



ST MARYS CE FIRST ACADEMY

We love and value each member of St. Mary's family as precious individuals. Our outward-looking curriculum enables everyone to embrace life in all its fullness while celebrating the everyday and the unique. Through our Christian values of belief, respect and friendship we:

'Shine as a Light in the World'.

POLICY STATEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

1 Introduction

In our academy we pride ourselves on maintaining good communication between all stakeholders. We encourage mutual respect between all staff, pupils and visitors who are asked to listen to the views of others, express their views in a courteous, polite manner and work together for the benefit of the school and its community.

- 1.1 Effective communication is important to our academy, we communicate with a diverse range of people both inside and outside of the academy and across a wide range of ages and abilities. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools/academies and parents/carers know what the academy is trying to achieve and work together to achieve this.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 In our academy, we aim to have clear and effective communication with all pupils, colleagues, governors, parents/carers and the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, through keeping every stakeholder well informed about academy life.
- 2.2 We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible.
- 2.3 We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination recognising and celebrating the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our academy.
- 2.4 We also aim to communicate respectfully whether verbally or in written form and avoid language which may be misconstrued - particularly when given in written form.

3 Communicating within our Academy

Good staff relationships are essential at St Mary's and we pride ourselves on the way we welcome each other on a daily basis, by a polite or friendly greeting. Experienced staff are always willing to help and support new staff in terms of sharing pupil information, academy routines, subject experience and best practice etc.

- 3.1 So that we all know what is going on there is: a weekly bulletin produced by the Head of School each week and then forwarded to all staff. This is also shown in greater detail on the staffroom whiteboard and it is here that 'last minute' changes are recorded. The annual calendar is available to all staff through Microsoft Outlook. Staff are alerted of key changes as and when they are made to the calendar. The Teaching and Learning calendar is shared in paper form at the beginning of the academic year. This includes appraisal dates as well as monitoring and assessment weeks. The staff meeting calendar is shared each term. There are opportunities for informal daily discussions in the staff room.
- 3.2 A Staffroom whiteboard contains information about the forthcoming week's activities and important events and staff are encouraged to read it.
- 3.3 All our procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook or induction booklet.
- 3.4 Written communications are delivered by e-mail or in paper copy when appropriate.
- 3.5 Staff should discuss any specific issues promptly with the Head of School, Executive Principal or relevant staff member so that these can be resolved quickly and issues do not build up.
- 3.6 Volunteers, visiting teachers or Cover Supervisors are given a welcome pack on arrival which contains essential information about what is expected of them and other useful information.
- 3.7 Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff without their prior consent. The exception to this is an optional database of staff contact numbers for emergency reasons eg. School closure, visits off-site or other essential communication.
- 3.8 A reflective self-review activity or SWOT (Strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats) analysis is conducted on the first INSET day which proceeds the start of the new academic year. This gives staff a chance to contribute their views on the school. Responses are collated to produce an overview which feeds into the AIP priorities for the year and the basis for SLT agendas.
- 3.9a) If Teaching or TA staff are unwell and cannot attend school they should ring the Head of School as early as possible but no later than 7:30am on the day of absence. This will enable a conversation to take place to ascertain the staff member's illness, likely period of absence and any further support which may be necessary. It will enable the Head of School to sort cover for the appropriate groups or classes. It will be helpful if the absent teacher can phone the office no later than 2.30pm that day to inform us of the likely attendance next day.

On returning to school the member of staff should meet with the Head of School or Executive Principal for short return to work / re-entry meeting for an appropriate discussion, and the Head of School or Executive Principal will ascertain if further support is needed. The Self-Certification form (AB200) should also be completed at that meeting.

Appropriate sick notes issued by GPs should be given to the Head of School on return to work to ensure the school's absence systems are kept up to date and to pass on to the County Council for processing.

3.9b) Professional Development and training of Staff

The academy prides itself in developing the skills and experiences of staff. Requests for training should be made to the Head of School. Once training is completed feedback should be given. A summary of CPD and its impact is presented termly to the LAC.

4 Communicating the school's values to pupils

This is done through:

- 4.1 modelling respectful and supportive relationships between all adults in the academy community;
- 4.2 treating all children with respect and warmth;
- 4.3 using positive language to emphasise and praise desired behaviour rather than focus on negative behaviour;
- 4.4 teaching an emotional vocabulary so that children develop the language skills to help them recognise and understand their own and others' feelings;
- 4.5 teaching social skills of sharing, turn-taking, listening, giving and receiving compliments, giving and receiving criticism;
- 4.6 using social problem-solving structures such as circle time to give a framework for resolving difficulties constructively;
- 4.7 using playtimes, clubs and educational visits as opportunities to extend social skills and develop independence and responsibility.
- 4.8 giving pupils leadership opportunities i.e., buddies, monitors
- 4.9 Feedback on pupils' learning is provided in-line with the school's Marking & Feedback Policy.

5.0 Home-school communication

- 5.1 We send a regular newsletter to parents and carers. It contains general details of academy events and activities. Class Dojo is used for both whole academy and individual class updates. Relevant information is posted on our website to keep all stakeholders informed. Text messages are sent of urgent reminders to parents.
- 5.2 Parents receive an annual calendar with key dates for the forthcoming year. The half termly calendar is also on weekly newsletters.
- 5.3 Children have a reading/homework diary. This enables parents and carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher.
- 5.4 The academy encourages parents and carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers see parents/carers immediately, if at all possible. Where this is not possible, the parent makes an appointment.
- 5.5 We arrange meet the teacher days in July for new classes and two parent consultation meetings and a drop-in evening each year.
- 5.6 If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason by 9.30am, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence and follow the unaccounted for procedures.
- 5.7 All school information is uploaded on to the school website.

5.8 Termly reports are provided to share information on pupils' progress.

6. Home-school agreement

6.1 The school sets out a home-school agreement. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents and carers, and the academy's expectations of the children. We ask parents and carers to sign this agreement when their child starts at our academy, and to renew it each year.

6.2 The agreement covers the standard of education in our academy, the ethos of the academy, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework.

7 Contacting and meeting with Parents or other stakeholders

It is vital that we remember that all visitors to the academy are made very welcome on entering the building, at reception and around the building. Visitors will be asked to give their name and reason for their visit when arriving main reception. They will then be asked to sign-in and wear a 'visitor's badge', before entering the building / site and sign out and return their badge before leaving the building. Contractors must read and sign the asbestos survey documentation before entering the site.

Visitors are asked to follow and respect our agreed procedures whilst in the academy and in being equally courteous and polite at all times with all stakeholders.

When parents or others telephone the academy a sympathetic manner and a willingness to listen will often make an anxious caller feel more at ease.

7.1 It is mainly the class teacher's responsibility to contact parents when the need arises. Comments made to parents should be based on evidence. Minutes of any meetings with parents should be kept in the school office in children's files and recorded on CPOMS as required. It is essential that any letters from parents, copies of letters to parents and notes from parents are dated and kept. Lunchtime Supervisors will complete relevant forms (medical and behaviour) the event of a pupil sustaining an injury at lunchtime. If after all attempts to contact a parent (or pupil nominated contact), have proved unsuccessful, a voice mail message will be left. A copy of the relevant page in the Accident form sent home with the child). If there is not a facility to leave a voice mail message then this must be conveyed to the parent at the time of collecting the child (only in a non emergency situation).

When communicating with parents it is important that we:

- (i) consider having a discussion with a parent on the telephone first or at a meeting, which usually resolves most issues;
- (ii) try to avoid sending long letters or emails in reply to a parent. Be careful of tone / words used in any letter or email. If an email is sent please send it via the school office so that it is received from the academy email address;
- (iii) are polite, calm and respectful at all times and that parents will also be the same;
- (iv) do not weaken our professional position by responding with what the parents may feel they want to hear rather than with what we know to be right;

- (v) do not pass comments on matters which do not relate to us but instead refer the parent to the appropriate colleague;
- (vi) do not unwittingly complicate an issue by attempting to resolve it on an informal basis, e.g. by talking with a parent in a local shop;
- (vii) give only good news at the gate;
- (viii) are sure of the information we give out regarding pupils' events and procedures. It is better to return the call later when clearer information is available, if we are unsure.

The positive approach must be:

- (i) to ask the academy office to arrange a more convenient time to discuss matters with a parent if the parent arrives whilst we are teaching;
- (ii) to contact parents the same day if this is possible to say that an issue will be investigated promptly the next day;
- (iii) to refer matters when in doubt to the Head of School or Executive Principal (keep office informed)
- (iv) to clarify in our own mind what school policy is in a given area before entering into discussions with a parent;
- (v) to arrange a meeting for a quiet venue i.e. Head of School's room, staff room etc. **NOT** an open area where interruptions may take place or comments may be overheard. Choose a location as near to the front of school as possible and make sure a colleague / colleagues can be contacted if support is needed. Try to make parents as welcome as possible and give them an opportunity to raise concerns or ask questions. If necessary arrange a follow-up meeting in order to make sure any action is making an impact.
- (vi) consider having a colleague member present and ensure meetings are minuted and any follow up communication with parents is carried out.

