



**Alma
Primary**

עולם חסד יבנה
A world built on kindness

Alma Primary Communication Policy

Policy no. 64

Responsibility: *Marc Shoffren*
Start date: *February 2019*
Review date: *Spring 2020*

Contents

Executive Summary, Introduction and Aims; Core principles	Page 1
Responsibilities	Page 2
Website Communication & Communication to families	Page 3
School Closure and Urgent Notification; Parents to School Communication	Page 4
Social Media Expectations	Page 5
Parents who are not living together	Page 6
Surveys and Questionnaires	
Monitoring and Review	Page 7
Appendix A: Summary of parent to school communication	Page 8

Policy Development

Change	Responsible	Date

Executive summary

Key points:

- Good communication is essential for the school community, and should always be respectful.
- The school website and class emails are the main channels of communication.
- Parents are offered two main meetings each year to learn about their child's progress, but can request additional meetings if necessary.
- Parents are encouraged to be respectful of teacher's time, which is mainly classroom based and ensure emails are succinct and mainly used to (i) ask a basic, factual question; (ii) briefly update staff about children; or (iii) request a meeting with staff, where more discussion is required.

1. Introduction and aims

- 1.1. Clear and effective communication between members of the school community is an essential part of school success.
- 1.2. This policy covers communication between those working on behalf of Alma Primary (staff, volunteers and governors) and the families of the school, referred to throughout this policy as 'parents', which also includes 'carers'. Guidance on communication between staff is contained in the Staff code of conduct, however the key principles of communication in this policy should also apply to staff internal communications.
- 1.3. In a world of digital communication and social media, it is important to ensure that communication channels ensure the best outcomes for children and avoid overloading individuals, including class teachers.
- 1.4. Communication includes verbal exchanges (either face to face or on the phone), written correspondence (letters, emails and text messages) as well as communication through the school website.
- 1.5. This policy should be read in conjunction with other, relevant school policies, including policies on safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, anti-bribery, publications and relevant data policies.

2. Core principles for communication at Alma Primary

- 2.1. At Alma Primary we aim to ensure that all our communications:
 - Are clear, timely, respectful, ethical and professional.
 - Use jargon free, plain English and can be easily understood by all.
 - Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
 - Take account of relevant school policies.
 - Are compatible with our school values and agreed practice.
- 2.2. Communication includes not only the content of the message but also how that message is communicated; staff, governors and parents are all encouraged to take care in written and verbal communications to avoid misunderstanding and upset.
- 2.3. Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that relationships are professional.
- 2.4. Individual staff will not communicate with parents or pupils directly via social networking sites or accept them as "friends".
- 2.5. We recognise and celebrate the contributions of all individuals and groups in our school. To this end we seek to avoid any form of discrimination and to make written communications accessible and inclusive.
- 2.6. In line with the school's ethos and in keeping with other policies, school staff, governors and volunteers are asked to avoid engaging in school related work, during shabbatot (sabbath days) and haggim (festival days). This is to avoid situations where others are prevented from engagement in discussions because of personal observance, and to avoid creating a situation where the results of any work done compromise anyone in the school community.

Alma Primary Communications Policy

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Senior leadership: Members of the School Leadership Team are expected to:

- Ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- Ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- Maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- Keep governors informed of developments and challenges.
- Ensure that the school website is maintained and kept up to date.

3.2. All staff: Staff at Alma Primary are expected to:

- Communicate regularly with each other, including face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- Ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- Use two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed of developments and issues that occur.
- Communicate with parents in accordance with the principles and guidance in this policy.

3.3. Alma Primary staff are not permitted to provide any paid services for families outside of school, without the express permission of the Headteacher, including tutoring and babysitting. Where parents would like a member of staff to provide any private service, they are asked to write to the Headteacher in the first instance.

3.4. Governors: Alma Primary Governors are expected to:

- Use a variety of communication methods to promote and explain the work of the governors.
- Ensure the use of trusted online spaces when communicating between governors or with the school.
- Ensure that formal, agreed minutes of meetings are posted online in appropriate places.

