



Communication

Approved by: Trust Board

Last reviewed: July 2026

Next review due: July 2027

COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. Scope

This policy is written and approved at board level, but applies to all members, trustees, governors and employees of schools, settings, and services, hereafter the 'organisations,' within The Claxton Trust.

2. Purpose

We are committed to an open, approachable culture that sustains strong, respectful partnerships with families. Effective, kind and professional communication enables the best outcomes for children and a positive school environment. All interactions must safeguard staff and pupil wellbeing and align with the expectations in this policy. Parents/carers are asked to approach conversations with openness, to listen, and to assume positive intent.

This policy:

- sets expectations for everyday communication across all channels (in person, phone, email, letters, social media).
- defines unacceptable communication and explains our responses.

3. Our Communication Commitment

All staff are expected to always treat everyone with respect, politeness, and courtesy. They should respond promptly to reasonable requests or concerns from parents.

Likewise, parents, carers and visitors are expected to communicate respectfully with and about staff across all channels—face-to-face, phone, email, letter, or social media.

4. Communication from our staff

Communication from our staff is professional, respectful, timely and in the best interests of our children. We recognise the importance of keeping you informed about your child's experience at school and their progress. We have timely information sent out to all parents. This may include:

- meet the teacher evenings
- academic reports
- parent-teacher consultations
- a range of parent information sessions
- regular updates via the school website
- regular communications through Arbor
- a range of letters/newsletters sent home
- social media

We also communicate with our parents informally - either face-to-face, via email or via telephone.

Within reason, class teachers are available at the end of each school day to pass on/receive messages and make informal communication with parents.

Our admin offices remain open during the day for parents to visit or telephone and typically our school senior leadership teams are also generally available before or after school in the school playground.

5. Communication with our staff

Our expectations from those communicating with us is that they:

- trust that staff are skilled professionals who endeavour to act always in the best interests of the child.
- listen to and work together with staff
- treat all members of the school community with respect.
- follow outlined channels of communication.
- communicate in an acceptable manner: reasonable, proportionate, constructive, and timely

6. Communication channels

We ask parents to carefully consider which type of communication is best suited for the situation – some communications are best had face-to-face at the end of a school day, whilst others, given their nature, may be quickly resolved over the phone or via email.

Initial Communication

- All general or class-related questions should be directed in the first instance to the class teacher.

Email Communication

- All queries or concerns should be sent to the main admin email address.
- The admin team will forward emails to the relevant staff member/s as appropriate.
- Any emails sent directly to staff, as opposed to the school admin email address, may not be responded to.
- Staff aim to respond to emails in a reasonable time. Teaching staff will not respond to emails during the school day.
- Emails sent over weekends will not receive a response unless they concern a safeguarding issue.

Telephone Communication

- All phone calls must be made to the school's switchboard.
- The admin team will pass on a communication to the relevant member of staff. Where appropriate, the admin team may also connect a phone call from a parent, straight to a member of staff.
- Any phone calls made outside of school hours may not be picked up unless a voicemail is left. Teachers will not respond to phone calls during the teaching day.

Face-to-face Communication

- Requests for face-to-face meetings should be made either through the school office (in person, via email or telephone) or with a class teacher at the end of a school day. Meetings will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time and cannot be guaranteed on a same-day basis.
- Parents should be aware that a request for an appointment must be made in advance. We cannot facilitate same day requests for appointments unless they concern safeguarding.
- We will endeavour to facilitate a meeting between parents and staff at the soonest available time. On occasions, alternative members of staff may have to meet with parents.
- Staff reserve the right to have an additional member of staff present at any meeting with a parent/s. This may be for reasons of support, note-taking, or safeguarding.

7. The difference between a query, concern, and a complaint

Queries, concerns, and complaints may be justified but parents must pursue them appropriately. Similarly, if a parent is unhappy and seeks to challenge something, within the recognised communication or complaints procedure, this would not cause the parent to be labelled as any of the outlined unacceptable forms of communication.

- A **query** may be defined as ‘a question, especially one asking for information or expressing a doubt about something.’
- A **concern** may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.’
- A **complaint** may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.’

It is in everyone’s interest that queries, concerns, and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Claxton Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, or the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with your query or concern, the headteacher/local manager will refer you to a member of staff best able to consider the query or concern objectively and impartially.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people feel they need to raise their queries or concerns formally. In this case, we will follow the stages outlined within the complaints procedure, outlined in our complaints policy.

8. Use of artificial intelligence to communicate

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools can be helpful in supporting individuals to clarify, structure or articulate their communication. When used appropriately, such tools may assist everyone to express and respond to queries, concerns, or complaints clearly and constructively.

