



King's Group

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## Communication with Parents Policy

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At King’s College schools, we believe that good communication between school and the home is essential. Children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work

together. Parents/carers can help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve and how they can help.

We aim to have clear and effective communication with parents and the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the importance of the role that parents play in supporting the school in educating their children.

Kings College schools expect all communication between parents and staff to be prompt, courteous and appropriate. Communication includes the use of telephone, letter, email, website, iSams, ClassDojo and face-to-face meetings. Our Schools have systems for the formal recording of Parent/Teacher communication. Our aim is to be as helpful as possible and offer a high level of personal service.

Some of this communication will be routine and/or planned and some will be unplanned. Evidence suggests that the way in which communication is planned and managed can have a significant impact on how what is said or written is interpreted by parents. This, in turn, will impact on the way in which parents feel able to support schools in the education and social inclusion of their children.

### **1.0 General Principles**

- Use school policy as a guide, to ensure consistency;
- monitor style and phrasing of communication e.g. differentiate between fact and opinion and present information neutrally;
- notice, acknowledge and respond to feelings, beliefs and behaviours within agreed professional frameworks. If a situation arises where we are unable to respond immediately, we will confirm a more appropriate time
- training, support and supervision should be offered ahead of and/after meetings to contribute to staff CPD and well-being
- seek support and/or supervision from colleagues in new or difficult situations.
- we will communicate in a tone which is courteous, jargon free and warm.
- we acknowledge that some information is of a confidential nature and we will always respect that confidentiality
- The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child with their teacher at the earliest opportunity. The relevant member of staff will arrange to see parents as soon as possible.

### **2.0 Informal Communication**

Informal communication refers to that which occurs between employees of King's College Schools and a parent/carer in response to an email, telephone call, note in the school diary, ClassDojo or through an unplanned face-to-face discussion with a parent or carer.

It is always helpful to be clear about the reason for the communication, particularly when there has been recent communication that appeared to be focused around the same, or a similar issue. If the reason for the communication is unclear, seek clarification from the parent or carer as to their exact concern or question.

It is important to ensure that all communication is appropriately recorded, e.g. in terms of what was discussed and the actions that were agreed. Using iSams as a communication platform will ensure consistency. This should be completed by the end of the next working day following the meeting.

### **3.0 Formal Communication**

#### **3.1. In Writing**

After discussion with the senior leadership team it may be deemed more appropriate to send a letter via email. Where a response is required this will be clarified in the letter.

Following the below guidelines will ensure written communication with parents is effective:

- parents' and/or school's concerns, issues or questions are clearly stated;
- the action/s to be taken by whom and when is outlined;
- the process for feedback and review is detailed;
- where appropriate, choices are offered (e.g. dates/times for meetings) within policy guidelines;
- parents are invited to ask additional questions, highlight additional concerns, or to seek additional clarification of issues already raised.

#### **3.2 Face-to-face Meetings**

Some parents need particular support and encouragement to attend meetings. In some cases, parents find it too difficult either to attend meetings, or to speak within a formal group setting. In cases where such difficulties might be anticipated, e.g. where the parent has not attended previous meetings, it is helpful to make alternative, modified arrangements that will enable parents, or carers to make a positive contribution to their child's education.

Practical adaptations can be made, such as inviting the parent to provide a written, or taped submission for scribing, for inclusion in the meeting. Similarly, arrangements could be made for a one-to-one meeting, where the most appropriate member of staff could talk through the minutes of a meeting.

On request, local language translators may be available if required to maximise effective communication.

Everyone attending meetings should have their needs and perspectives acknowledged and met, as far as is possible. To achieve this, the following should be adhered to:

##### **3.2.3 Face-to-face Meeting A: i.e. teacher and parent/carer**

Make sure the environment is suitable to conduct a meeting in and that there are other members of staff readily available if needed.

