



29 February 2016

Dear parent/carer

At Mayfield Primary School we always welcome contact with parents and carers. We firmly believe that this fosters mutual understanding and support which has a positive effect on the performance and well-being on our pupils.

We would be very grateful if you would read through these guidelines and have provided a single page summary at the end of this document that you might find helpful to print out and keep by your computer/telephone.

### **Principles**

Unlike some businesses and other occupations, the professional duties of teachers can make it difficult for them to speak or meet with parents/carers during the school day:

- Teachers may be teaching for up to 90% of the school week and for the rest of their working hours (over 50 hours on average according to a recent survey), they are working with for children in a variety of activities. These include meeting pupils to discuss behaviour, progress or target setting, meeting with other teachers to prepare, plan and co-ordinate their work with children, marking, assessment, break and lunchtime supervision duties, training and development, etc.
- The important business of working with and responding to parents/carers has to be managed by teachers within this professional context. They are often not in reach of a telephone. This also means that meetings with parents/carers, beyond a quick word at the start or end of the school day, must be by appointment only.

In order to achieve the most effective balance for children, parents/carers and teachers, we follow these principles:

- Welcoming contact from parents.
- Responding as quickly and fully as possible to parents/carers, using the most appropriate form of communication for each context.
- Involving parents in our work with children.
- Sharing information as often and as fully as possible with parents/carers.

It is important that parents/carers know how they can expect their telephone calls, letters and emails to be dealt with. The attached guidelines show our intentions.

JK Hill  
Headteacher

Mayfield Governing Body

## **Guidelines**

### **Telephone Calls:**

All telephone calls from parents/carers are received through the school office.

*Urgent calls:* If the member of staff asked for is not available the office staff will normally take details of the parent's/carer's name and telephone number and the general reason for calling and will pass on the message straight away.

*Non-urgent calls:* If the member of staff asked for is not available the office staff will normally take details of the parent's/carer's name and telephone number and the general reason for calling. This information will be given to the member of staff concerned, who will try to respond promptly and by the end of the next school day, whenever possible.

*Messages for pupils:* In emergencies or at other times when it is unavoidable, office staff will help parents/carers by taking messages for pupils.

*Telephone calls made at arranged times:* If teachers have arranged with parents/carers for them to receive calls at particular times of the school day, those teachers will try to ensure that the office staff know where they will be and they will try to make themselves available at those times. Should other commitments or events make this impossible, the office staff will take down the details and the teacher will try to call back the same day.

All calls are dealt with in a sensitive and professional manner. Our protocol gives explicit guidelines to all staff on the handling of all calls. On rare occasions, telephone calls are or become difficult and, only extremely rarely, a caller may become abusive or threatening. It is our policy to advise the caller that this is unacceptable and to ask them to refrain or the call will be terminated. If the caller continues to be abusive, then the call will be terminated. In such cases, the member of staff in question will pass on to their line manager a note of all key points at the earliest opportunity. Similarly, should such abusive or threatening behaviour be evident from a parent or carer during a face to face meeting, our staff will deliver the same clear message.

### **Letters from the school to parents and carers:**

The school operates an electronic system of sending all standard forms of communication home and our aim is to operate an entirely paperless system. Over 85% of our parents/carers already receive this information to their personal email address, using the ParentMail system, with hard copies of the same information being sent home to the remaining parent/carers.

Clearly for this system to be successful it is vital that we hold accurate email addresses for all parents/carers. Please could you be sure to let the school know if there are any changes to your details.

### **Letters and emails from parents and carers:**

The school will always try to respond to letters and emails as soon as practically possible, with the most pressing concerns of parents prioritised. It is our intention to try to respond to any letter or email within 72 hours or 3 working days as a rule although this may be impacted upon due to staff absence or other unforeseen circumstances.

If a significant period of time is required to provide a complete response, teachers will make contact with parents to acknowledge receipt and indicate when a formal response can be expected.

Email forms an increasingly key element of our communication with many parents and carers. It allows for the sharing of simple points of information and for straightforward, functional questions, helping to facilitate the smooth running of our school.

However, if it is a detailed response that is required, then a face-to-face conversation is the preferred means of communication.

## **Email protocol for parents and carers:**

When composing emails, parents and carers are asked to follow the same guidelines as teaching staff. Here is an overview of the school's email protocol for parents/carers.

### **Checking emails**

All teachers check their emails, as a minimum, at the start and end of each day. It is not an expectation that staff read emails at home. Parents and carers should expect a response within 72 hours or three working days as a rule.

### **General email conventions**

All emails should start with an appropriate salutation – Dear... etc. This should set the tone of all email communications: being friendly and professional at all times. Email formatting should be chosen with a view to maintaining a positive atmosphere. For example, bold or expanded text should not be used to reinforce a message.

### **Contacting the right person**

Efforts should be made to direct an email to the most appropriate individual member of staff. Full details of who to contact are available on our website: <http://mayfieldcambridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Who-to-contact-Information-Leaflet.pdf>

This ensures that information is communicated on a 'need-to-know' basis only and avoid cluttering up the inbox of staff who are not part of a particular communication. Most importantly, it will ensure the most prompt and appropriate response.

### **Use of subject lines**

Subject lines are really useful in helping to prioritise messages. These should include a clear description of the nature of the message being sent. The following conventions should be followed where appropriate:

**HIGH IMPORTANCE** either as words appearing in the subject line or the **!** symbol should be used with great discretion and usually be a matter of urgent health and safety.

**SENSITIVE** appearing in the subject line would indicate that the information contained should be read in private and deleted immediately if requested.

All other messages should contain a description of the type of message in the subject line.

### **Meetings:**

A meeting is often an obvious follow-up to a telephone or email communications and allows for a detailed response. The appointment will usually be made directly by the teacher, though it may be appropriate for this to be done through the office staff. Teachers are available to meet with parents and carers during the school day, when they are not teaching or engaged in other professional duties, as outlined in the introduction. In reality most meeting with parents and carers take place after school at a time convenient to all parties.