



REDDAM
— HOUSE —

BERKSHIRE

Communication Policy

Reddam House Berkshire is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, students and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Reddam House Berkshire.

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Introduction

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation.

Parents and carers, and students also have a part to play in reflecting the school's reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

RHB uses several different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable 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 alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

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

This Communications Policy embraces the principles of the school's Equal Opportunities and Acceptable Use Policies (copies available in the Employee Portal and the school website).

The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and students and this Policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective two-way communication between home and school.

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

Aims

Our aims include the following:

- To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- Clear, informative and positive signage.
- All written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly and parents and carers can expect an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- A variety of forms of communication with parents and carers for example, telephone contact, e-mail, post and push notifications.
- Parents and carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Information is given to parents and carers on what students will be taught and tips for helping their child will be provided.
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective.

Communication with Parents and Carers

Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query

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

Letters

Staff will always reply to a letter from parents and carers as quickly as possible. A response to acknowledge receipt of a letter will be made by telephone, letter or email **within 2 working days and responded to within 10 working days**.

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 Year Coordinators and sent out using iSAMS. Copies of correspondence with parents and carers will be placed on student files on iSAMS.

Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

The school will use standard templates for letters where possible. As this is a formal communication, it will be expected that the tone and content of the letter is appropriately professional.

The correct salutations must be used when writing to or emailing parents/carers or partnerships. The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not always appropriate; therefore, all communications will be to and from Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc. Staff are reminded of the autofill functions in iSAMS which support this.

Any relevant line manager / Head of Department / Form tutor must be copied into letters or emails.

E-mail

E-mail is a quick, 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 working days and responded to within 10 working days.**

We are mindful that our families are busy and streamline our communications as much as possible. We endeavour to use email sparingly and where whole school/year group updates are needed we will utilize the Weekly Bulletin to highlight these items. We also use the Weekly Bulletin to remind parents about events.

Emails will always include the following in subject headings:

URGENT: For emails which need to be read and/or actioned immediately

INFORMATION: Emails which share information such as dates for an event

FOR ACTION: Emails which require an action to be completed such as a form to complete

REMINDER: Where a reminder is issued by email, such as a multi-day or trip taking place

Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter. Any items longer than a few short paragraphs should be attached in word format. A staff contact list is published on the iSAMS Parent Portal.

Parents and 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 reception@reddamhouse.org.uk or Junioradmin@reddamhouse.org.uk or ELS@reddamhouse.org.uk

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

Telephone Calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents and 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 working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days.** Staff will make a record of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer on the iSAMS student log.

Use of staff telephones is discouraged, however, where this is unavoidable staff members must make sure that their personal number is blocked before making a call.

Push Notifications

Automated notifications from iSAMS are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from members of staff and staff should 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).

Absence

If a child is absent, parents and 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.

Meeting with Parents and Carers

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

Parents and carers should report to Reception prior to meeting with a member of staff. Another member of staff will normally accompany them, this may be a colleague, member of the Leadership Team or a member of the Admin team who are able to provide note taking.

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.

If an emergency arises parents should contact the office staff who will need to be given sufficient information to quickly alert the most appropriate person(s).

Social Networking

The School has social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram and Linked IN and Facebook) which are used to provide updates to parents 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.

Weekly Bulletin

Whole school information is included in a weekly newsletter, published on Friday each week during school term time. A link to an electronic copy of this is emailed to all parents and carers as well as being published on the school website and on the iSAMS Parent and Student portals.

Reports and Progress

Parents and carers receive a progress report each term. Generally, the Autumn and Summer reports contain data and comments and the Spring report is a data report. These reports are accessible online through the iSAMS Parent Portal.

In addition, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's subject teachers once a year, at parents evening. Parents and 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 Form Tutor.**

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

Accessibility

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

Before sending or posting information electronically staff should test to ensure cross platform access.

Staff as Parents

We understand that in some cases the staff fulfil a dual role of parent and employee.

Parents as employees should ensure that they uphold boundaries between the two roles and that their behaviour does not constitute a conflict of interest. For example, they must maintain the same level of confidentiality despite social expectations.

Further guidelines for appropriate behaviour is found in the Code of Conduct for Staff.

School Website

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including key policies and term dates.

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

Communication between Students and Staff

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;
- Use appropriate language;
- Be respectful, do not talk over, raise voice or walk away before the conversation has ended.

When communicating with students, staff should:

- Use students' first names;
- Use full names of staff (Mr Surname and Ms/Mrs Surname) in front of students. Try to avoid generic terms of: Sir and Miss to convey politeness;
- Be respectful, do not raise voice aggressively;
- Not use sarcasm or phrases which may be interpreted as offensive.

Students may also email staff on their school accounts in relation to their learning.

All students are taught email protocol:

- Complete the subject line
- Use Ms/Mrs/Mr and Surname as salutation
- Use Standard English
- Avoid abbreviations
- Sign off with Thank you or Kind Regards.

Correspondence is to remain professional at all times.

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

Students are expected to check their emails daily and delete or archive regularly.

Staff are expected to check emails daily (twice a week in the holidays) and to delete and archive regularly. For emails relating to situations which require investigation or follow up, a pdf/cut and paste of text should be kept either in CPOMS or iSAMS as appropriate.

