



HILLVIEW
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

COMMUNICATION POLICY

CONTENTS	PAGE
POLICY	
1. Rationale	3
<i>Aims, Objective, Relationship to other Policies</i>	
APPENDICES	
Appendix 1 - Communication with Stakeholders	4
Communication from the school	
Communication with parents	
Appendix 2 - Communication from parents	7
Appendix 3 - Communication with other schools and outside agencies	9
Appendix 4 - Communication with staff	10
Appendix 5 - Inappropriate communication / behaviour	12

1. Rationale

At Hillview we believe in an effective, productive relationship between stakeholders¹. This requires good communication from all parties across the community. An honest, open and transparent dialogue is required to successfully support the children and employees within our care and safeguard their well-being.

Aims

- To maintain effective, proactive communication systems
- To develop positive working relationships across all stakeholders¹
- To support the development of the child.

Objectives

All communications at Hillview School for Girls should:

- Keep staff, students, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon-free English and be easily understood by all
- Be conducted in a timely manner
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience

Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy

¹ Stakeholders: parents, staff, governors, external provision, students

1. Communication with stakeholders

At Hillview School for Girls we aim to have clear, effective communication with parents the Hillview and wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, school successes and information about the school

2. Communication from the school

2.1 The school website

The school website is used largely for communication with those outside the current school community, except in the case of emergency notices.

The aim of the school website is to inform and promote the school to the wider community. Therefore, the website does not contain any content which would be considered to be for an 'internal' audience.

2.2 Social Media

Facebook and Twitter are used to communicate news and successes to the Hillview and wider community. These are maintained professionally and monitored regularly.

2.3 Weekly newsletter

The whole Hillview community receive the weekly newsletter via email every Friday. The newsletter outlines the key foci, events and successes from the week. This is also a valuable planning resource with short-term dates outlined for information.

3 Communication with parents

Staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, it is appropriate that relationships are professional and parents are addressed in a formal manner.

Communication can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone); written (through letters, notes in planners or email); through the MyEd app or for staff, via the school's internal VLE system. Our aim is to utilise all means of communication effectively.

3.1 The MyEd app

The first port of call for parents is the MyEd app that enables parents to access live information about their child, their education and the school. The app was developed specifically to ease the burden for parents in managing the information coming from the school and to access up to date information about their child and their education.

3.2 Paperless communication

We aim to have 100% of parents signed up to email to achieve paperless communication wherever possible. Where this is not appropriate, the parent must contact the school and a hard copy of communication is provided.

3.3 Preference of communication

Parents identify the order of preference for communication on entry to the school. This remains, unless amended, throughout the child's education. It is vital that parents update their contact details: phone number, email and address in a timely manner.

3.4 Estranged/separated parents

Unless there is a court order to the contrary, the school will provide the same information to both parents, provided that contact details have been furnished. Copies of communications can be sent via the student if both parents are in agreement.

3.5 Student Planners

Each student has a planner for noting down homework and the date for completion. It is also an important tool for communication between parents and teachers. Parents are asked to check and sign the planner on a weekly basis, which is then checked by the student's mentor.

3.6 Prospectus

All prospective parents will receive a school prospectus upon request or in person at various community locations, within primary schools or by coming to the school's Reception. The school's prospectus is also available on the school's website.

3.7 Open events

Prospective parents are invited to one of two Open Sessions and/or Open Mornings throughout the year. New parents are invited, along with their child, to an Induction Evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined, essential information given and the school's expectations explained.

3.8 Teacher/Parent consultations

Year 7 parents are invited to a "Meet the Mentor Evening" in the October of Year 7 to help the student settle into the school. All parents are invited to attend one full parent consultation or evening each year to review the academic, personal and social progress of their child.

3.9 Translation

Key school documents will be translated into community languages on request and a translator made available, if required, to ensure effective communication.

3.10 Parents' feedback

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. The relevant member of staff will arrange to see parents as soon as possible.

All parents will receive an annual questionnaire on the service provided by the school. Replies are confidential and will be collated and analysed by a senior member of staff. Issues arising will be shared and discussed by governors, the leadership team, staff and Student Council.

3.11 PTA

The school has a thriving PTA. Its primary purpose is to organise social events and raise money for the school but it is also a good way for parents to get involved in the life of the school and at times the school consults with this group of parents on ideas for the future.

PTA contact details: PTA@hillview.kent.sch.uk

4. Communication from parents

The main communication from parents is via email or telephone and parents are asked to contact the school via the school office. This enables the school to act in a timelier manner and also ensures that the response is addressed within the time scale outlined below:

Acknowledgement: 1 working day

Response: 5 working days

In exceptional cases where further information or a thorough investigation is required a 10 working day limit is applicable.

Teachers set aside time each school day to check communications. However, commitments, illness and part-time working may restrict an immediate response. We therefore ask for patience and understanding from our parents when awaiting a response.