3.5. Parents: Alma Primary expects that parents of children at the school will:

- Notify the school of absences in a timely manner, including requesting absences a minimum of two weeks prior to any planned absence.
- Use a 'minimal' approach to email, as detailed below.
- Ensure that emergency contact details are kept up to date where changes occur.
- Ensure that individual communication mechanisms, such as reading logs are written in on a regular basis.
- Avoid public criticism of the school, school staff or children at the school, as detailed in the social media section, below.
- Respond to requests from teachers and admin staff regarding trips, extracurricular activities or requests to meet to discuss their child/ren's progress.

4. Website Communication

4.1. The school website is used to communicate with parents in a variety of ways, including:

- School dates for the year
- Class blogs, sharing works being done by children

Alma Primary Communications Policy

- Forms for absences requests and medication
 - Guidance on how to manage a variety of situations
- 4.2. The website affords parents an opportunity to give feedback to the school, which can be sent anonymously. Where feedback is submitted anonymously the school may not be able to either act on the views expressed or respond to parents.
- 5. Communication with families**
- 5.1. Class teachers send out a weekly newsmail which gives a summary of class activities and learning and any relevant issues that week e.g. relating to timings and events.
- 5.2. Parents are invited to meet their child's teacher twice during the year at 'Learning Journey' meetings. These meetings give parents the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to discuss progress. We expect parents to bring children to these meetings, so that the child is able to be part of the discussion. However, on occasion it may be appropriate for parents and teachers to talk without the child present, in which case the child may be asked to wait outside for a short time.
- 5.3. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being outside of these times, which require additional discussion. Similarly, teachers or other staff will contact parents where they have concerns about a child or about an aspect of schooling which requires discussion, identifying shared expectations of the meeting in advance, wherever possible.
- 5.4. When children have particular education needs, or if they are making less than expected progress, parents will be invited to meet with their child's teacher more regularly. If a parent has concerns about their child's progress, they should contact their child's class teacher in the first instance. More details on this are set out in our SEND policy and our School offer, which can be found under the inclusion section of our website.
- 5.5. In addition to these meetings, we provide a written 'End of Year Celebration' to each child's parents, in the summer term, covering their progress in each area of learning. This report identifies areas of strengths and areas for future development. Children are also given an opportunity to comment on their progress.
- 6. School closure and urgent notification to the whole parent body**
- 6.1. In event that extreme weather means the school is unlikely to be able to open as normal, the Headteacher will make a decision, as set out in the school's School Closure and Adverse Weather policy.
- 6.2. In the event that the decision to close the school is made, in accordance with the school's policy, the Headteacher will notify parents in advance using the school email system (and/or SMS) and will put a notice on the school website, no later than 7:30am on the day of closure.
- 6.3. For subsequent days the school will notify parents of likely plans by 8pm on the night before and send final confirmation as to whether the school is open or closed by 7:30am on the day.
- 6.4. In the event that the school has to close early during the school day because of weather or site related issues such as lack of water or heating, the school will message parents, aiming to give a minimum of 60 minutes warning, where possible and will also put information on the school website, where appropriate.
- 7. Parent to School Communication**
- 7.1. We expect communication between members of our school community, both written and verbal, to always be polite and respectful. Our school motto is 'a world built on kindness', something we expect of all adults in our school community, as well as children.
- 7.2. Parents can communicate messages to staff by email or phone. Where messages are not urgent, we encourage parents to use email. Emails should be kept succinct, as excessive email messages and requests can overwhelm staff. See *appendix A for a chart summary of these points.*
- 7.3. We encourage parents to use email communication for three main reasons:

Alma Primary Communications Policy

- to ask a basic, factual question;
 - to briefly update staff about children, normally for situations that do not require anything more than a brief acknowledgement;
 - or to request a meeting with a teacher, where a deeper level of discussion is required, briefly explaining the reason.
- 7.4. Class based staff (teachers and Learning Support Assistants) are engaged with children throughout the day. Whilst they have some short breaks during the day, these often include covering duties, short meetings, or support for individual children. For this reason, staff are unable to respond to emails immediately.
- 7.5. Staff will normally take up to two working days to respond to parental emails. Where an issue is more complex, a full written response may take longer. If a concern is urgent, or time dependent, parents are encouraged to call the office and, where possible, we will expedite any concerns.
- 7.6. For the purposes of this policy, a school working day finishes at 5pm and therefore any email sent to a class or school email address after 5pm will only be seen by a member of staff on the next working day.
- 7.7. Telephone calls to the school office should always be used where urgent or time sensitive information needs to be communicated to school staff, such as changes to end of day pick up arrangements or urgent matters related to the health and wellbeing of pupils. The admin team will pass information to the class teacher but will not interrupt teaching staff to answer a telephone call, unless it is an emergency.
- 7.8. Where a child has a medical need, either to attend an appointment or to be given medication during the school day, parents are asked to complete the relevant request form available from the 'virtual office' section of the school website.
- 7.9. If teachers receive a communication which does not meet the standards set out in this policy, for example using inappropriate language or tone, they will refer the message to a member of the school leadership team, who will normally contact the individuals concerned to address the nature of the communication and try to resolve the situation. In extreme circumstances, if an individual persistently uses inappropriate language or tone in addressing our staff, the Headteacher may, as a last resort, choose to block them from being able to email staff at Alma.
- 7.10. In the event that parents have tried to contact a member of staff, as described above, and have not had a satisfactory response within the timeframe set out in this policy, then they may contact a member of the leadership team to ask for additional support. To do this, parents should email the school office giving brief details. A member of the leadership team will then explore the issue and respond to the parents in due course.
- 7.11. In the unlikely event that a parent has a complaint about the school, in accordance with Alma's Complaint Policy, they should contact their child's teacher, before escalating the complaint to the Headteacher. Parents should only contact the Chair of Governors, if they have followed this procedure and are not satisfied with the response from the school, having given the Headteacher appropriate time to respond.

8. Social Media

- 8.1. Social media enables the school and parents to easily share information, along with images and video, however there are also important safeguarding, data and reputational issues that need to be kept in mind.
- 8.2. We therefore expect that parents:
- Do not name children or post any comments about children (other than members of their own family) who attend Alma Primary. In particular never post negative or offensive comments about any child or families at our school on any public website, social media forum or other digital platform;
 - Do not post negative/offensive comments about specific staff or make defamatory statements about the school or staff at the school;

Alma Primary Communications Policy

- Do not use social media to make allegations or complaints about children, staff, volunteers or Governors at Alma Primary;
- Do not use social media to generate or ferment negative attitudes towards a child or adult at the school;
- Do not post comments which are derogatory about any social group on a school forum (including shared parent sites etc.);
- Do not post comments that threaten violence, even if intended as a joke.

8.3. In order to maintain appropriate professional boundaries, and to avoid misunderstanding, staff are not permitted to have personal social media links to parents.

9. Communication in situations when parents are not living together

9.1. Where parents do not live together and the full details (address etc) have been shared with the school, staff will arrange for both parents to receive copies of written communication, including End of Year Celebrations.

9.2. Although we strongly encourage parents to attend any meeting about their child together, we recognise that it is not always appropriate. In situations where it is not in the child's best interests for the parents to be part of the same meeting, arrangements will be made for separate parent meetings.

10. Surveys and Questionnaires

10.1. The school uses digital surveys and questionnaires as a means to communicate with parents, gathering views on school activities, operations and initiatives.

10.2. Parents are encouraged to share their views via surveys, however there is no obligation for parents to respond to these.

10.3. Where parents contribute to a survey or questionnaire, including sharing views, the school will have no obligation to respond to the parents directly.

10.4. The data collected, including any views expressed, will normally be shared with staff and governors as part of the efforts to further develop and improve Alma Primary.

11. Monitoring and review

11.1. The School Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy and communication with parents, recommending any appropriate changes to the Headteacher.

11.2. This policy will be reviewed by the school leadership team annually, or earlier if considered necessary.

Alma Primary Communications Policy

Appendix A: Summary of parent to school communication:

