4 The academy encourages parents and carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers see parents/carers immediately, if at all possible. Where this is not possible, the parent makes an appointment. We allow many parents and carers the opportunity to have a word with the teacher when they bring their children to the academy, or when they collect them at the end of the day.
- 7.5 We arrange annual curriculum meetings for parents and carers. These are evening meetings to explain areas of our curriculum. We hold a meeting for new parents/carers each June, and a meeting for Year 2 and Year 6 parents and carers each March, concerning the national tests. The residential visit that Year 5/6 children make to Boreatton Park, or other PGL centre, involves a number of meetings with parents and carers regarding the planning and content of the visit, and a post-visit review.
- 7.6 If a child is absent from the academy, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence. (Parents are expected to contact school as set out in the Home/Academy Agreement.)
- 7.7 If the academy is closed unexpectedly then it will be announced on the local radio stations and posted on the LA website.

## **8 Communication with other schools and outside agencies**

- 8.1 Toward the end of their final term in Year 6, we pass on information about the children to their intended secondary schools. We try to give a view of the whole child, and we include their expected national test results, their strengths and weaknesses, their interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, academy council representative, playground buddy, etc.). There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. We may also send on several items of work.
- 8.2 We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical

services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as SENSS Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units.

- 8.3 We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our academy should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the headteacher, who may share this information with the social services.
- 8.4 We hold information on pupils in our academy, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents and carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents and carers have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

## **9 Communication within our school**

- 9.1 So that we all know what is going on, there is a timetable in the staff room of the week's activities, and a whiteboard for the day's messages.
- 9.2 All our procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- 9.3 Written communications are delivered through pigeonholes or by e-mail.
- 9.4 Supply teachers can find additional information in a Supply Teachers' file in each classroom. This contains important medical information, class lists, SEN & G&T lists, and a timetable.
- 9.5 Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff without prior agreement.

## **10 Electronic communication**

- 10.1 We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have a school website.
- 10.2 All academy members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our Safe Use of the Internet policy. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.
- 10.3 The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.
- 10.4 Our academy website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.
- 10.5 Members of staff, classes as a whole, and individual older children will all have their own school-provided e-mail accounts.

- 10.6 Parents and carers are required to sign permission slips for their child to use the Internet whilst at the academy. A record of those who do not have permission is held by each class teacher, and by the academy office.
- 10.7 It is academy policy that no member of staff accepts a pupil or ex-pupil as a "friend" on social networking sites such as "Facebook".

## **11 Use of photographs and names**

- 11.1 Photographs are used in and around the academy for many purposes, including About Me and other displays, records of practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and records of important academy events. There are also displays for instructing pupils in the use of digital cameras and camcorders.
- 11.2 We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the academy prospectus, on the academy website. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at the academy.
- 11.3 Parental permission must be obtained before using photographs of children or their work as detailed in 12.2 above. Parents and carers will want to know the policy of the press about name disclosure before giving permission for a photo to be used. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the academy office.
- 11.4 Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable (photos of children in swimwear would be unsuitable, as would individual and close-up shots).
- 11.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names. Even on the school website, only children's first names will be used.

## **12 Monitoring and review**

- 12.1 This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required.