4.1 E-mail (as the recommended communication method)

Parents may wish to contact the school via email as an alternative to telephone or letter. Admin staff will forward any communication to the appropriate staff member for whom the message relates. All email communication will be treated in the same way as a letter.

The school is proactive in encouraging the use of email, with office email contacts being publicised regularly in newsletters and all parents being encouraged to give an email address for prompt and effective communication.

4.2 Telephone calls

All telephone enquires will pass through the main school office, who will direct the call to the relevant member of staff. In the likely event that the member of staff is not available to answer the call a message should be left and a return call will be placed at the earliest appropriate time.

4.3 Meetings

At times, at the request of the school or parent, a meeting may take place if either party feel that this would be the most appropriate communication method. Meetings are conducted to discuss formally points or concerns pertaining to a student's welfare or well-being. All meetings must be agreed in advance.

Notes from telephone calls /meetings/ email content will be saved electronically into the student's file.

All visitors to school must report to Reception, sign in and wait to be collected by the staff member they are seeing.

Communication from parents should be polite and civil at all times. Rudeness, inappropriate language, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour will result in the communication being ended immediately. Should the Headteacher deem it necessary for safeguarding and security reasons, action will be taken and restrictions may be put in place for future communication. (See Appendix 5)

5. Communication with other schools and outside agencies

Prior to students joining Year 7, students are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to Hillview School for Girls.

We recognise that children have diverse needs and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs so that children may participate more fully. Information will only be shared once parental agreement has been sought.

We also work closely with welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Child Protection Units. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. Communication between professionals is always confidential.

5.1 Accessibility of information

We hold information on all students in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details will be sent to any new parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data and who we may pass it to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

6. Communication with Staff

6.1 The VLE

The majority of communication for staff is via email or through the VLE, where information regarding the day-to-day procedures and notices are placed. This allows easy access to up-to-date information, located in a central point.

6.2 Meetings between Staff

There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff, both formal and informal. The school calendar stipulates the minimum standard of frequency of these. All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to department/faculty reflection on priorities, activities and future plans. Meeting notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

Availability of minutes/Notes of meetings

Minutes and notes of meetings are made available on the VLE

6.3 Email

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of e-mail where appropriate. However, it does not replace face-to-face meetings where some discussion is required.

The school has a separate ICT Policy dealing with e-mail/internet usage. Staff must make themselves conversant with this.

6.4 Written communications (Post)

These are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room, which staff should check on a daily basis. Phone messages taken by office staff are emailed to those staff concerned.

6.5 Staff Briefings

Staff Briefings take place each Monday morning at 8.25 a.m. The main points are also printed in the weekly Bulletin that is provided to staff as a paper copy in the staff room. A copy is also available on VLE.

6.6 Staff Handbook

A copy of the Staff Handbook is saved electronically on Staff Public available via the VLE and a hard copy is provided for each member of staff at the beginning of the academic year. It is updated at least annually.

6.7 Notice boards

A staff notice board is located in the staff room. All corridor areas are planned to provide areas for celebrating students' work and displays should be mounted, be checked for spelling and grammar (but not to the detriment of students' self-esteem) and made safe in line with Health and Safety Policy.

6.8 Written Communication

All written communication external to the school MUST be sent via the school office for formatting and checking.

6.9 Social networking sites/blogs, etc.

Staff are not permitted to communicate with parents or students via private social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as “friends”. The exception is networks or blogs set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning, together with official School sites. This is part of our safeguarding procedure to protect students and staff. (See ICT Policy and Safeguarding Policy).

7. Inappropriate Communication/Behaviour

Following an incidence of poor communication from any member of the Hillview community, it may be necessary to put into place actions that enable all parties to return to a positive standing.

Staff member: Please refer to the Complaints Policy. The school would support the re-building of trust. However, an alternative member of staff may be appointed as a contact point if the school felt this were appropriate.

Depending upon the severity of the situation, the following actions may be put into place:

- A verbal/written warning to the parent about their behaviour / language
- Any future meetings/discussions will be conducted with more than one member of the school staff so as not to compromise a lone member of staff

In more severe cases the school will put stricter restrictions in place whereby:

- Access into school will be pre-arranged and agreed in advance by both parties
- A single point of contact within school through whom all communications should be directed will be put in place

The school does have the right to refuse access from the school site to anyone if they are deemed to be a threat to the safeguarding of any members of the school community, including students and staff. (DfE Guidance 2012, "Advice on School Security: Access to and barring of individuals from school premises"). In this case a formal letter will be issued giving full details of when the ban begins and might end. The decision to refuse access would be agreed and reviewed by a representative of the Governing Body.

**HILLVIEW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
GOVERNORS' COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Main Compilers: Hilary Burkett, Headteacher
Bryan Key, Director of Finance and Administration

Date of approval by governors:

Most recent update: May 2017

Consulted: Parents, governors

Anticipated review date: May 2020