

Positive Communications Policy



1. Introduction

At Vaughan Primary School we strive to build strong relationships with parents, carers, and visitors, to help create a stimulating, happy and safe learning environment which continues from school to home and the wider community, providing all our pupils with the opportunity to achieve their personal best. The trust, support and co-operation of parents is fundamental to the continued success of our school.

Everyone involved with school life needs to communicate in a respectful manner, whether in person, on the phone, or online (including on WhatsApp groups). In this way, staff, pupils, parents, carers, and members of the public behave respectfully to each other, which helps to promote the most constructive working and learning environment. Please note that our staff do not consent to being recorded during meetings or telephone calls, and if they become aware that the exchange is being recorded, they have the right to end the conversation immediately.

Vaughan Primary School therefore asks parents, carers, and visitors to:

1. Treat each other, staff members, pupils and external agencies with dignity and respect.
2. Positively support the ethos of the school by setting a good example in their speech and behaviour (including online) towards all pupils, staff members and other adults.
3. Work constructively with staff members to resolve any issues of concern, including clarifying specific events to bring about a positive resolution.
4. Send emails to staff that are constructive and respectful.
5. Refrain from communicating (by telephone, email or at meetings in person or remotely) in a manner which could be perceived as threatening or demanding.
6. Work alongside the school to improve their child's behaviour where necessary, understanding and accepting that a behaviour policy is fundamental and necessary to a safe and purposeful learning environment – this policy (and consequences outlined within) apply to ALL pupils; it is not democratic or open to negotiation.
7. Make reasonable requests for meeting times and not expect to see any member of staff without a prior appointment including at drop off and pick up when staff need to be safeguarding our pupils. We will always try to accommodate a meeting or phone call as soon as reasonably possible, but do have many

commitments, including teaching, throughout the day and we would ask that you understand and respect this.

8. Agree to communicate or meet with the member of staff which the school deems most appropriate in dealing with the situation – the choice of staff member is not open to negotiation.
9. Make every effort to positively promote the school to the wider community and not publicly undermine the school or the implementation of school policies or publicly manifest complaints or criticisms online, on social media platforms (eg WhatsApp / Facebook) or in public forums.
10. When deciding to contact the school, please remember that we are a school of over 600 pupils. No school in the country has the capacity to enter into lengthy or regular email or telephone conversations. **We do not have the capacity to meet persistent or immediate demands from parents / carers.**
11. Emails received will be acknowledged within 2 working days and the school aims to respond to emails within 10 working days. However, it is recognised that under some circumstances, it may prove difficult to meet this deadline. In such cases, the school will inform you of the revised timeline.
12. Parents should be aware of school policies and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies.

Any abusive, foul, or insulting language, physical attacks or aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff members, governors, pupils, parents or any member of the public within our premises, on the phone or online, at face-to-face meetings or remotely will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This also extends to posting or publishing comments online that risk bringing an individual or the school's reputation into disrepute.

Anyone exhibiting these behaviours will be formally warned by the school that this will not be tolerated, and any future violation of this policy could then result in all future communications with the school being restricted to writing. The school will consider taking legal action as appropriate.

All members of Vaughan Primary School community have the right to work without fear of abuse or violence at all times.

All employees of Vaughan Primary School:

- Are required to demonstrate the highest possible professional standards.
- Deal with all pupils, fairly and consistently.
- Communicate with all parents and visitors with the highest level of professional courtesy.
- Be aware of and conform to all safeguarding routines in the school.
- Uphold the professional integrity of the school and teaching profession.

2. Excessive Parental Contact/Demanding Behaviour

Vaughan is a very busy and successful school, and our priority will always be to teach, supervise and support our pupils. We are committed to working positively with home to effectively deal with any issues or concerns. However, we would ask parents / carers to understand that we will simply do not have the capacity to engage in excessive communications or lengthy meetings.

Once the school has given a reasonable amount of time to address an individual issue or concern, we will not engage in further communication regarding those issues to which we have already responded.

We will ensure that communications cease when we deem that the excessive contact is to the detriment of our ability to carry out our respective duties in the interests of all our pupils.

Please note that it is not possible to interrupt members of staff during the school day as they need to remain with their classes and often have commitments before, during and after school. If you need to speak to a staff member, please contact the school office who will acknowledge receipt of your query within 2 working days. This inability to respond instantaneously is consistent with arrangements in the NHS and other organisations.

Any situations the school deems an emergency will be dealt with separately.