### **3.2.4 Face-to-face Meeting B: Meetings with additional members of staff/outside professionals.**

The person chairing a meeting has a key role to play in ensuring that everyone attending has their needs and perspectives acknowledged and met, as far as is possible. To achieve this, meetings need to be carefully planned (see Preparing for Meetings Checklist in appendix A) and managed (see Guidelines for Managing Meetings in appendix A), in addition to which there needs to be the following in place to allow the meeting to be minuted appropriately:

- All notes subsequently put on iSams

#### **At the beginning of the meeting:**

Welcome everyone and state reason for meeting.

Chair introduces him or herself and minute-taker.

Chair requests everyone to introduce themselves along with their title.

Run through agenda of meeting and check whether there are any additional points to be added.

Agree a time frame - everyone is then clear as to the time they have to get their points across.

Some parents need particular support and encouragement to attend meetings. In some cases, parents find it too difficult either to attend meetings, or to speak within a formal group setting. In cases where such difficulties might be anticipated, e.g. where the parent has not attended previous meetings, it is helpful to make alternative, modified arrangements that will enable parents, or carers to make a positive contribution to their child's education.

Practical adaptations can be made, such as inviting the parent to provide a written, or taped submission for scribing, for inclusion in the meeting. Similarly, arrangements could be made for a one-to-one meeting, where the most appropriate member of staff could talk through the minutes of a meeting.

If requested, key school documents can be translated into the local language.

#### **Post-Communication Actions**

Actions agreed should be implemented within the agreed timeframe. Nominated staff should have responsibility for following through on particular aspects of the action plan and ensuring it is recorded on iSams.

### **4.0 Managing Meetings**

It is important to be flexible when scheduling meetings with parents. Some parents can only attend before or after school.

Therefore, meetings can take place when appropriate throughout the day although preferably not during teaching time.

Effective outcomes from meetings can be achieved by following good practice.

## **During the meeting**

Allow everyone to have a say and look out for signs of frustration on the part of those who might feel uncomfortable in such settings, or those who might become distressed/angry when discussing particular issues. If someone is finding the meeting difficult, use strategies to support the individual/s and the meeting, e.g. by acknowledging this, pacing the meeting and emphasising points of agreement.

School staff should be responsible for monitoring and managing their own feelings and behaviour (including non-verbal) during meetings.

Manage the time effectively. Try to be aware of where you are in terms of time and the issues that remain.

Summarise the key points as you move through the agenda, to assist the meeting and the minute-taker.

Ask for clarification about any point that is unclear. Where further investigation is necessary, an agreed time-scale for feedback will be established and must be adhered to.

## **Concluding the Meeting**

Check that everyone has had a chance to say what he or she wishes.

Clarify the actions that have come out of the meeting: who will be undertaking the actions and the timeframes involved.

Should there be a follow-up meeting, agree a date and time.

## **5.0 Use of ClassDojo – Localise for each individual school**

### Guidelines for Class Dojo

Class Dojo is used as both a behaviour rewards and sanctions system and a method of communication with parents.

When setting the behaviours across those year groups which have two classes, please meet with your stage partner to ensure you set the same behaviours for both classes in the same year group.

### **Use of Negative Points**

Negatives should have 1 with 0 points taken away which will work as a warning and a second with the same title taking 1 point away. This helps parents to see they were given a chance before they had a point removed. E.g. Calling out (negative), Calling out (-1)

To ensure it is accepted as a set behaviour you may need to add a full stop. Otherwise the system won't let you have 2 of the same behaviours listed.

### General Use of ClassDojo

You must share classes with specialist teachers and Spanish staff to ensure all have access to the same dojo account.

Points will be reset every Monday morning.

Points will convert into house points on Fridays for Years 1-6 (5 dojo points = 1 house point)

Photos are to be sent regularly to parents minimum 1 per day. Photos should vary to include different children and activities as much as possible. (5 - 10 per week is ideal). Subject specialist teacher aim to send a picture of 1 of the lessons with each class (once fortnightly is a minimum.)

Children should not be leaving at the end of the day on minus numbers. If they are they should have been sent to a member of SLT to discuss this.

