

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Effective Communication Policy
<b>Function:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out to all members of the Compass School community the expected protocols around communication, and how to maintain and strengthen positive relationships between the school and external stakeholders.
<b>Status:</b>	Non-statutory
<b>Audience:</b>	All staff, parents, and other external stakeholders
<b>Ownership/ Implementation:</b>	Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented.
<b>Implementation Date:</b>	October 2016
<b>Review period:</b>	Annually
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	October 2016

# Effective Communication Policy

## 1. Rationale

At Compass School Southwark we believe that effective communication both within and outside of our school community is crucial in ensuring that **everyone in the Compass School community confidently reaches the destination to which they aspire.**

We are committed to being open, accessible and approachable to all stakeholders who have an interest in the school (including students, parents/carers, governors, the Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies, etc), and will actively encourage all stakeholders to behave in a similar manner.

We strongly believe that our students achieve more when everyone works together, when all stakeholders are clear on what the school is trying to achieve, and how it intends to achieve it. This becomes ever more important as the school grows.

The various forms of communication referred to in this policy include:

- **Verbal** - through meetings or telephone
- **Written** - through letters, notes in diaries, and publications to parents
- **Electronic** - through emails and text messages
- **Presentational** - through parents' and presentation evenings
- **Via an intermediary** - on occasions where this is most appropriate
- **Through consultation** - where stakeholder input is sought on strategic school issues

## 2. Aims of the policy

As the size of the school grows, it becomes increasingly important that we clarify the parameters within which we communicate with all stakeholders via each of forms of communication set out above. It is no longer possible to communicate effectively with parents with a student community of 300 students and 50 staff, as it was when our school community was just 36 students and 8 staff. We hope that this ensures consistency of approach, and satisfies the requirements of each of our stakeholders. In particular, we wish to ensure that communication with students, and parents/carers is effective and clear.

This policy also aims to ensure that we avoid bias, stereotyping, or any other form of discrimination. We recognise and celebrate the contributions made by all members of our community, where these contributions are made with respect and integrity, one of our core values.

All communications by and between Compass School staff should:

- Keep staff, students, parents/carers, governors and the wider community well informed
- Be honest, open, ethical and professional
- Use jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- Be carried out within an agreed timeframe
- Use the method most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience
- Provide interpreters and support for parents or students with SEND, when appropriate

**This policy focuses on the communication between the school and parents/carers.**

### 3. Types of communication with parents and carers

#### Verbal

- **Telephone** – Teachers and support staff may call parents/carers on the telephone to discuss specific concerns or to pass on praise and celebrate success. School staff are expected to communicate regularly with parents/carers in this way. Parents are asked to ensure that the school has up to date contact information so that we are able to contact them readily.
- **Meetings (at school's request)** – Teachers and support staff may request that parents/carers attend the school for a face to face meeting. When this is requested, parents must make every effort to attend at an agreed time. Failure to do so could result in the student being restricted from participating in particular school activities, and in the most serious cases, could lead to referral to the Local Authority Early Help Service where an Education Welfare Officer may become involved.
- **Meetings (at parent's request)** – Parents may also request to meet with staff at the school. Any request for a face to face meeting with a member of staff needs to be made with the school's reception in person or on the telephone. If you attend the school without an appointment you will not be able to meet with a member of staff.

#### Written

- **Home-school agreement** – Our home-school agreement explains the school's responsibilities towards our students, sets out the responsibilities of parents, and makes clear our expectations of students within our community. Parents/carers and students are asked to read and sign this agreement, at the start of each academic year in the student diary.
- **Parent Handbook** – This is the key source of information for parents/carers, and is available in hard copy (on request) and on the school website. All parents/carers are issued with a parent handbook when their child joins Compass School Southwark.
- **Student diary** – It is expected that a weekly communication between parents/carers and Learning Family Tutors takes place via the student diary. Heads of House monitor that this is taking place. Parents/carers can also inform the school of absences/medical appointments through the forms in the back of the diary.
- **Letters to students/parents/carers** – Letters sent on behalf of the school will always use Standard English, use inclusive and accessible language, and be on Compass School Southwark headed paper. **It is important to note that often letters are given to students by hand, to take home to parents. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that these letters reach home.** Letters are also posted on the school website, for reference.
- **"Our Journey" newsletter** – Each half term the school publishes a newsletter which celebrates the successes and range of events that our students have experienced during the term. Articles are written by both staff and students. All students receive a paper copy of the newsletter to take home, and an electronic copy is published on our website via [issuu.com/compassschoolsouthwarkse16](https://issuu.com/compassschoolsouthwarkse16).
- **Progress reports** – Each half term all students receive a progress report, which sets out their attitude to learning and provides an update on their progress and attainment in each subject. In December, March and June/July a more detailed report is provided. Full details of our reporting schedule can be found in our *Assessment and Reporting Policy* on the school website.

#### Electronic

- **School Website** – The school website contains up to date information on the school term dates and calendar, any school closure information, all relevant school policies and Ofsted reports, news items and blogs on school events and activities, and a historical record of all letters posted home. The school website also links to the school's twitter feed.

- **Weekly email bulletin** – From January 2017, a weekly email bulletin to parents will inform them of upcoming events and activities, as well as important notices that parents should be aware of.
- **Text messages** – The school office may send text message reminders to individual parents, particularly regarding student absences. Text messages will also be sent in the case of an emergency or sudden incident affecting the school.
- **Twitter** – Compass School Southwark actively maintains a twitter account (@compassSE16) which we encourage parents/carers and other community stakeholders to follow. We post regular messages on school activities, and this is the main point of contact with our community when students are out of school on trips and visits where we share information in real time.

## Presentational

At Compass School we hold a range of informational evenings throughout the year, in addition to two parents' evenings per year group (one focusing on pastoral indicators with the student's Learning Family Tutor, and the second with the student's academic teachers to discuss student progress and attainment).

These evenings include:

- Open evenings for prospective parents
- Induction evenings for new students and parents
- Year 8 Futures (careers) evening
- Year 9 GCSE Option Choices evening
- Other information, advice and guidance evenings

## Via an intermediary

It is sometimes necessary to communicate with parents and carers via an intermediary. The school will always take external advice when we believe that this may be the case. An intermediary may be required when language barriers are identified between the school and parents/carers, or when parents/carers/the school ask for a third party intermediary to be involved.

## Consultation

At various times of the year, and particularly as the school grows, we seek the views of parents and carers. This can take the following forms:

- **Questionnaires** – These are issued to parents on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email). They allow the school to gather a wide range of views across key areas of the school in a quick and efficient way.
- **Parent governor representation** – The governing body of Compass School Southwark is constituted to include two parent governors. This is a key way in which parents can influence strategic matters regarding the school and hold the Principal and Senior Leadership Team of the school to account
- **SLT coffee morning** – Each Friday morning during term time 08.30 – 10.30am, the Senior Leadership Team are available on a drop-in basis. This is a regular opportunity for parents/carers to raise any issues, questions, or matters they would like to discuss with senior leaders.

## 4. What parents can expect

We aim to respond to all parental communication as quickly as we can. However, it can often be challenging for a member of staff to respond to a parent request immediately, as most teachers are in classrooms teaching, or running activities and working with students, for a significant portion of the day. This means, that given our longer school day, it is not unusual for a teacher not to receive a message until after 4.30pm, and to be unable to respond until much later in the afternoon. Therefore, Compass School Southwark has set out a clear policy around service standards, in order that we can ensure a consistent and prompt response from communications with parents/carers.

### Who to contact, when and how?

Parents are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage. This can be done through a variety of means:

- A letter via their child's Learning Family Tutor
- An email or phone call to the school office (details are on the school website)
- By making an appointment to meet a member of staff
- By a comment in their child's school diary
- At Parents' and other information evenings
- During SLT coffee mornings

### Contacting teachers

We are happy for parents and carers to contact individual class teachers when there are concerns or queries about particular lessons; indeed, we encourage this. However, when doing so, we ask parents to bear in mind that most teachers teach hundreds of students at any one time and it is therefore impossible for them to undertake an extensive, ongoing dialogue with the parents of individual students over any significant period of time. We reserve the right for teachers to refrain from further contact where the demands for information become unrealistic.

### Contacting the Principal

Whilst the Principal is, and always has been, very willing to receive both suggestions and enquiries, parents will appreciate that in some circumstances it may be more appropriate for another member of staff who has a more detailed knowledge of the issue to respond in the first instance. However, if the response does not answer your concerns, then you are very welcome to follow up with the Principal directly.

If parents are unsure about who to contact with a specific issue or query, they can refer to the "Who to contact?" document which is on the school website and attached as an appendix to this policy.

### Maintaining positive relationships

We understand that sometimes parents and carers may be frustrated about issues that arise, and that this can sometimes lead to tempers becoming frayed and anger being directed towards the school. As members of our community know, we will always do our best to solve any problems and all Compass staff will do so with respect, politeness and professionalism.

At the same time, our staff should not have to put up with communication that is rude, abusive or aggressive. **Where the behaviour of parents/carers is considered to be rude, abusive or aggressive, this will be escalated to the Principal and could result in a ban from the school and/or police action.**

### Timeliness of responses

We acknowledge that when parents/carers contact the school, it is often with regards to something which they would like an immediate response to. Unfortunately this is not always possible. Below we have set out indicative response times for each form of communication. This is to ensure that staff and parents share the same expectations.

Phone calls have the quickest response time as we know that most parents who wish a quick response will contact the school via the telephone. If a call back is required, the appropriate person aims to make this call within 24 hours (during school days). Other response times are provided for additional forms of communication.

Communication from parent	Indicative response time
Phone call	Call back within 24 hours (during school days) of parents' call, if possible the same day. This may be an initial phone call, with a follow up at a later date.
Email	Reply within 48 hours (during school days) of receipt of email. This may be to acknowledge receipt of the email, with a suggested timeline for a more detailed response.
Written letter	Acknowledge receipt of letter within 48 hours (during school days), and provide suggested response time in line with school policies and professional advice where appropriate.
Note in school diary	Acknowledge within 48 hours (during school days) of receipt by initialing or responding to the note (provided that the student shows the appropriate member of staff)
Parental complaint	Any complaint is dealt with in accordance with the process set out in the school Complaints Policy. Please note that complaints will only be handled if they are submitted on the correct form. The policy and form can be viewed and downloaded from the school website or is available on request from the school reception.
Any form of abusive or unnecessarily unpleasant communication	Any correspondence that is either abusive or unnecessarily unpleasant is very unlikely to receive a response unless there is a clear safeguarding concern. Likewise, staff are encouraged to put the phone down if they encounter verbal abuse.
Weekend / school closure period	Any communication sent to a member of staff at the school during a weekend or school closure period may not be dealt with until the following working week, or when the school staff returns from half term breaks.

**In exceptional circumstances where it is impossible to meet these deadlines, then the initiator will be contacted to explain why there has been a delay and when a full reply will be made.**

## 5. Marketing, PR and communicating with the wider community

As well as informing parents/carers about their own child, Compass School Southwark is keen to share its successes with the wider community, and convey positive messages about the school to additional stakeholders.

Clear signage and notice boards are a key way to share our successes and positive stories with visitors. These will be updated regularly, and an electronic notice board in the school reception area shares our weekly celebration presentation.

Successes will be highlighted throughout the year. Some will be suitable for reporting solely on the school website/newsletter/social media while others may also be turned into press releases for distribution to community and local media.

When press coverage is achieved, parties who may be interested such as parents, staff, governors and the community will be informed via email, social media, the newsletter and the school website.

All publications and press releases which include pictures of students will be checked before release/publication to ensure that they do not include any students whose parents have informed us they do not wish their child to be photographed.

An easy-to-use website is crucial for online visitors, as is an up to date and informative one. The school website is updated weekly with non-urgent information, while urgent information will be shared on the school website (and on Twitter) as it occurs.