7.2 Celebration Collective Worship provides an excellent form of communication in sharing pupils' successes with parents and a range of stakeholders. Collective Worship also offer an opportunity for staff notices to be shared with all school stakeholders so that everyone is aware of forthcoming events and successes and helps to contribute to a shared school ethos.

7.3 Each year Open Mornings and Open Evenings take place to provide information for prospective and existing parents and family members.

8 Annual written report to parents and carers: children's achievements

8.1 Every year, we provide parents and guardians with a termly progress postcards and consultation appointment in the autumn and spring terms. In the summer term a report is given to parents and guardians outlining the progress in numeracy, literacy and details of other subjects studied. An additional parents' 'drop-in' session is also scheduled during the Summer term.

8.2 As well as receiving the written report, parents and guardians have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher before the start of each new academic year. In the Summer term parents can request a meeting with staff to discuss any major concerns which they have following the distribution of the school report.

- 8.3 When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we may request a meeting with parents and carers or other outside agency.
- 8.4 We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter or support. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

9 Academy prospectus and marketing opportunities

- 9.1 The prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents and carers a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated periodically.
- 9.2 Community notice boards are used to publicise school news and community events organised by the school.

10 Public access to documents

- 10.1 The academy makes a range of documentation available to parents and carers. We keep a master set in the office, and we make a copy of this available on request. It contains minutes of LAC meetings, and all policies, including those that the LAC are required to draw up in relation to the following matters: charging and remissions, health and safety, curriculum, performance management, admissions, and action planning following an inspection.

11 Communication with other schools and outside agencies

- 11.1 Toward the end of their final term in Year 4, we pass on information about the children to their intended future schools/academies. We try to give a view of the whole child, and we include their expected national test results, their strengths and development areas, their interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, football captain, school council representative, playground buddy, etc.). There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. We may also send on items of work.
- 11.2 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. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units.
- 11.3 We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our academy should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with the children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the DSL, who may share this information with the Safeguarding Team.
- 11.4 We hold information on pupils in our academy, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents and carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents and carers

have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

- 11.5 In April 2011 Brewood CE Middle School federated with St Mary's CE First School Wheaton Aston; The Brewood and Wheaton Aston Federation. This has led to increased opportunities for joint training, enhanced communication and improved transition for pupils. During the 2012 / 2013 academic year Brewood agreed to a collaboration with our feeder High School, partner Middle School and all the first schools in the Brewood and Penkridge cluster. This has led to improved sharing of best practice between all stakeholders and celebration of subject successes exhibited at the annual 'showcase' event at the High School. It has led to improved transition for all pupils within the collaboration. In October 2019 both Brewood CE Middle and St Mary's joined the St Chad's Academies Trust.

12 Electronic communication

- 12.1 We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have an academy website. Children must not have staff email addresses. Drop boxes may be used if required.
- 12.2 All school members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are any benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our E-Safety policy. Staff should be cautious of using Social Networking sites such as Facebook etc. where information is widely available to the school's community. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.
- 12.3 The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.
- 12.4 Our academy website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.
- 12.5 All members of staff have their own school-provided e-mail accounts.
- 12.6 Parents and carers are required to sign permission slips for their child to use the Internet in school.
- 12.7 ICT technical support is provided by Concero. There is a link on each academy computer to report any faults or to order any IT consumable replacements electronically.
- 12.8 The academy uses its Twitter account to share information and celebrates successes. Please see related policies.

13 Use of photographs and names

- 13.1 Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes including displays, recording practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and are a visual record of school events.
- 13.2 We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus, on the website. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at school.
- 13.3 Parental permission must be obtained via a signature in the personal organiser before using photographs of children or their work as detailed in 13.2 above. Parents and carers may ask to see the policy of the press about name disclosure before giving permission for a photo to

be used. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

- 13.4 Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable (e.g. photos of children in swimwear would be unsuitable).
- 13.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names unless they are part of a publicity article published officially i.e. Newspaper article. Even on the academy website, only children's first names may be used.

14 Local Academy Committee

- 14.1 Each form has a link governor with whom they communicate termly via individual letters. Governors' responses are optional.
- 14.2 Ratified full LAC termly meeting minutes are published and displayed.
- 14.4 LAC members are welcome to visit the school by prior arrangement with the Head of School.

15 Monitoring and review

- 15.1 This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed annually in the Summer Term or earlier if required.

Linked documents

- Home School Agreement
- Reading Diary
- School Reporting System
- School Prospectus
- Headteacher' Newsletters
- Curriculum Summary
- School Calendar
- E-Safety Policy
- Twitter Policy

Signed:



Chair of LAC

Date:

17 JUL 2023