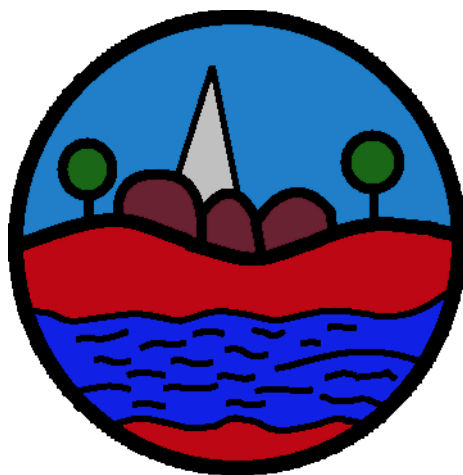


Rockcliffe CE School



Communications Policy

February 2015

At Rockcliffe CE School, we believe that good communication between school and the home is essential. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve, and how they can help.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with parents and the wider community. Effective communications enable 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.

These are our principles:

- Communicating with stakeholders, particularly parents, is a core part of what we do, not an afterthought.
- We will always try to share as much information as possible about any issue.
- If we cannot share information we will explain why.
- We will endeavour to work as transparently as possible by offering clear explanations for major decisions.
- We will communicate in a timely fashion and try to avoid parents receiving information about the school from other sources first.
- Where information relating to the school is available in the public domain, we will direct people to it.
- We acknowledge that some information is of a confidential nature and will always respect that confidentiality.

Communication Strategies

We communicate with parents through a range of different strategies. Some of our communications are the result of a statutory requirement; others reflect what we believe is important to our school:

Talking with staff

Class Teachers are always available for a 'quick word' at the start or end of the day (from 8.30 to 8.45am). However, if you need to talk with the class teacher in more detail, please make an appointment for a telephone conversation or a meeting in person, as talking at length in the playground before or after school is difficult for the teacher and the children.

Many parental queries and concerns can be dealt with at this time. It is also possible to make appointments through the school office.

Staff Communication with parents

At the beginning of each year all teachers will share a summary of their curriculum plans. This enables parents to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with their child at home. These are also made available on the school's website.

Teachers regularly provide further information throughout the school year.

Meetings

There are a number of meetings through the term which provide opportunities to discuss current developments in the school:

- New parents - we hold a meeting for new parents each July.
- Year 6 journey and other residential trips – where a major trip is taking place, such as the Residential trips, the visit leaders will organise a meeting for parents well in advance to provide detailed information about all aspects of the trip.
- Parents Evenings in October/November and February/March each year.

Website

The school website <http://www.rockcliffe.cumbria.sch.uk> is regularly updated with information.

School prospectus

This is a source of information on many issues including uniform, attendance and admissions. It can found on the website.

Public access documents

These are available on the school website.

Email and Text Messaging

The school makes use of both email and text messaging. Details can be found later in this document.

School to Home Communication

Rockcliffe School uses a range of methods of communication to inform you about your child and school events. Any communication is evaluated to assess how time critical it is and a suitable method of communication is then selected. The following methods are shown from least critical to critical.

1. **School website and Twitter** – Information posted here is non-critical and gives warning of changes in the months ahead.
Examples: School Policies, Term dates for future school years, Admission arrangements. School Prospectus, Information from selected third parties.
2. **Email** – we use email to inform parents in advance of non-critical items which do not require a letter. We are also sending duplicate emails along with Letters and Printed Communications to avoid the lost letter syndrome. Parents should ensure that they check their email regularly and keep the school informed if their email addresses changes.
Examples: Themes for Friday assemblies, information from third parties which may be relevant or for reminders about events previously sent out by letter.
3. **Letters and Printed Communication** – Rockcliffe CE School uses letters and other forms of printed communication. We will always use a letter or similar when a response is required by the school. Letters are sent home with the children at the end of the day. We occasionally send letters by post – this though is the exception. *Time critical letters are not sent by post.*
Examples: Permission to attend an event outside the locality or for anything that requires a voluntary donation, After-school clubs, Reports to Parents, Parents Evenings.
4. **Text Messaging** – this is used to inform parents at shorter notice or changes to events. We will usually notify the first contact but, on occasion, will text both first and second contacts. As policy we do not use text after midday on any day for anything that is happening in school time with the exception of passing on information only. Sometimes, but not always, information will also be sent by letter the following day.
Examples: reminders about events after a holiday, a more definite return time of a bus from a trip or event, school closure information before the start of the school day, a request to contact school.
5. **Telephone** – the school keeps an up to date list of phone numbers that are used to contact parents with time critical information. This tends to be for illness or short notice events. Due to the number of children in school we cannot ring all parents unless it is a critical change.
Examples: Information about an ill child, urgent clarification about an event, request to bring in an item of forgotten school equipment, a request for a parent to make an appointment with a member of staff.

Home to School Communication

Parents are able to communicate with school in the following ways.

- 1. By telephone.** Parents can phone the school on 01228 674631. We expect parents to tell us when their child is absent on the first morning of absence – messages can be left before the office is manned on the answerphone. Parents can also call in the morning to tell us about changes for collecting children after school. Unfortunately the office is not manned each afternoon so please do not leave urgent messages after 12.30pm. Mrs. Delaney is also available for advice and information each morning and on selected afternoons.
- 2. By return slip.** Parents can use return slips from written communications to provide consent for events or inform the school of other information.
- 3. By letter or email in advance.** You can email the school in advance or write to us requesting information. Unfortunately email is not acceptable to inform us of absences though. Emails can be sent to admin@rockcliffe.cumbria.sch.uk. Please allow two working days for a response.
- 4. In person.** You can speak to a member of between 8.30am and 8.45am each morning or after school. It is much easier if you can make an appointment though so that staff can avoid clashes with tasks such as bus duty or assemblies. After 8.45am it is not possible to see staff members, as they will be teaching.

Emergency Contact Details

Parents are required to inform the school of any changes to emergency contact numbers and email addresses. We use these to contact parents in an emergency. In a medical emergency the Head Teacher or designated deputy will act in loco-parentis should we not be able to contact anyone from the emergency numbers provided.

If we do not hold the correct contact details then the school cannot be responsible for any missed communication.

School Closures

If the school is to be closed for any reason then parents will be notified by text to both contacts 1 and 2. The closure will also be notified to the County Council through the school closure system on the secure portal, this updates the County Council website automatically.

Radio Cumbria and CFM are informed of closure by the County Council but if time allows a member of staff will confirm this with both radio stations. ***Parents should be aware that the primary method of informing them of a closure will be a text message followed by notification on the County Council website.***

School and the Governing Body

Communications to Governors are conducted through email. Copies of documents and agendas for meetings are sent in advance. At meetings copies of information are available digitally.

Confidential materials are kept as paper only copies and are not shared digitally.

The Clerk and Chair of Governors are provided with secure email addresses. Other Governors are able to have a secure email address on request.