Communication between RHB 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;
- tone and content to be professional and conducive to collaborative working practice;
- Staff to check emails twice a day;
- Use group emails as appropriate. Email groups are as follows:
 - All Staff
 - Academic Staff (to include TA/ELS Educators)
 - Junior Academic (staff who teach in the Juniors)
 - Senior Academic (staff who teach in the Middle/Senior School)
 - ELS Academic (staff who teach in the ELS)
 - SLT

Staff should try not to send non-urgent emails before 8am or after 8pm. Emails should instead be saved as drafts and sent during work hours or scheduled to be sent later/the next day.

Meetings

Agendas for staff meetings are to be circulated at least two days in advance. The minutes of the meeting to be circulated to all relevant parties where possible within two weeks of the meeting.

Dealing with the Media

The school's Weekly Bulletin and Social Media is our main avenue for communicating to our parents/carers, for wider coverage staff must first seek permission from the relevant Head or Principal.

The relevant Head must approve every piece before it is sent externally and in each case there must also be an equivalent article written for the school's Weekly Bulletin and/or Social Media.

All media enquiries must be directed to the Principal.

School Calendar

The school runs a busy and varied schedule and we appreciate the importance of good communication around expectations for parental support, either through provision of resourcing or attendance. The Weekly Bulletin highlights all events two weeks in advance and important events one month in advance. In order to avoid email clutter, the school will not routinely send out reminders for events by email.

Dates and Events can be found on the iSAMS Parent and Student Portals. We also make use of an online calendar, particularly for events which are open to the community or where booking is necessary. We do not publish a paper calendar as this quickly becomes out of date.

Term Dates

Term dates are normally published in the Autumn Half Term of the previous academic year.

Annual Events

The Annual Calendar is published at the end of the previous academic year and will include annual events such as exam schedules, school productions, large House events, parent consultation evenings, sports day, prize giving etc. Although we do try not to, occasionally these dates may change due to circumstances outside of our control.

Trips, Visits and Activities

Where possible, the school will endeavour to publish all proposed trips, visits and activities on the school calendar at the start of each term.

Parents and 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 and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events.

Staff should see Appendix B for procedure for booking events into the school calendar.

Severe Weather and Emergency Closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via push notification and email. We will also place a notification on the website.

Communication with other Schools and Outside Agencies

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).

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. Disciplinary information on other students is confidential and will not be shared with other parents.

Complaints

We hope that you will not feel the need to complain about the operation of our Communications Policy and that any difficulty can be sensitively and efficiently handled before it reaches that stage. However, the school's Complaints Procedures, which apply equally to the Early Learning School are on our website, and we will send you copies on request.

Appendix A – To whom should my query or concern be addressed?

General Query

If you have a general query or concern, not specific to your child, please email your child's Tutor.

Query Specific to your Child

My query is about my child's learning:

In the first instance you should email your child's Subject tutor. If, following the communications to the Subject tutor you are still dissatisfied with the response or you would like to discuss this further, please contact the Head of Subject. This may then be escalated to the Head of School if you do not feel that the matter has been resolved.

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

In the first instance you should email your child's Form tutor. If, following the communications to the tutor you are still dissatisfied with the response or you would like to discuss this further, please contact the Year Coordinator. This may then be escalated to the Head of School if you do not feel that the matter has been resolved.

Complaints

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 Policy available on the school website.

Appendix B – Maintaining the School Calendar

Learning culture is eroded if lessons are not sacrosanct and forward planning is penalised if urgent or important tasks must supersede it. It is therefore vital that our planning of events and workflow is communicated in a clear and timely manner.

The following general principles apply:

- No item may be added to the school calendar without the approval of the relevant Head of School. Only middle leaders can propose an addition to the calendar;
- A calendar meeting for middle leaders is held prior to the end of each term which runs through every day of the following term, in advance;
- A minimum of one week's notice must be given for any activity or event which impacts a planned lesson;
- A minimum of two weeks' notice must be given to add an event the calendar.

Annual Events

A meeting to plan all the annual events such as examination weeks, productions, parent consultation sessions, prize giving etc. is held by the Principal and Heads prior to the end of the academic year. Most of the annual events are held at the same time each year. This forms the basis for the school calendar.

Trips, Visits and Activities

All trips, visits and activities must be submitted by the Head of Subject (curriculum based) or Year Coordinator (pastoral based) to the relevant Head and Head of Co-Curricular, after checking the school calendar for availability.

The lead time for any activity which impacts another lesson is a minimum of two weeks, however, staff should be mindful that families need to plan in advance so in most cases, these will be submitted to the calendar the term before.

All residential trips must be approved and added to the calendar no later than the half term prior to the trip taking place.

Cycle Test/Examination Schedules

The Cycle Test schedule is published at the start of the academic year. This is planned by the Head of Academics and given to Heads of Subject for consideration before the start of the academic year.

Occasionally, some changes are made to accommodate unforeseen events, the schedule is therefore reviewed before the start of each term.

Staff Specific Deadlines/Considerations

Staff have a multitude of different draws upon their time and it is therefore important that any additional demands upon time are communicated in a timely way.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are expected to diarise important annual calendar events such as open days, parent evenings, prize giving etc. and should communicate with at least two weeks' notice if they are unable to attend an event.

When entering trips or activities into the calendar, organising staff should ensure that the teachers of the affected classes have been clearly communicated regarding how this will impact their lessons.

Notification

Where a deadline or event is specific to staff members this will be entered onto the staff calendar (in iSAMS) at least the term before. An example would be report deadlines.