## Annex 1 - Who to contact and when?

### Quick guide for parents

**Main office phone number:** 020 3542 6506

**Main office email address:** [info@compass-schools.com](mailto:info@compass-schools.com)

Issue	Who to contact	How?
<b>Any safeguarding concern</b>	Mr Collins, Director of School, is in charge of safeguarding, but in the first instance contact the school office.	Contact the main office making clear that you have a safeguarding concern.
<b>Concerns about bullying</b>	Any member of staff. Your child's Learning Family Tutor will usually be the first port of call, but Mr Egbuchiem can also be contacted.	We'd hope that the student would be able to speak to a member of staff or one of the the anti-bullying ambassadors in school. They can also use report function via any computer. Alternatively, please contact the main office making clear that you have a bullying concern.
<b>Reporting absence or other queries relating to attendance.</b>	Phone the Main Office to report an absence. Our Student Administration Officer will be able to deal with any attendance queries.	Phone the main office on 0203 542 6506 or email <a href="mailto:absence@compass-schools.com">absence@compass-schools.com</a> .
<b>Concerns about your child's progress in a particular subject</b>	You can contact a subject teacher via the school diary, or by calling and asking for a teacher to contact you. A follow up meeting may be arranged. If the issue is not resolved, the Head of Faculty can be contacted.	Contact the main office and ask for the specific member of staff to get in touch with you.
<b>Concerns about the progress of your child generally - i.e. in more than one subject</b>	You can contact your child's Head of House, to discuss general concerns regarding your child's progress.	Contact the main office and ask for your child's Head of House to get in touch with you. North - Mr Flowers East - Ms Hill (temporary) South - Ms Segiuer West - Ms Hayward
<b>A complaint about a member of staff</b>	Usually, the Head of Faculty is the most appropriate person, though if it is especially serious, the Principal should know. If the complaint is about the Principal, it should be made to the Chair of Governors.	Please see the school Complaints policy, which can be found on the school website.
<b>Concerns about friendship issues</b>	Your child's Learning Family Tutor will usually be the best person to approach.	We'd hope that the student would be able to approach the Learning Family Tutor themselves, alternatively, please contact the main office making clear your concerns.
<b>Questions or concerns relating to SEN provision</b>	Our Senior Leader of Inclusion and SENCO should be able to address any SEND questions.	Ms Bilbrough can be reached at <a href="mailto:jbilbrough@compass-schools.com">jbilbrough@compass-schools.com</a> . Alternatively, please contact the school and ask for a member of the inclusion team to get back to you.
<b>Something that doesn't fit into any of the categories above</b>	Contact reception or Student Services and they will direct you to the appropriate person.	Phone the main office on 0203 542 6506 or email <a href="mailto:info@compass-schools.com">info@compass-schools.com</a> , making clear what your concern or query is regarding.

## Annex 2 – Managing aggressive behaviour from parents and visitors

### Statement of principles

The governing body and Senior Leadership Team of Compass School Southwark encourages close links with parents and the community. We know that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. However, on the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards members of school staff or the wider school community.

The governing body expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defense. We therefore expect parents and other visitors to behave in a reasonable way towards members of school staff.

Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone;
- physically intimidating a member of staff, eg standing very close to her/him;
- the use of aggressive hand gestures;
- threatening behaviour;
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person;
- swearing;
- pushing;
- hitting, eg slapping, punching and kicking;
- spitting;
- breaching the school's security procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

**Unacceptable behaviour will result in a ban from the school, and may result in the local authority and the police being informed of the incident.**

### Procedure to be followed

If a parent/carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Principal or other member of senior staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed. Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent or carer may be banned by the Principal from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review.

### Imposing a ban

In imposing a ban the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent/carer will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow.
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included.

3. The Chair of Governors/LA will be informed of the ban.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for pupils being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified.

## Conclusion

The local authority itself may take action where behaviour is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation.

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the Local Authority's education, health and safety and legal departments, to ensure fairness and consistency.

This Policy will be reviewed annually.