



School Communications Policy

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1. Purpose

We believe that through efficient and effective communication we are able to promote partnership between the school, parents/carers, students and the wider community.

2. Definition of communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated. Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated.

3. Principles

The Richmond upon Thames School (RTS) uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents/carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most appropriate means to contact the recipient.

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

Staff will always seek to establish friendly relationships with parents/carers but they will ensure relationships are professional and parents will always be addressed in a formal manner. Staff are to avoid developing close relationships with parents/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, Admin Team, IT Team, etc.

The Communications Policy embraces the principles of the school's [Equality Statement](#) and [Online Safety Policy](#) (copies are available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Documents Shared Drive, on the school website or links above).

4. Aims

To ensure RTS thrives we must communicate effectively with each other, with our students, with their parents and with other members of the wider community. 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/carers, trustees and students also have a part to play in reflecting the school's reputation.

The school recognises that engaging and working with parents/carers is a vital key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents/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/carers in their child's education as possible.

Our aims include the following:

- Ensuring our communication is high quality

- Keeping staff, students, parents/carers, trustees and other stakeholders well informed
- Being open, honest, ethical and professional
- Using jargon free, plain English wherever possible and to be easily understood by all
- All written and telephone enquiries to be dealt with promptly and parents/carers to receive an acknowledgement within 2 school days
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- For our communications to take account of relevant school policies and the core values of the school
- Making the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible
- Ensuring signage is clear, informative and positive
- Communicating with parents/carers for positive (as well as negative) reasons
- Providing information to parents/carers on what students will be taught and to help or support their child's learning at school and at home

5. Communication with parents/carers

5.1 Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query

Please see Appendix 1 which details who to contact and how to progress any query that is not successfully resolved.

5.2 Letters

Staff will always reply to a letter from parents/carers as quickly as possible.

A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter will be made by telephone, letter or email within 2 school days and responded to within 10 school days.

All 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 Arbor.

Copies of correspondence with parents/carers will be placed on student files on Arbor.

Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's [Complaints Procedure](#) (copies are available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Documents Shared Drive, on the school website or link above).

The school uses standard templates for letters where possible.

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

Parents/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/carer, communications will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post.

Staff must use the correct salutations when writing to or emailing parents/carers/partnerships.

The use of a parent/carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate. In addition, when,

- the Admin, Student Welfare, Inclusion, Wellbeing, SEND, Accounts or Curriculum Teams send bulk communication to parents/carers their signature is 'Name of Team' e.g. Admin Team,
- acknowledging receipt of communication this will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc and sign from is the relevant Team,
- staff respond to communication this will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc and sign from is always the first initial Ms/Mrs/Mr/Dr Teacher Surname.

Any relevant line manager / Head of Year / Academic Tutor must be copied into letters or emails.

5.3 E-mail

E-mail is a quick, free, 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 school days and responded to within 10 school days.

Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter. If we send text, longer than two paragraphs then this will be sent as a linked pdf within the email.

Parents sending items longer than two paragraphs should be sent as an attachment where possible.

[A staff list is published on the website.](#)

Parents/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: info@rts.richmond.sch.uk

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

5.4 Telephone Calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time, running clubs or working with students at lunchtime or after school. The senior leadership also have teaching commitments as well as rota duties which mean they are almost always unavailable during school hours.

Parents/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 school days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 school days. Staff will always make a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer on the Arbor communications log.

5.5 Texts

Automated texts from Arbor are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school). The attendance and welfare officer and PE department also use texts to remind parents/carers about reporting absence or to remind students about out of school hours fixtures. However, they are not used for general communications from members of staff and staff will 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).

6. Absence

If a child is absent, parents/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](#) (copies are available in the Policy Folder in the Whole School Documents Shared Drive, on the school website or link above).

7. Meeting with parents/carers

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

Parents/carers should report to Reception (Student Welfare) 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.

8. Social Networking

The School has a Twitter account which is used to provide updates to Parents/carers and students 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.

