

LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This policy was approved:	July 2024
This policy will be reviewed:	July 2027
Member of staff with responsibility for review:	Carey Mayzes
This policy was consulted with:	LGB
This policy was consulted with external unions (HR policies):	
This policy was distributed to:	

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to establish a shared understanding of effective home-school communication. Effective communication between the College and home is an integral part of securing academic success and positive well-being for students at Linton Village College. It also outlines procedures and expectations of behaviour between the College, parents/carers and students in line with the following principles.

Principles for Communication

- To harness and foster community relationships.
- To keep staff, students, parents/carers, governors and the wider community well informed about the work of the College.
- To be open, honest, ethical and professional at all times.
- To be timely and effective.
- To use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- To be compatible with LVC's core aims and values.

Procedures for Communication

To ensure effective and regular communication the College provides:

- A weekly Sway.
- Targeted SchoolComms emails.
- A regularly updated school website including College policy updates.
- The College calendar available on the College website.
- Access to live on-line assessment data and progress reports via Go 4 Schools.
- Access to on-online details and deadlines for home learning via Satchel One.
- Annual Parent Teacher Evenings and Parent Tutor Evenings.
- Linton postcards of praise to recognise specific student achievements.
- Additional information letters as required to groups or individuals.
- Monthly contributions from the Principal to parish newsletters.
- Contact home via email and telephone as and when appropriate.
- Social media updates from the College via Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter).
- Annual parent information evenings to share topical or timely information. E.g. Options.

Behaviour and Protocol for Communication

Staff will

- Use an appropriately formal and polite tone in emails and letters to parents.
- Send out a letter only after it has been checked by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Respond to emails and phone messages within two full working days. Staff are not expected to reply to any message received during a weekend or holiday until the working week begins. During the week

staff are not expected to email, phone or contact parents beyond the working hours of 8.00am – 5.30pm or during other working commitments.

- Respond using a holding message if more than two working days are required to investigate the matter raised.
- Consult with line managers before responding to sensitive issues raised in emails from parents/carers.
- Not reply to any email, letter or communication that is rude, aggressive in tone or content or makes unreasonable demands; or engage in excessive continued dialogue via email. Such emails, letters or communication will be referred to their Head of Department to reply on their behalf. If necessary, Heads of Department may need to seek advice from the Senior Leadership Team.
- Inform parents of significant incidents during the school day and behaviour/or sanctions that their child has received, as required by the 'College Behaviour and Discipline Policy'.

Students must

- Discuss reports and targets with parents as outlined in the College Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy.
- Be honest and truthful in their communications between home and college.
- Behave in a responsible and caring manner in line with Linton Learner values: to report, in a timely manner, any inappropriate activity to the relevant organisation, e.g. website/app provider, police and/or College Safeguarding team if this activity is likely to impact upon the safety or well-being of a student at the College.
- In the event of an *emergency* if students need to contact home they must do so via reception or the Support Hub. Direct contact home with parents via mobile phone is a breach of the Home-School Communications Policy and College Mobile Phone Policy.
- Use an appropriately formal and polite tone in emails and letters to teaching staff. Students must only email staff using their LVC email address.

Parents/Carers should

- Read the weekly LVC Newsletter and respond to the letters sent home.
- Sign and adhere to the 'Home/School Agreement' alongside the admissions form and return to LVC.
- Update any changes to personal details on the SMS/Parent/Student App.
- Keep the College informed of changes in contact information and their child's personal circumstances.
- Attend calendared Parents' Evenings and specific invitation Parents' Meetings.
- Use an appropriately formal and polite tone in emails and letters to staff.
- Seek to clarify a child's version of events alongside the school's view in order to bring about a constructive solution to any issue.
- Acknowledge receipt of and, where appropriate, respond to emails, phone messages and communication from the College within two full working days.
- Book appointments in advance to meet the appropriate member of College staff. Requests or demands for immediate appointments will not be met; exceptions to this will only be made in circumstances such as Safeguarding emergencies.

- Ensure email communication is with the appropriate member of staff, as outlined on the College website. If parents/carers remain uncertain they should contact Reception. Please note the College or staff will not respond to any messages sent via social media accounts.
- Support the College's policy that every teacher's main priority is to teach and support students to achieve their academic potential. Excessive emailing and communication is disruptive and counterproductive.
- Inform the College if separated parents require access to reports, newsletters, 'Go4Schools' and 'Satchel One'. Requests by parents may need to be supported by relevant documentation demonstrating they are entitled to receive such information.
- Report inappropriate activity to the relevant organisation, e.g. website/app provider, police or College Safeguarding team if this activity is likely to impact upon the safety or well-being of a student at the College in a timely manner.
- In the event of an *emergency*, contact the College reception via telephone, or email, if parents/carers need to contact their child. Direct contact with students via mobile phone is a breach of the 'HomeSchool Communication Policy' and 'College Personal Mobile Device Policy'.

In the case of emergency communication, the College will:

- Make an urgent phone call to students' parents.

In the case of emergency school closure, the College will:

- In the case of school closure before the start of the College day, provide messages on the LVC website, LVC Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) as well as the LA website (www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)
- In the case of school closure during the College day, provide messages via SchoolComms email, the LVC website, LVC Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter). Students will be instructed to phone/text home individually once a final decision has been made.
- In the case of an unexpected change of arrangements in after-school clubs or fixtures or trips on the day, students will be instructed to phone/text home. A College telephone will be available for student use. In exceptional circumstances, subject to staff express permission, students will be instructed to use their own phones.

Home-School Communication Issues

The overwhelming majority of parents/carers are extremely supportive of the College and the work of its staff. The College endeavours to maintain a positive relationship with parents and carers; in cases where home school communication becomes challenging or unproductive it will be referred to someone more senior in the College.

The College works hard to resolve matters of dispute however in cases where parents wish to make a complaint, they should refer to the Anglian Learning's 'Complaints Procedure'.

Where parents become abusive, aggressive or excessive/persistent in their response, in whatever form of communication is being used, that communication will cease. In extreme cases it may be necessary to contact other authorities. Anyone causing a nuisance or disturbance will be dealt with in line with the Anglian Learning Trust parent, carer, visitor code of conduct.

For persistent complaints and harassment, the Anglian Learning's Complaints Policy' will be applied. Any member of the College community should be aware that raising matters on social media can make resolution of Home-School communication issues more challenging and undermine the positive relationship the College seeks to foster. (See Appendix 1).

In cases where parental contact becomes excessive and unreasonable, it may be necessary to introduce a communications protocol specifying the communication channels to be used.

The College does not permit electronic recordings of meetings or telephone calls by parents or staff without prior mutual consent.

Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of social media

While social media platforms are mostly used to share good news, particularly examples of the great work, opportunities and successes of our schools and pupils, disappointingly they are being used to make personal attacks against school staff and, in some cases, other parents / carers / pupils.

Anglian Learning and Linton Village College believes that everyone in our school community (pupils, staff, parents, carers etc) should have the right to use social media fairly and positively, free from harassment; threatening, abusive or offensive messages; or defamatory information being posted about them. We already work to educate our pupils about the importance of cyberbullying and expect all of our school communities to uphold this behaviour.

Anyone that sends or posts threatening, abusive or offensive messages via Facebook, X or any other social networking site, could be committing a criminal offence. Anglian Learning also considers the use of social media networking sites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community.

We recognise that, on occasion, there will be misunderstandings between schools and parents / carers, and as with any institution, schools may make errors in the way matters are handled. But any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by following the school's policies, speaking to the class teacher, the headteacher or the chair of governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately, and effectively for all concerned. This also allows the school to report on, and review whether consistent concerns are being raised and to take appropriate steps to improve them.

Any instances where a member of our school community is found to be posting defamatory, abusive or threatening comments on social network sites will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the social network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site, and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. We will also contact any parents or carers where any defamatory, or abusive comments are identified, and we expect that they will be removed without delay.

In serious cases, or where posts will not be removed, the school will also report any posts to the police and consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social media networking and other sites.