



COMMUNICATION POLICY

Priestley Smith Specialist VI School

July 2026

Policy review date: July 2027

Policy status: Non Statutory

Responsible member of SLT: Joanna Garvey Headteacher

Priestley Smith School is committed to the rights of the child as outlined in the UN Convention and is working towards Rights Respecting Schools Gold award. This belief influences everything the school does and impacts upon all our policies.

Article 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 23 (children with a disability) A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

We believe that clear, open communication within the school and between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Gives clear concise information between staff for the wellbeing of the children
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- 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 within school and with parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- Helping parents/carers 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 within school and with parents/ carers 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 within school and from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core school hours 8.30am and 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 Parents / carers

Parents 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
- Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the school

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

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours **8.30 am -3.30 pm** or during school holidays.

We aim for communication between home and school to be respectful, constructive and focused on each child's best interests. We will listen to concerns and explain the next steps. If a concern remains unresolved, parents and carers can use the school's Compliments and Complaints Policy.

3. HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The sections below explain how we keep parents up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in school. Parents/ carers should provide an up to date email address and 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

Staff may use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming school events
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests

3.2 Dojo messages

Staff will text parents using dojo about:

- Payments
- School surveys or consultations
- Upcoming school events
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

3.3 School calendar

Our school website www.priestleysmith.com includes a full school calendar for the school year (see diary of events).

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for pupils to bring in special items or materials).

Any such event will be included in the school calendar.

3.4 Phone calls

- Parents/carers should phone school on each day of absence before 8.30 am and discuss return to school in line with the absence policy
- Staff will phone home if a child is absent or safeguarding checks
- Staff may phone home to discuss outcomes, progress or concerns following mentor meetings
- Staff may phone home with concerns about behaviour
- It may be necessary to phone home for conversations regarding referrals to other professionals

3.5 Letters

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our termly update and links to newsletter

3.6 Homework books/school planners

- Home / school books will be used to communicate daily issues and homework set

3.7 Reports

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

- A report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance
- A report on Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 SATs tests or notification of withdrawal
- A report on the results of public examinations
- Information about vocational qualifications gained (or credits gained towards these)

We also arrange regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress

3.8 Meetings

We hold one parents' evening per year. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

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

Annual EHCP meetings where parents/ carers and other professionals are asked to attend to address additional needs and update their EHCP

3.9 School website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, www.priestleysmith.com including:

- School times and term dates
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information

3.10 Home-school communications app

- Priestley Smith School uses an app called Dojo to send messages home.

3.11 WhatsApp and text messages

- Staff may send text messages or WhatsApp messages in using the school phone ONLY where contact with parents is difficult (for example specific medical needs or language barriers where translation may be required) All text messages and exports from WhatsApp will be available for scrutiny on request. **They are NOT permitted to use their own phone for this purpose**

3.12 Class Dojo and Tapestry

- Staff and parents/ carers can communicate with each other via Class Dojo and see their child's progress on Tapestry.

4. HOW PARENTS AND CARERS CAN COMMUNICATE WITH THE SCHOOL

Parents 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

Parents should always email the school, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 3 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school.

Family Connect

Parents and carers can email familyconnect@priestley.bham.sch.uk with non-urgent questions or concerns about their child.

Emails will be directed to the appropriate member of staff. Where helpful, the school may arrange for one named member of staff to coordinate communication with a family.

We can also agree an individual communication plan with a family where this would help make communication clearer and more manageable.

Where it would be helpful, we will work with parents and carers to agree a clear way of keeping in touch. An individual communication plan may identify a named member of staff, preferred contact methods and suitable arrangements for regular updates. This does not replace the urgent contact arrangements described below.

4.2 Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should call the school office 0121 325 3900 and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 3 working days.

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 parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 5 days of your request.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues
- Medical issues and any resulting changed appointments

For more general enquiries, please call the school office.

Staff regularly call parents /carers to talk about their child's attainment and progress, parents / are welcome to use these calls to ask questions or raise concerns as appropriate.

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see appendix 1), or call the school to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request.

While teachers are available at the beginning or end of the school day if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

4.4 WhatsApp and text messages

- Staff should use the staff phone **ONLY** to WhatsApp parents and carers. Parents may send Dojo messages in some circumstances where contact with parents is difficult (for example specific medical needs or language barriers where translation may be required) All Dojo messages and exports will be available for scrutiny on request.

For routine enquiries, please use the school email address, Family Connect or the school office. Where alternative messaging is agreed because of a family's circumstances, the school will explain which school-managed communication method to use. Staff do not use personal mobile phones to communicate with parents and carers.

- The Specialist Outreach team have work mobile phones which should be available for scrutiny on request. Communications using these devices should not be deleted.

5. INCLUSION

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

We can make whole-school announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) in English and these are available on request in different languages

Parents 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.

Parents and carers can also request information in accessible formats, including formats suitable for people with visual impairments. Please contact the school office to discuss the format or communication method that works best for you.

We recognise that some parents and carers may need additional help with written communication. Where appropriate, we can provide a simple email form, arrange a telephone conversation or agree other suitable ways to communicate.

6. COMMUNICATION WITHIN SCHOOL

6.1 Staff email

- Staff use email to communicate day to day issues, communications from other professionals and information sharing.
- If emails are sent outside of working hours there is no obligation to respond until the following day

6.2 WhatsApp and text messages

- Staff are not permitted to use WhatsApp to communicate with colleagues regarding work medical or personal needs

6.3 Radios

- Staff use radios to communicate urgent messages to ensure children get the best possible care and support. Radio traffic should be kept to a minimum and no personal details should be disclosed over the radio.

7. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Parent / carer code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct
- Compliments and Complaints
- Staff wellbeing

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 on 0121 325 3900 or enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk
- 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
- **Family Connect - For non-urgent questions or concerns about your child, you can email: familyconnect@priestley.bham.sch.uk We will make sure your email reaches the appropriate member of staff.**
- **If your concern is urgent, particularly if it involves safeguarding, welfare or medical needs, please telephone the school on 0121 325 3900.**

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

www.priestleysmith.com

We try to respond to all emails within 3 days.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher in primary or subject teacher in secondary on Dojo or email
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	0121 325 3900 familyconnect@priestley.bham.sch.uk
Payments	0121 325 3900 enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk
School trips	0121 325 3900 enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk Or the relevant staff member running the trip
Uniform/lost and found	0121 325 3900 enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, call: 0121 325 3900 If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact Mrs Joanna Garvey j.garvey@priestley.bham.sch.uk
Bullying and behaviour	Your child's class teacher in primary or form teacher in secondary. Or Mrs E.Clabon DHT, Mr R. Foord AHT
School events/the school calendar	School website www.priestley.bham.sch.uk
Governing board	Chair of Governors, Mrs A Bearfield, C/O Priestley Smith School Beeches Road Great Barr B42 2PY Or email enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk
Catering/meals	0121 325 3900 enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy.

This can be found on the website, under "Our School" and "Policies"