Staff may make appropriate professional use of AI tools to support the drafting and formulation of responses and for assistance with structure, clarity, and tone. No personal data or sensitive information will be entered, and AI use will be restricted to Microsoft-approved systems operating within the school’s secure Microsoft environment, in line with data protection requirements and school policy. All final communications remain the responsibility of the staff member sending them.

However, AI tools can also be misused to generate excessive, repetitive, or disproportionate correspondence, including large volumes of information, obscure legal references or arguments that may be irrelevant, inaccurate, or inappropriate to the matter being raised. This can place unreasonable demands on staff time and hinder our ability to operate effectively in the best interests of children.

The Claxton Trust reserves the right to treat communication that is generated using automated or AI tools, **and** which we perceive as aggressive, incoherent, misleading, repetitive, or irrelevant, as unreasonable, or vexatious communication, as defined below. In such circumstances, the school may apply communication restrictions in line with this policy, including limiting or refusing further engagement.

9. Unacceptable communication

As an employer, The Claxton Trust takes any aggressive behaviour or threatening language towards any member of staff seriously. It also takes communication that is deemed **unreasonable, chronic, malicious, vexatious or a refusal to communicate** seriously – these types of communication are unacceptable. Unacceptable communication hinders staff’s ability to focus on teaching and caring for children, negatively impacts staff wellbeing and school operations, and affects children’s experience and education.

In some cases, this may also lead to safeguarding concerns.

The below examples of unacceptable communication are indicative, not exhaustive.

Unreasonable Communication

Definition: Communication intended to overwhelm and influence decision making at all levels.

Characteristics: Frequent, unreasonable demands on timelines or responses; disrupts school operations.

- demanding a response within an unreasonable timescale.
- demanding to speak with staff immediately.
- insisting on communicating with a particular member of school staff or refusing to communicate with another.
- changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns.
- referencing and re-raising old concerns that have already been addressed.
- requesting large volumes of information without good reason
- refusal to follow the complaints policy.
- electronically recording meetings and conversations without consent.
- refusing to accept that an issue is not within the power of the school to resolve.
- communications created by artificial intelligence which are intended to overwhelm staff

Chronic Communication

Definition: Excessive, persistent, or repetitive communication often expressing anger, frustration, or unhappiness.

Characteristics: Overwhelming volume, recurring messages, frequent contacts in a brief period, or prolonged communication.

- refusing to accept a school decision and repeatedly demanding further meetings.
- demanding to escalate concerns to senior staff as opposed to following the outlined channels of communication. requesting regular and excessive 1-1 feedback from staff about a child.
- repeatedly raising the same complaint through numerous channels.

Vexatious Communication

Definition: Communications pursued solely to harass, annoy, or subdue, often without a valid basis, rather than seeking resolution or information.

Characteristics: Unwarranted, without foundation, repetitive, burdensome, and frivolous, often involving excessive demands on staff time.

- raising multiple concerns without evidence.
- insisting on dealing with specific staff regardless of policy or delegation.
- changing the basis of a concern as it progresses.
- seeking unrealistic outcomes.
- repeatedly or unreasonably using Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Act requests.
- making excessive demands on staff time through frequent contact.
- communications created by artificial intelligence which are intended to harass or intimidate staff

Malicious Communication

Definition: Communications intended to cause harm, upset, or damage someone's reputation. Often indecent, offensive, or threatening.

Characteristics: Intentionally hurtful or offensive and may include threats or harassment.

- swearing and shouting at staff
- sending threatening or abusive messages
- spreading false information to damage staff or school reputations
- using public communication networks to cause annoyance, anxiety, or needless distress.

Refusal to communicate

Definition: Deliberate avoidance of or refusal to engage in any form of communication.

Characteristics: Parents are unresponsive to contact and show a lack of engagement with their child's school life.

- refusal to engage with or respond to school communication
- not following agreed channels of school communication
- failure to attend formal school communications such as parent-teacher consultations
- refusal to engage with and/or give consent for the school to engage with external specialist support.

10. Action taken against unacceptable communication

The Claxton Trust reserves the right to act on behalf of our schools and individual staff where individuals persistently engage in unacceptable communication.

We will issue a letter to the individual which will include clear examples of communication we consider unacceptable. A formal entry will also be entered on our school records to reflect this. We will ask the individual to modify their communication moving forward and explain that we will take formal action, in line with this policy, if they do not. We may also provide a copy of this policy for reference.

Where unacceptable communication persists, or where unacceptable communication is deemed too severe for restrictions not to be imposed, we may consider putting formal restrictions in place on communications.

Where this occurs, we will detail in a formal letter the length of time which the restrictions are to be in place and whom they apply to. A formal entry will also be entered on our school records.