#### Use of ClassDojo in EYFS Classes

All classes will use ClassDojo as a reward for positive behaviour. At first the totals will be reset at the end of each day. Once established as part of the class routine, targets will be set (e.g. 10 or 20 points) and when children reach these they will get a reward certificate.

#### Inviting Parents to Access ClassDojo

Parents can be invited to access their child's account by either an email link or a printed out code which they use with the Class Dojo app. Parents are to be invited to class dojo by Thursday 5th September 2019.

Children can also have their own logins to access their accounts and this can be used as a reward for reaching a set number of points such as 100. Access for children allows them to personalise their avatar. This is to the teacher's discretion, but must be consistent across year groups.

#### Communication with parents

This system may be used by parents to communicate to you and vice versa. You must ensure all parents are connected before whole class communication as otherwise a portion of the parent will not receive messages.

#### Use of Language on ClassDojo

Giving points without saying anything can be a useful behaviour management strategy as children hear the points sound and begin to get back on task.

It is useful to use the 0 point negatives as it demonstrates the frequency of poor behaviour from more challenging children.

Award as many points as possible at the beginning of the day to ensure you have leeway when taking points away.

Review class behaviour on the pie charts - very motivating as a class and good real life use of charts.

Use both the classroom iPad and the computer version as necessary. It can be useful to use in corridors on the iPad and at playtimes or outdoor lessons.

### **6.0 The use of Social Media**

It is not permitted to discuss, by either parents or teachers, a child (other than your own) on any form of Social Media e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook. Doing so is a personal data breach against GDPR and, where there is sufficient evidence, school action will be taken.

Staff are not permitted to communicate with parents or pupils via any form of social media (such as Facebook) or accept them as their “friends”. This is part of our safeguarding procedures to protect students and staff.

This does not apply to any of the school’s own Facebook pages or school-approved blogs, which will be monitored appropriately and are intended to facilitate communication with all stakeholders and supporters of the school.

Include section on guidelines if parent hears anything that they shouldn’t

We encourage parents to come in and discuss anything that affects them or their child with their class teacher in the first instance.

### **7.0 Frequency of Communication**

Members of staff should consider the frequency of communication with parents especially at particular times of the year, when a higher volume of emails are being distributed. Teachers should be mindful of the number of emails being sent and consider what form, frequency and content of communication is necessary.

All teachers should be aware of any generic emails sent out to parents of their class and all teachers should receive a copy of these emails.

Heads of Department and Senior Leadership Teams must approve emails before they are sent to multiple parents.

Native speakers must proof-read/edit any official, written communications, in a language other than English, sent to parents and confirm with teacher before sending.

No emails should be sent between 18:00 and 8:00am on weekdays and no emails should be sent on weekends unless deemed necessary by the senior leadership team.

### **8.0 Written Local Language Standards**

All communication in local language should be positive, courteous and jargon-free.

Communication must address parents in the most formal manner e.g. ‘usted’ instead of ‘tú’, and emails and letters start in an appropriate manner e.g. ‘Dear/Good Afternoon Parents/Carers’, and that they are signed off ‘Kind Regards’.

If teachers require support in translating, this should be sought through the appropriate member of staff.

When responding to Parent’s emails, teachers should use an appropriate tone, and remember to maintain professionalism.

### **9.0 Guideline to drawing up minutes**

Minutes should be a succinct, factual record of a meeting uploaded onto iSams. They should include issues that are disputed or points of disagreement, and clearly set out the agreed actions.

#### **The following should be included in minutes:**

Date and time of meeting;

Those present and titles;

Record accurately and succinctly the main points of the meeting (as agreed at the time) and attribute them appropriately;

Record all actions agreed, person responsible for following up and time frame involved;

Record date, time and venue of any further meetings.

Arrangements should be made for people with limited English language or literacy skills to access the minutes

### **10.0 Managing Difficulties**

If the meeting is likely to be highly charged or contentious, give advice on ‘Code of Conduct’ for all to adhere to

- Everyone should be courteous to each other;
- Everyone should be allowed to have their say in an uninterrupted way.

Should this not be the case, the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the school’s policy, e.g. the person behaving discourteously will be given the opportunity to take time out to calm down.

If reports/documents are to be discussed, check that everyone has had sight of them. If not, allow time for them to be read during the meeting. Check if attendees are happy for the extra time to be added to the meeting. If this is not possible, give information and reassurance about how this additional task will be time-managed.

The aims of any alteration to routine communications should be made clear to parents and carers. Take account of the parent’s feelings, competing needs and concerns. If necessary, consider where else they could access support.

Avoid responding in the moment to emotional parental displays. Draw on the school’s policies to help manage difficult interactions;

Be familiar with the laws and policies (e.g. in relation to meeting children's needs and health and safety) that govern educational decision-making and how these guide professional decision-making and behaviour;

All staff should bear in mind the pressures a parent may be under because of a child's needs (SEN, EAL). Professionals should make efforts to ensure effective communication with parents.

Do not try to avoid speaking to, or meeting with, a parent who is being difficult, without first seeking advice, as this is likely to create additional demands for communication, or perceived cause for complaint; ask for support from a senior member of staff.

If at any point during the meeting, communication breaks down, resulting in ineffective dialogue or volatile, abusive or threatening behaviour, it is at the discretion of the staff member to end the meeting. Following this, staff members must follow-up with the senior leadership team to discuss further actions.

Any action and/or behaviour deemed inappropriate by either a parent or staff member will be investigated further.

Ensure that the systems in place in school enable parents to receive consistent messages and/or information. Keep and make effective use of written records.

Seek access to supervision and support to minimise and relieve stress created by working with parents who are being challenging.

We recognise that young people 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 they participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from health professionals and other specialists.

### **11.0 Dealing with Complaints**

In the event of a parent or carer making a complaint, make a detailed, factual record (see Complaint Record). Check whether any actions that were agreed have been carried out. Clarify whether this is part of what the parent perceives is an ongoing problem, or whether it is a new problem.

If the parent indicates that the complaint is related to an ongoing issue, pinpoint which aspect is creating the cause for complaint. Check this against the records. If it appears from the records that the issue about which the complaint has been made has been addressed, communicate this clearly to the parent.

Ask the parent what action he, or she, would find helpful, e.g. an apology, or reassurance that the situation causing concern will be handled differently in the future. If a meeting is agreed, make use of the meeting guidance contained in the policy.

King's College schools have a formal complaint procedure. It is hoped that this is a last resort and that staff and senior leaders will do everything possible to avoid written formal complaints.

<b><u>Created and Reviewed by :</u></b>	<b><u>Policy Category: school</u></b>
<u>Dawn Akyurek March 2018</u>	
<u>Dawn Akyurek August 2019</u>	
<b><u>Approved by KGB</u></b>	<b><u>Next Review:August 2020</u></b>
<u>Sep 2017</u>	

Aim/s of meeting? – e.g. questions to answer, issues/concerns to address, disagreements to resolve	- Agenda devised.
Who should attend? Consider the contribution and requirements of those suggested to attend the planned meeting e.g. providing advice, information or support. What will happen if a key person sends apologies, or has to cancel?	- Attendance list decided - Support professionals contacted
When will the meeting be held?	- Date and time of meeting identified
Where will the meeting be held? Consider size, location and layout. Does it comply with H&S and accessibility guidelines? Are confidentiality and comfort assured?	- Appropriate venue identified
How long will be needed for the meeting, in view of the number and complexity of the issues, length of agenda and number of people attending?	- Meeting room secured
What information needs to be gathered and from whom?	- Relevant information requested. - Relevant information received.
What information needs to be distributed, and to whom, ahead of the meeting? Who will coordinate this and monitor this?	- Letter/email sent to all on attendance list inviting them to meeting
Are written reports from professionals needed?	- Letter/s requesting reports are sent
Have reports been received? Do reports contain personal or biased views, or technical jargon?	- Report/s received on time - Non-receipt of report/s followed-up

<p>Are they received in time to be posted out?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report/s may be inappropriate/need action before distribution</li> </ul>
<p>Have reports been distributed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reports sent with accompanying letter/email</li> </ul>
<p>Is the meeting likely to need a dedicated minute-taker?          Has someone been identified to take minutes?          Has the minute-taker seen the guidelines for taking minutes?          Is the minute-taker familiar with the agenda?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Person identified to take minutes</li> <li>- Person is available and has agreed to take minutes</li> <li>- Minute-taker has seen guidelines</li> </ul>

**Appendix A: When planning a meeting:**

**On the day of the meeting:**

Is the meeting room set up?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sufficient seating</li><li>- Acceptable temperature</li><li>- Action taken to prevent interruptions</li><li>- Meeting arranged to facilitate positive communication e.g. chairs at same height and facing each other</li></ul>
Would it be helpful to distribute agenda? Have any questions/concerns raised in advance by attendees been included in the agenda?	
Have any late reports/documents to share been distributed?	
Is the meeting likely to be highly charged or very contentious?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ensure familiarity with meeting 'Code of Conduct'</li></ul>

**Following the meeting**

Have the minutes been recorded on iSams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Minutes recorded on iSams</li></ul>
Have the points agreed in the meeting been actioned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Clear in minutes</li></ul>
Have non-attenders who have not given apologies been contacted? Has a note been made of any non-attenders with reasons? Does this information need to be taken into account when planning future meetings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Contact made</li><li>- Note added to school records</li></ul>

**Appendix B: Post-meeting Action Required**

**Name of Child:**

**Date of Meeting:**

<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>By Date</b>	<b>Resulting Actions</b>

**Appendix C: Record of Communication with Parent**

Date:

Time:

Duration:

Discussion Between:

Discussion Initiated by:

Purpose of Discussion:

Telephone/Face-to-face

**Main Points Discussed:**

- 
  
- 
  
- 

Agreed Actions	By Whom?	When and how to review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li></ul>		

Record Completed by:

Date completed:

Copy of record to Parents/School File

Date sent to Parents:

**Appendix D: Form to Send to Parents in Preparation for Meeting**

Dear (parent’s name),

We are planning to hold a meeting on (Date and time) to discuss \_\_\_\_\_. We have set aside \_\_\_\_\_ (minutes/hours) for the meeting. A decision to hold a meeting was taken because \_\_\_\_\_. You are welcome to invite your partner, family member or friend to attend with you.

We have invited (names of professional/s) to attend the meeting.

To help ensure that the meeting fully considers all the relevant issues, we would be grateful if you could complete this form and return it to school.

Yours Sincerely,

(Name & date)

---

**Meeting Agenda Return Slip**

**Childs Name:**

**Date of Meeting:**

I would like those attending to know:

I would like to make sure that there is time to discuss:

I would like the following question/s to be answered:

## Appendix E: Letter to Professional/s ahead of Meeting

Dear (name),

Re: (name of child)

I am writing to request your involvement at a meeting being held on (date) at (name of school). The aim of the meeting is to (reason - e.g., set up a PSP). The decision to call a meeting has been taken because (reason for calling meeting).

In view of the fact that you have (reason for requesting attendance – e.g. been providing regular support to (child's name) your attendance at the meeting is requested/your attendance at the meeting is considered essential.

### **If a report is being requested:**

As (reason for requesting report e.g. this is the PSP meeting for (name of child) it would be helpful to have a written report from you, \* which (reason e.g. summarises his/her progress + time e.g. this half-term/since you began offering support). We would be grateful if your report could be forwarded to school by (date required), as this will allow time for reports to be circulated to those attending in preparation for the meeting.

*\*Please see attached sheet outlining the types of comments that experience indicates can be helpful.*

For your information, the following people have also been invited to attend the meeting: (list).

It is anticipated that we will need to address the following questions: (list, e.g. what additional support could the school/your service offer the child as School Action? / Who else might become involved at this stage?).

If, on the basis of your knowledge of (child's name), you can either recommend any further questions that should be added to the meeting agenda for discussion, or, suggest any additional professionals who should be invited to attend, then please notify me.

In the event of your being unable to attend the meeting, I would be grateful if you could inform the school by (date/as soon as possible).

Yours Sincerely,

(name and date)

## **Appendix F: Guidelines for Professional Reports**

Professionals' reports can be produced to fulfil a number of functions. This can make them difficult to interpret at times; particularly when, which is often the case, there is more than one agency involved in supporting a particular child. The confusion that results, either from unclear and/or conflicting assessments, or advice, can create anxiety both for parents and education practitioners, and can, at times, undermine potentially helpful action and partnership working.

Evidence indicates that confusion can be minimised where a) technical terms are explained e.g. what is meant by dyslexia, bright, above average b) opinions are clearly evidenced-based and, where this is not the case, the limitations of the opinions are clearly stated, e.g. the fact that they are based on limited information, or a lack of knowledge about things such as the child's progress or provision and c) a complete description of the assessment/s and findings upon which recommendations for a particular course of action are being made are included in the report. This is particularly important in situations where the course of action being recommended might be anticipated to be notably different to that being recommended by other professionals working with the particular child, or where the research evidence, more generally, would point to a different course of action being preferable.

Below are some examples, taken from professionals' reports that highlight the types of conclusions and recommendations that have been found to be unhelpful, for one or more of the reasons outlined above.

### **Assessment Statements:**

- “The Bangor Dyslexia Test shows clear evidence of dyslexia” (6/10).
- Overall, X exhibits a classic dyslexic profile, with tests of general ability scoring significantly higher than tests of literacy attainments.
- X emerged from present testing as a child of average abilities overall in verbal reasoning areas, but of bright potential.
- In view of X's superior level of general intellectual ability, his attainments in basic skills, may be expected to be at similar levels.
- Further investigation is needed into additional possible inhibitors of learning.
- X's receptive vocabulary score was 101, giving an age equivalent of 9.2yrs, and a range of 8.6 – 9.10 years. This score confirms his parents' feeling about him that he is of average ability.
- Although the latter (literacy attainment) are around age level, general ability is at the “bright” level.
- This profile of weak areas is consistent with a diagnosis of Dyslexia, which is constitutional in origin.

- During the lesson, X looked as though he was functioning at least two years behind his chronological age.

- X appears to be of normal intellect.

**Action Advice:**

- X would benefit from receiving specialist, individual tuition each week.

- X will need an extra time concession of 25% in examinations in his school career... (pupil aged 9 yrs.).

- It will also be worth pressing them (school) to arrange a statement for X.

- Among items of equipment and software considered to be potentially valuable in helping X to develop basic skills ..... are the use of a personal computer and printer.

- X's attitude to work was impressive throughout my assessment today, revealing tenacious achievement motivation that augurs well for future academic learning, hopefully at a grammar school.

- X's parents should continue with private tuition at the XXXX Centre in XXXX.

- X will require individual teaching on a one-to-one basis for three lessons a week from an experienced teacher who has undertaken a training such as the OCR Diploma in SpLD or who holds an AMBDA qualification, or the equivalent.

- It is difficult to see how X has survived this long in a mainstream school without a statement.

**Appendix G: Letter to Professional Sending Reports for Meeting**

Dear (name),

Re: (Child's name and date of birth)

As you know, a meeting is being held at school on (Date) to discuss \_\_\_\_\_.

(Name of professional/s) has prepared a report for the meeting, a copy of which is enclosed.

We look forward to seeing you on (date and time)

Yours Sincerely,

(name and date)

Encs.

## **Appendix H: Complaint Form**

### **Personal Information**

**Your Name:**

**Pupil's name and class:**

**Your relationship to the pupil:**

### **Complaint Details**

**Please give details of your complaint:**

**When did the issue/s about which you are complaining first arise?**

### **Previous Action**

**What steps, if any, have you taken to try and resolve the issue/s about which you are complaining?**

**With whom did you raise the concerns?**

**What actions were taken?**

**If action was taken, what effect did it have?**

**Moving Forward**

**What actions, or actions, do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**