9. Reports and Progress

Parents/carers receive two interim attainment reports in KS3 and three at KS4 interim attainment reports and a full annual report to provide information about their child's progress in each academic year. These reports are accessible online through the Arbor parent portal. Parents also receive two Health Check reports throughout the year via Arbor detailing net merits and attendance.

In addition, parents/carers have the opportunity to meet their child's subject teachers once a year, at the parent/carer subject consultation evening and an opportunity to meet their child's academic tutor in the autumn term of each year.

Parents/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 Academic Tutor.

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

10. Accessibility

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

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

If a translation of a document is required, in the first instance parents/carers should access [Google Translate \(https://translate.google.com\)](https://translate.google.com) and a link to this will be included in documents sent out to parents.

Other translation services are available eg [this one from Microsoft, for PCs](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/document-translator/)

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/document-translator/>

or an app for you phone, such as [this one for iOS](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/scan-translate-text-grabber/id845139175)

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/scan-translate-text-grabber/id845139175>

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.

11. School Website

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

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important procedures
- Statutory policies
- Important contact information
- School prospectus

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

12. Google Apps Suite for Education

The Google Apps Suite is a powerful tool for motivating students as it gives them more choice and flexibility about when and where they complete their learning. It also encourages parent/carer involvement in learning, especially with extended learning tasks. Google Classroom is the app we use to organise, distribute and collect digital work. Parents/carers can sign-up for Google Classroom email summaries. These summaries list the work the students have been set by each of their subjects. Parents can subscribe to an email-update of this list. This can be sent daily or weekly. Parents will be reminded, via the parent newsletter to let us know if they have not yet subscribed and would like to.

12.1 Arbor Parent Portal

Parents have access to their child's attendance and progress data, via the Arbor Parent app and website. Report Cards for each formal assessment are also available. Parents can submit requests to change their contact details on Arbor. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure they check their details and request any corrections via their Arbor login. The School Office Manager will authorise the requests in most instances. Parents will be reminded, periodically, to update their details on Arbor, via the parents' newsletter.

13. Communication between students and staff

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

When communicating with a member of staff, students 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
- Never talk over, raise their voice or walk away before the conversation has ended

When communicating with students, staff should use students' first names and full names of staff (Mr Surname and Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of students.

13.1. Student and teacher communication through GoogleClassroom

Students may also send staff messages through GoogleClassroom on their school accounts, in relation to their learning. These may be publically visible to all the other students in the Classroom, if the teacher has enabled this setting. Students can also send a message to their teacher, which is only visible to the teacher and the student. Shy students often feel more comfortable using this method.

Written correspondence must remain professional at all times.

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

Students are expected to check GoogleClassroom daily.

Parents/Carers must not send messages to staff through GoogleClassroom. Parents must use the school's central email: info@rts.richmond.sch.uk, this ensures we are able to respond to all messages appropriately.

While parents/carers may perceive sending a message to staff through GoogleClassroom as an efficient method, such distractions are unfair on staff, whose focus is on the students in the GoogleClassroom setting. In keeping with Data Protection guidance, GoogleClassroom is an online teaching and learning space, which must only be used by RTS staff and students of the class or our school.

Staff will not respond through GoogleClassroom to GoogleClassroom messages received from a parent/carer.

Staff who receive messages from parents/carers via their Google-Classroom should refer this to their Senior Leadership Team link, as a matter of urgency.

14. Visiting the school site

To avoid disappointment, parents/carers should not visit the school site unless they have a pre-arranged appointment with a member of school staff or a prior arrangement has been agreed with regard to the dropping/picking-up of their child.

Parents/carers should avoid coming to the site to seek immediate meetings with staff. Teachers may be leading activities with students, supervising clubs, or in meetings during lunchtime and after school. The Senior Leadership Team and Head of Year also have teaching commitments as well as rota duties which mean they are almost always unavailable without prior arrangement.

Parents/carers may be frustrated if they feel that they cannot meet with staff immediately, when in fact there is no one available to meet with them.

To arrange an appointment with a member of staff, first decide on who you need to meet and contact the school via your chosen method (telephone, letter or email).