These formal restrictions on communication may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Restricting communication in terms of method or frequency (for example – a dedicated email address that is responded to on a regular basis).
- Requiring communication to go through a designated member of staff.
- Only responding on the provision of new information or evidence.
- Only responding on receipt of any clarification or summary requested by school.
- Restricting communication to an advocate or representative of the parent/s.
- Referring the communication to the local governing body.
- Escalating the communication to the Trust board.
- Restricting access to our school sites.
- Other reasonable measures determined at the discretion of the headteacher and Trust.

In exceptional circumstances, we may consider the following actions:

- Taking legal action.
- Making referrals to the police or children services
- Stopping all direct contact with an individual.

Our schools reserve the right not to respond to communications that are deemed unreasonable, chronic, vexatious, or malicious and reserve the right not to respond to communications made through incorrect channels.

11. Legal implications of unacceptable communication

Both vexatious and malicious communications can have legal consequences. Vexatious communications can be stopped or sanctioned by the courts. Malicious communications may be prosecuted under criminal law. The Communications Act 2003 and the Malicious Communications Act 1988 in the UK address this.

APPENDIX 1 – CAMPS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL: channels of communication

Type of communication	Who do I contact?	Contact Information to use
- Initial queries or concerns about my child. Initial SEND queries or concerns for my child. - Any general or class related query. - Any query or concern relating to behaviour.	My child's class teacher	Brief questions: face to face at drop off or collection admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk Subject: [FAO class teacher] 01438 351053
- Behaviour queries or concerns for children that have not been resolved by the class teacher. - Queries about the curriculum. - Safeguarding queries or concerns.	Mr Chris Holgate, Assistant Headteacher Mrs Natalie Sembi, Deputy Headteacher Miss Michelle Bridge, Senior Deputy Headteacher	chris.holgate@fairlands.herts.sch.uk natalie.sembi@fairlands.herts.sch.uk michelle.bridge@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
- Queries or concerns for children that have not been resolved by the Deputy / Assistant Headteachers or are serious in nature. - Queries or concerns about staff conduct. - Formal complaints. - Freedom of information / subject access requests	Mr Robert Staples: Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Data Protection Officer	head@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
Queries or concerns about attendance.	Mrs Kerry Baker & Mrs Megan Swan	admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk Subject: [Attendance] 01438 351053
Queries or concerns about admissions	Mrs Amy McDonagh, Admissions Leaders	admissions@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053
- Queries or concerns about specialist external SEND support. - Queries or concerns about existing EHCPs or EHCP applications. - Further SEND advice and support after an initial conversation with class teacher.	Mrs Julie Jeffries, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo)	julie.jeffries@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053
Queries or concerns about school premises.	Mr Andy Sharp, Site Manager	andy.sharp@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
- Financial queries or concerns. - Queries about breakfast/after school club - Queries about trips - Queries or concerns about pupil premium or free school meals.	Mrs Claire Muggleton, Financial Assistant	admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053

APPENDIX 2 – FAIRLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL: channels of communication

Type of communication	Who do I contact?	Contact Information to use
- Initial queries or concerns about my child. - Initial SEND queries or concerns for my child. - Any general or class related query. - Any query or concern relating to behaviour.	My child's class teacher	Brief questions: face to face at drop off or collection admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk Subject: [FAO class teacher] 01438 351053
- Behaviour queries or concerns for children that have not been resolved by the class teacher. - Queries about the curriculum. - Safeguarding queries or concerns.	Mr Chris Holgate, Assistant Headteacher Mrs Natalie Sembi, Deputy Headteacher Miss Michelle Bridge, Senior Deputy Headteacher	chris.holgate@fairlands.herts.sch.uk natalie.sembi@fairlands.herts.sch.uk michelle.bridge@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
- Queries or concerns for children that have not been resolved by the Deputy / Assistant Headteachers or are serious in nature. - Queries or concerns about staff conduct. - Formal complaints. - Freedom of information / subject access requests	Mr Robert Staples: Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Data Protection Officer	head@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
Queries or concerns about attendance.	Mrs Kerry Baker & Mrs Megan Swan	admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk Subject: [Attendance] 01438 351053
Queries or concerns about admissions	Mrs Amy McDonagh, Admissions Leaders	admissions@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053
- Queries or concerns about specialist external SEND support. - Queries or concerns about existing EHCPs or EHCP applications. - Further SEND advice and support after an initial conversation with class teacher.	Mrs Julie Jeffries, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo)	julie.jeffries@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053
Queries or concerns about school premises.	Mr Andy Sharp, Site Manager	andy.sharp@fairlands.herts.sch.uk
- Financial queries or concerns. - Queries about breakfast/after school club - Queries about trips - Queries or concerns about pupil premium or free school meals.	Mrs Claire Muggleton, Financial Assistant	admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk 01438 351053
All communication with Fairlands Pre-School	Nicola Mutch & Patricia Scotcher, Preschool Managers	nickyandtricia@aol.com 07870 141270 01438 342304