

Durham Dales Partnership

Butterknowle, Frosterley, Hamsterley,
St John's Chapel, Wearhead & Woodland
Primary Schools



Home-school Communications Policy

Written:	June 2025
Reviewed:	Autumn 2026 or as procedures change

1. Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication 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
- 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 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

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents 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 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 8:30-4:30 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.

A copy of the Staff Acceptable Use policy 2025 and Staff Code of Conduct are available to view on office 365 in *DDP staff -staff information and policies*

2.3 Parents

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
- Responding 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 8:30-4:30 or during school holidays.

A copy of our parent code of conduct can be viewed on our website

www.durhamdalespartnership.co.uk

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 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 Home-school communications apps – Weduc (Hamsterley, St John's Chapel & Wearhead), Dojo (Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland)

We use Weduc or Dojo to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Weekly newsletters
- Upcoming school events
- After school club provision
- Class activities or teacher requests
- Updates to ParentPay accounts
- Scheduled school closures (for example, for staff training days)
- School surveys or consultations
- Short-notice changes to the school day
- Emergency school closures (for instance, due to bad weather)

3.2 Weduc and Dojo messages

We will message parents via Weduc or Dojo about:

- Pupil specific queries and feedback e.g. non-return of completed consent forms
- ParentPay balance queries

3.3 School calendar

Our weekly newsletter includes a full school calendar for the term and events are also published on our Weduc or Dojo calendar and Federation website

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

Staff will call parents and carers if children are absent from school and no explanation for absence has been received by 9:15am on the first day of absence.

Staff may also telephone parents if children are unwell or have sustained an injury or if concerns have arisen regarding your child's behaviour or mental wellbeing.

3.5 Letters

We send the following letters home:

- Consent forms
- SEND support plans
- Accident reports
- Red card letters where poor behaviour choices have led to consequences
- Letters from secondary schools advertising open days
- We may also send home letters or information from third-party organisations, such as the NHS, that are relevant to your child's health, wellbeing, or education

3.6 Home-school record books

All pupils have a home-school record book from Reception onwards. This book is used to record children's progress in reading and to log homework tasks such as weekly spellings. It is intended as a two-way communication between staff and parents and can include messages about a pupil's day, lost equipment etc. Older pupils are encouraged to make their own entries in this book to help them prepare for secondary school and taking responsibility for their own equipment and homework.

3.7 Reports

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

- An end-of-year report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance
- A report on EYFS outcomes, Year 1 Phonics Screen, Year 4 multiplication check and KS2 SATs tests

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

3.8 Meetings

We hold a parents' evening in the Autumn and Spring terms. 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.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, will also receive a termly appointment to review support plans to address these additional needs.

3.9 School website

Key information about the school is posted on our website, including:

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about before and after-school provision

Parents should check the website before contacting the school.

3.10 Facebook

We use our Facebook account to promote pupil achievements, subject information and generic educational information. This can be found on our Durham Dales Partnership page.

4. How parents and carers can communicate with the school

Teachers want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so. However, the majority of teachers' time is taken up teaching and preparing for lessons. Teachers' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, and they may be unable to respond to you on the day a query is made. We have also agreed with staff that there is no expectation to respond to queries during their personal time.

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, Weduc or Dojo

Communication by email, Weduc (Hamsterley, St John's Chapel and Wearhead) or Dojo (Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland) are the preferred method for **non-urgent** matters in the first instance. We aim to acknowledge all messages or emails

within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days.

Please note:

Staff monitor their Weduc or Dojo accounts periodically throughout the day but do not have access to them whilst teaching. Therefore, if it is essential that your message is received as soon as possible, e.g. for last-minute change in collection arrangements, parents should telephone the school office.

4.2 Telephone Call

If a query or concern is **urgent**, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the school. In the event that there is no-one available to answer the telephone, parents should email the school office, as the co-Headteachers have access to these accounts at all times.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Change in collection arrangements for your child that day
- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

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

5. Monitoring and review

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every annually or as procedures change.

The policy will be approved by the governing board.

7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Parent code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct

➤ Complaints

1: school contact list

Who should I contact?

School office telephone numbers and email addresses:

Butterknowle 01388 718369 p2413.admin@durhamlearning.net

Frosterley 01388 528358 p2319.admin@durhamlearning.net

Hamsterley 01388 488279 2301.admin@durhamlearning.net

St John's Chapel 01388 537332 p2322.admin@durhamlearning.net

Wearhead 01388 537265 p2324.admin@durhamlearning.net

Woodland 01388 718271 p2428.admin@durhamlearning.net

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's class teacher
My child's wellbeing	Your child's class teacher
Payments	School office
School trips	Your child's class teacher
Uniform/lost and found	Your child's class teacher
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence, contact the school office. If you want to request approval for term-time absence, contact the school office
Bullying and behaviour	Your child's class teacher in the first instance, then if you remain concerned: Mrs Sarah Hodgkinson, Co-Executive Headteacher s.hodgkinson@durhamdalespartnership.co.uk Mr Richard Sains, Co-Executive Headteacher r.sains@durhamdalespartnership.co.uk

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
School events/the school calendar	School office
Special educational needs (SEN)	The SENCO in your child's school (see website for details) or Mr Richard Sains, Co-Executive Headteacher r.sains@durhamdalespartnership.co.uk
Safeguarding concerns	Mrs Sarah Hodgkinson, Co-Executive Headteacher (Mon-Wed) s.hodgkinson@durhamdalespartnership.co.uk or Mr Richard Sains, Co-Executive Headteacher r.sains@durhamdalespartnership.co.uk
Before and after-school clubs	School office
Catering/meals	School office

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy, which can be found on our federation website:

www.durhamdalespartnership.co.uk