15. Communication between RTS staff

Verbal

Staff are to use first names when communicating with each other and full names (Mr/Dr/Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of students. 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.

Staff should not send non-urgent emails before 07:00 or after 18:30. 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 Premises and Business Support 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 RTS Parents' Newsletter 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 Business Support Team will then be able to liaise with local contacts such as Twickenham Tribune for smaller pieces.

The Deputy Head teacher responsible for Communications must be the main liaison for bigger pieces or any pieces going to the Richmond and Twickenham Times, 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 RTS Parents' Newsletter.

All media enquiries must be directed to the Deputy Head Teacher 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/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 students additional trips, visits or activities that were not known or available when the school calendar was published. The school will always ensure parents/carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents/carers have adequate time to plan for such events.

18. Severe weather and emergency closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents/carers via text or email. parents/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/carers may request a printed copy. Prospective parents/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/carers are also invited, along with their child, to an induction evening in June where the main channels of communication are outlined, and important information will be shared.

20. FoRTS

Friends of The Richmond upon Thames School is our equivalent to a Parents Association. This is led by current parents/carers and their focus is to provide a social forum for parents/carers of RTS and to run events and activities. Fundraising is an important aspect of their work but is not their sole focus. Parents may contact the FoRTS committee by emailing FORTS@rts.richmond.sch.uk

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

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

All staff within the school are expected to help parents/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 students who have special educational needs / disabilities are making less than the expected progress or if they are experiencing behavioural difficulties, we would expect to meet with parents/carers more regularly.

Parents/carers are encouraged to communicate immediately where they have a concern about their child's needs being met and should also refer to the [SEND section of the website](#).

22. Communication with other schools and outside agencies

Prior to students joining Year 7, students are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to RTS. 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 Documents Shared Drive, on the school website or link above).

We hold information on all students 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 Regulations (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 students, school members of staff interview all students involved and ask them to complete a written account. The school will only share any information that would identify any students in accordance with data protection regulations and legislation and our policies (a copy of our Data Protection Policy is available in the policy page of the [school website](#)).

24. Monitoring, evaluation and review

A member of the senior leadership team and the Richmond upon Thames School 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.

Appendix 1 - Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/pre-learning	Your child's subject teacher
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's academic tutor
Payments	Accounts Team
School trips	Teacher who is organising the trip
Uniform/lost and found	Student Welfare Team
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 0208 891 2985 option 1 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the Attendance and Welfare Officer
Behaviour	Your child's Academic Tutor or Head of Year
School events/the school calendar	Calendar on the school's website or Student Welfare Team
Special educational needs	The school's SENDCo or SEND Team
Before and after-school activities	School calendar on the website or Student Welfare Team
Hiring the school premises	Accounts Team
The Parents' Association	FORTS@rts.richmond.sch.uk
The Trust Board	Clerk@rts.richmond.sch.uk
Catering/meals	Accounts Team
Complaints	Read the complaints procedure here
Student iPad	RTS IT Team
Student passwords	Student Welfare
Parent passwords: Arbor Wisepay	RTS IT Team Accounts Team
Updates to personal details such as address, phone numbers, medical details	Parents/Carers make this update themselves via their Arbor login.

Appendix 1.1 - Communication Routes

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
 - ↳ Curriculum Leader or Senior Leader for that Curriculum Area
 - ↳ Deputy Head Teacher, Quality of Education
 - ↳ Head Teacher via her PA pa@rts.richmond.sch.uk

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 procedure Policy available on the school website.

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

- ↳ Academic Tutor
 - ↳ Head of Year
 - ↳ Assistant Head Teacher
 - ↳ Deputy Head Teacher, Personal Development, Behaviour & Attitudes
 - ↳ Head Teacher via her PA pa@rts.richmond.sch.uk

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 procedure Policy available on the school website.

Appendix 2 - Staff list

See the staff list [here](#) to help you direct your query.

Appendix 3 - School Communications Overview - Summary for Parents

Communication overview summary for parents/Carers [here](#).