Please remember that any time dealing with complaints, excessive communications or questioning of school procedures is time away from our primary aim of supporting our pupils.

Please note the following:

- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone over the telephone, our staff will politely end the call.
- If any email is rude or inappropriate in tone, we reserve the right not to reply, or we may choose to take the action outlined within this policy.
- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone during a face-to-face meeting or a virtual meeting, our staff will terminate the meeting immediately.
- In either case, the school will forward a copy of this policy to reiterate our expectations and rights regarding appropriate communication.
- In circumstances where school has listened to the request of a stakeholder (i.e. parent or pupil), considered the request and shared the outcome of this with the stakeholder, should the stakeholder continue to repeat or labour the same request, school reserves the right to cease communication, limit the reply with a repeat of key messages already shared, arrange an alternative method of communication or set out a plan for a reasonable, manageable schedule of contact
- In such situations where staff feel that they have been misquoted or misrepresented, the school reserves the right to limit contact to written communications. This is entirely at the discretion of the school.
- Following reasonable attempts by the school to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time, or if a meeting is refused, then communication on this issue will cease.

Whilst we welcome feedback and regularly consult with a range of stakeholders in making key decisions, ultimately the school has to make decisions in good faith, which we deem to be in the best interests of all our pupils.

Whilst it is never our intention to disappoint, given the size of our school it is not always possible to secure agreement or consensus (and schools are not duty bound to do so).

Decisions around behaviour expectations, uniform, teaching and learning strategies or strategic direction are at the discretion of the Headteacher and do not require consensus or parental approval. Equally, the school reserves the right to disregard advice given or offered by stakeholders (however well-meaning) that it believes are not in the best interests of its pupils or staff. This includes advice that either exceeds or contradicts DfE (Department for Education) guidance. We are therefore unable to enter into lengthy discussion or debate regarding such issues. This position is protected by law.

Please see our Operational and Strategic Decisions Protocol for further information.

3. Communication of Political Views and standpoints

We want our pupils to develop a strong understanding of current and historical affairs; continuing to develop their own opinions and we fully recognise the benefit of healthy, respectful debate.

However, in line with the provisions set out within the Education Act (1996), the school is not permitted to allow the pursuit of partisan political activities by staff or pupils. This can include, and is not limited to, displaying political symbols and campaign slogans (all graffiti, whatever the intention, is not an accepted part of our behaviour policy). Where political issues are discussed in lessons or extra-curricular activity, steps will be taken to ensure there is a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Given that some topics are incredibly complex and engender strong emotive responses, staff and pupils are asked to take into account the sensitivity of key topics. It may be that, at the discretion of the Headteacher, the school decides that it is not appropriate to open certain topics to whole class or group debate. This is in the interests of avoiding any pupil, or group, feeling marginalised and is ultimately in the interest of protecting community cohesion and our fundamental value of inclusion.

4. Legal Framework

- I. This policy has due regard to statutory legislation, including but not limited to the following:

The Education Act 2011

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 2004

- II. The Malicious Communications Act 1988 prevents the sending of communications (including online messages or letters) that convey a threat, a grossly offensive or indecent message, or false information, if the intention of the sender is to cause distress or anxiety to the reader or recipient. The offence is punishable by up to six months in prison or a fine.
- III. The Protection of Harassment Act 1997, which makes it a criminal offence to pursue a course of conduct that, in the eyes of a reasonable person, amounts to harassment, or to harass two or more individuals with the intention of persuading a person to do or not do something. As such, online trolling or cyber-bullying can be criminal offences, for which there are serious consequences. Under section 2 of the Protection

of Harassment Act 1997, a person guilty of the offence of harassment, which is a summary offence, can be imprisoned for a term of up to six months or given an unlimited fine. There is also a more serious offence, which involves a course of conduct that puts a person in fear of violence, which is an indictable offence carrying a potential sentence of five years in prison (section 4 of the Protection of Harassment Act).

- IV. The Defamation Act 2013 which covers libel and slander and allows legal action to be taken in respect of comments which you make (or have made) relating to the school or its employees where such comments cause (or may be likely to cause) serious harm to the reputation of the school or its employees. This would include any comments you make online, such as Facebook or other social media platforms.
- V. This policy also has due regard to statutory guidance, including (but not limited to the following):
 - DfE (2025) Keeping Children Safe in Education.

5. Related School Policies

This Communications Policy has due regard to the following school policies and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

6. Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

