



**Alma
Primary**

עולם חסד יבנה
A world built on kindness

Alma Primary Communication Policy

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Last reviewed: *May 2023*
Next review date: *Spring 2026*

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Policy Development: New - change

Change	Responsible	Date
Addition of sections on recording meetings, emergency communication, timings of responses and data protection	MJS	May 23

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. At Alma Primary we value positive relationships between the school's professional team, our the parents/carers in our school community and the wider group of governors and volunteers that support our school.
- 1.2. Clear and effective communication between members of the school community is an essential part of school success. 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 has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Freedom of Information Act 2000;
 - Education Act 2002;
 - The Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003;
 - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
 - Data Protection Act 2018.
- 1.6. 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 communication:
 - Is clear, timely, respectful, ethical and professional;
 - Uses jargon free, plain English and can be easily understood by all;
 - Uses the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience;
 - Takes account of relevant school policies;
 - Is 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 sending 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 *shabbat* (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.

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:
 - Ensure their internal communication, i.e. within the school with other members of staff, is strong, effective, and abides by the procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook and Staff Code of Conduct;

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- 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. In accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and national guidance, staff at Alma Primary will not engage in direct personal correspondence with children via email, messaging or other remote means outside of school. Where children do need to be contacted, staff will do so by proxy via external communication with parents, rather than to children directly.
- 3.4. In accordance with the school's staff code of conduct, 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.
- 3.5. **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, following approval of the minutes at the next available meeting of the same group (Main Governing Body, committee or sub-committee).
- 3.6. **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;
 - 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 normally expect parents/carers to bring children to these meetings so that the child is able to be part of the discussion, however this is at the discretion of parents/carers. On occasion it may be appropriate for parents/carers 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 on 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/carers using the school email system 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/carer 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/carers can communicate messages to staff by email or phone. Where messages are not urgent, we encourage parents/carers to use email.
- 7.3. We encourage parents to use email communication for three main reasons:
 - 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. Email messages sent by parents/carers should be succinct, as excessively long email messages and requests can overwhelm staff. *See appendix A for a chart summary of these points.*
- 7.5. 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 other responsibilities. For this reason, staff are normally unable to respond to emails immediately.
- 7.6. Staff will normally take up to three working days (see 7.7 below) to respond to emails from parents/carers. Part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule. 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.
- 7.7. Our school working day finishes at 5pm, therefore any emails sent to a class or school email address after 5pm are likely to be seen by staff on their next working day. For part-time staff, this may mean that they don't see an email until they return to work the following week.

- 7.8. 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.
 - 7.9. Where a child has a medical need, either to attend an appointment or to be given medication during the school day, parents/carers are asked to complete the relevant request form available from the 'virtual office' section of the school website.
 - 7.10. If teachers receive a communication which does not meet the standards set out in this policy, for example using aggressive or inappropriate language etc, 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.
 - 7.11. In the event that parents/carers would like to meet with class teachers, or other school staff, we ask them to email the relevant staff with a brief explanation of why they want to meet. In most cases we would expect to have preparation time of at least three working days before the any meeting. We aim to avoid disrupting teaching for discussions, so meetings with parents/carers will normally be at the start or end of the day.
 - 7.12. In the event that parents/carers 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/carers should email the school office giving brief details. A member of the leadership team will then explore the issue and respond to the parents/carers in due course.
 - 7.13. In the unlikely event that a parent/carer 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/carers 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. Recording meetings**
- 8.1. If parents, carers and/or other individuals wish to record a meeting, whether the meeting is virtual or in person, they will need to submit a written request to the school no less than 24 hours before the meeting commences.
 - 8.2. The school will decide if recording requests are appropriate, in consideration of the meeting's subject matter and the school's policies.

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- 8.3. For meetings to be recorded, consent will need to be obtained from all participants. The final decision to permit any individual and/or parental recording of meetings will reside with the Headteacher.
- 8.4. If parents, carers and/or other individuals fail to obtain the school's permission to record before the meeting begins, and insist on recording without permission, the school will be permitted to suspend the meeting.
- 8.5. INCLUDE zoom transcripts etc

9. Emergency Communication

- 9.1. All parents/carers will ensure that the school has current contact details, including their address, telephone number and email address, so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency. Where families move house, change phone numbers or email providers they are expected to update the school admin team at their earliest opportunity
- 9.2. If a child is seriously ill or injured, the school will attempt to contact parents/carers using the emergency contacts they have available. In the event of a larger serious incident requiring invacuation, lockdown, or evacuation, the school will follow its Crisis Management Policy – parents/carers will routinely receive updates on how the school will communicate with them during an invacuation, lockdown or evacuation via the school newsletter.
- 9.3. Where children are on residential activities, parents/carers will be given an emergency contact phone no to call in the event of extreme situations where it is imperative that carers communicate with residential staff overnight.

10. Social Media

- 10.1. 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 keep in mind.
- 10.2. At Alma Primary we expect that parents/carers:
 - Do not name children or post any comments about children (other than members of their own family) who attend Alma Primary. In particular we expect that 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;
 - 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.

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

11. Communication in situations when parents are not living together

- 11.1. Where parents/carers do not live together and the full details (address etc) have been shared with the school, staff will arrange for both parents/carers to receive copies of written communication, including End of Year Celebrations.
- 11.2. Although we strongly encourage parents/carers 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/carers to be part of the same meeting, arrangements will be made for separate meetings.

12. Surveys and Questionnaires

- 12.1. The school uses digital surveys and questionnaires as a means to communicate with parents/carers, gathering views on school activities, operations and initiatives.
- 12.2. Parents/carers are encouraged to share their views via surveys, however there is no obligation for parents/carers to respond to these.
- 12.3. Where parents/carers contribute to a survey or questionnaire, including sharing views, the school will have no obligation to respond to individual parents/carers directly.
- 12.4. 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.

13. Data protection and consent

- 13.1. The school will abide by its Data Protection Policy and related documentation in all of its communication and when carrying out marketing activities.
- 13.2. Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies without a lawful basis for data processing as outlined in the UK GDPR. Under no circumstances will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.
- 13.3. The school will ensure its consent mechanisms meet the standards of the UK GDPR in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.
- 13.4. The school administration team will ensure a record of consent is kept, documenting how and when consent was given. The DPO will manage all requests to withdraw consent.
- 13.5. Where the school requests consent for marketing purposes, the request will clearly outline and explain that consent can be withdrawn by the individual at any time.

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14. Monitoring and review

- 14.1. The School Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy and communication with parents, recommending any appropriate changes to the Headteacher.
- 14.2. This policy will be reviewed by the school leadership team annually, or earlier if considered necessary.

Appendix A: Summary of parent to school communication:

