

Shotley Bridge Primary School

Home to School Communication Policy



January 2026

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: January 2026
Last reviewed on:	January 2026	
Next review due by:	January 2027	

1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between our school and caregivers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives caregivers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with caregivers
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the school communicates with caregivers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from caregivers
- Helping caregivers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with caregivers are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from caregivers in line with this policy and the school's Acceptable Use policy. Staff will not communicate with caregivers via personal phone numbers, messaging apps or social media. All communication will go through official channels (school email, school telephone, Arbor or face to face).
- Working with other members of staff to make sure caregivers get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves).
- Communicating with caregivers in a professional and respectful manner.

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours (8:30am -3:30pm) or their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

2.3 Caregivers

Caregivers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance – please see appendix 1
- Responding to communications from the school in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, unreasonably excessive, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our caregiver code of conduct.

Caregivers should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours or during school holidays. Caregivers should also be aware of the difficulties school face when dealing with unnecessarily excessive messages and/or requests.

3. How we communicate with caregivers and carers

The sections below explain how we keep caregivers up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in school.

Caregivers should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

3.1 Email

We use email to keep caregivers informed about the following things:

- Half termly school newsletters (containing dates for events and scheduled school closures)
- School surveys or consultations
- Overdue payments (eg school lunch, wraparound, clubs)
- Information about school trips, residentials and activities
- Instances in school regarding behaviour/friendship issues etc
- Any other longer correspondence

3.2 Arbor messages

We will text caregivers about:

- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather or loss of power)
- Reminders about activities/trips
- Teacher requests (eg when a sports kit is needed)
- Payments (eg residentials, enrichment, fund raising)
- First aid
- Instances in school regarding behaviour/friendship issues etc.

- Invitations to special assemblies where your child will receive an award/certificate (we aim to give one weeks' notice having selected children based on their effort and achievement that week).
- Invitations to sign children up to the following terms extra-curricular clubs
- Invitations to select caregivers' evening/SEN appointments

3.3 School calendar

- Our half termly school newsletter includes a full school calendar of events and scheduled school closures.
- Our school website includes scheduled school closures for staff INSET and holidays.
- Where possible, we give caregivers at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

3.4 Phone calls

Staff will telephone home to discuss issues and/or pupil progress with caregivers if necessary

3.5 Reports

Caregivers receive reports from the school about their child's learning, including:

- An end of term report covering achievement and effort in each part of the curriculum along with a short note.
- An end-of-year report covering achievement and effort in each part of the curriculum, progress and attendance.
- A report on KS2 tests/ MTC check/Phonics/ Early learning goals

We also arrange meetings where caregivers can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (see the section below).

3.6 Meetings

We hold 2 caregivers' evenings per year in the autumn and spring terms, plus additional meetings for children with SEND. During these meetings, caregivers can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, their child's wellbeing and any other area of concern. All caregivers are expected to attend these meetings so that information can be shared.

The school may also contact caregivers to arrange meetings between caregivers' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Caregivers are welcome to make an appointment with their child's class teacher to discuss their end of year report, should they wish to.

3.7 School website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- School times and term dates
- School tour dates for prospective caregivers and children
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about wraparound care

Caregivers are expected to check the website for the information that they require before contacting the school.

3.8 Facebook

Key information about the school is posted on our Facebook page, including:

- Announcements
- School tour dates for prospective caregivers and children
- Photographs of the children taking part in both curriculum and enrichment activities
- Signposting caregivers to events in the community
- Safeguarding

3.9 Home-school communications

We keep caregivers informed about a range of school issues via email, Arbor messages, Facebook and by sending paper letters home if this is deemed appropriate.

4. How caregivers and carers can communicate with the school

Caregivers should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

4.1 Email

Caregivers should email the school general email shotleybridgeprimary@durhamlearning.net with FAO (for attention of) and the appropriate staff member's name.

We aim to acknowledge all emails **within two working days**, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) **within five working days** where possible. The school does however reserve the right to deviate from these timescales where repeated and unreasonably excessive messages are received which fall outside of the guidance referred to in this policy. Where a response from wider professionals impacts upon the response, the school reserves the right to extend the response period.

If a query or concern is urgent, and caregivers need a response sooner than this, they should call the school and ask to speak to the appropriate member of staff. Caregivers should be aware that this may not be with the member of staff that they require if the member of staff is teaching or engaged in meetings.

Emails sent during holidays will be read and responded to when school reopens.

If you have an emergency safeguarding concern during holidays, please contact First Contact directly: 03000 267 979

4.2 Phone calls

If caregivers need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email or telephone the school office (01207 260444) and the relevant member of staff will contact them **within 2 working days**. Teachers cannot take phone calls during teaching time.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure caregivers have spoken to the appropriate member of staff **within 2 days of your request**.

If the issue is urgent, caregivers should call the school office and ask to speak to the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

For more general enquiries, please call the school office (01207 260444)

4.3 Meetings

If caregivers would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the school office to book an appointment shotleybridgeprimary@durhamlearning.net

We try to schedule all meetings **within 5 working days** of the request where possible

Teachers are not available at the start of the school day, however, a message can be taken and passed on by a member of staff at the school gate/door on a morning. Teachers are available at the end of the school day for short conversations, however, if caregivers need to speak at length about concerns/issues, we recommend they make an appointment.

4.4 Home-school communications app

We communicate with caregivers via the Arbor app.

5. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

Caregivers who need help communicating with the school can request the following support:

- School announcements and communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the school office to discuss these.

6. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher and Senior Office Manager monitor the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every year.

The policy is approved by the Governing Board.

7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- Acceptable use
- Caregiver code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Home-school agreement

Appendix 1: school contact list

Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email or call the school office
- Put the subject and the name of the relevant member of staff (from the list below) in the subject line (for emails)
- We will forward your request on to the relevant member of staff

Remember: check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Class teacher or Pupil Wellbeing Lead – Mrs Lee
Payments	School office
School trips	School office
Uniform/lost and found	School office
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call the school office: 01207 260444 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, email the school office
Bullying and behaviour	EYFS/Y1 – Mrs Dryden Y2/KS2 – Mrs Pearson Pupil Wellbeing Lead – Mrs Lee
School events/the school calendar	School office
Special educational needs (SEN)	SENDCo – Mrs Dryden
Before and after-school clubs	School office

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
Hiring the school premises	School office
Governing board	Headteacher – Mrs Atkinson
School meals	School office
Complaints or concerns around staff members	Headteacher – Mrs Atkinson

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy which is available from school or on our website.