Date	Review	Lead	Governor	Amended
January 2024	January 2025	Catherine Byard	Dianne Webster	no

Stonelow Communications Policy

'In many ways, effective communication begins with mutual respect, communication that inspires, encourages others to do their best.'

Zig Ziglar

Aim
To support Stonelow Junior School in its aim to become a thriving and successful school we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider school community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Definition of communication
Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. It is as much about how we say things as what we say. It is about listening as well as talking. Failing relationships have four negatives – criticism, defensiveness, contempt and 'tuning out' or ignoring. If a relationship is to thrive it needs empathy, attunement and non-defensiveness. **Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and to recognise that the quality of their communications has a huge impact on those around them.**
For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.
Staff and children have been asked about what is ineffective and effective communication.

See Appendices 1 and 2

Objectives:
All communications at Stonelow Junior School should:
• Keep staff, pupils, parents, Governors and other stakeholders well informed.
• Be open, honest, ethical, non-judgemental and professional
• Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all
• Be actioned within a reasonable time
• Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
• take account of relevant school policies
• be compatible with our core values and code of conduct

Internal Methods of Communication

Please note that ANY communication regarding an individual child should be referred to using their name, not initials.

Meetings
There is a programme of staff meetings to facilitate involvement of
all, both formal and informal. All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and staff invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject leaders reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.
For all other meetings notes should be taken and feedback given to relevant staff.

Availability of Minutes/Notes of Meetings
The approved minutes of meetings are available on request from the Headteacher.

Email
Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the
use of e-mail where appropriate. E-mail is a quick, effective way of
communicating information [however it does not replace face to face meetings
where some discussion is required]. E-mails should be used to share practical
information. No response if required, unless asked for. There is no expectation that an e-mail reply is made on a day when a staff member is not working. In an exceptional circumstance and if an immediate response is needed, then a phone call should be made.

Mobile Phones
Staff - Mobile phones should not be used during lessons or when in contact with the children. In exceptional cases such as family illness the circumstances should be discussed with the Headteacher. Non-intrusive work-related mobile phone use is acceptable during PPA or management time. During trips and off-site provision, staff should ensure they can be contacted by mobile phone at all times.

Pupils – It is recommended that pupils should not bring mobile phones into school. In exceptional circumstances any phones should be switched off when entering school and handed to the class teacher to be locked away.

Whatsapp / text messages

There is no expectation that staff will be part of a whatsapp group. For those that are, limited information will be shared via whataspp. This may include a photo of the week ahead and some management / organisational arrangements. If communication is limited to one or two people, this should be done through direct messaging rather than a group message.

Wherever possible work-related messages should not be sent in the evenings or at weekends unless necessary. Any important information should be relayed directly to a person face to face or via a phone call. Remember that sometimes text messages can be misinterpreted.

Written Communications

Wherever possible written communication should be shared during staff meetings or handed over in a face to face meeting.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies.

Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents will always be addressed in an appropriate manner. We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Letters

Staff will endeavour to respond to parents' letters as quickly as possible. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the HT. Letters to parents must be approved by the

HT before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed in pupil files.

E mail
The school has an email system it uses to communicate to parents. The school also communicates via Parenthub. All messages should be respectful and carefully worded. If possible, messages should be checked by another person before sending. Wherever possible messages should be sent within school hours. No communication should be sent after 7pm unless in an emergency.

If a parent communicates with the school using email, staff should ensure it is kept in an offline folder (a simple subfolder labelled Parents). Staff should forward emails from parents to the Headteacher should it be considered necessary, complaints should always be forwarded on. Staff should also cc the Headteacher in any response where the Headteacher has been forwarded content.

Telephone calls
Office staff will check the school phone messages each day. A file note will record the details of the conversation. Office staff should not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call, unless in an emergency.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc
Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends".

Written Reports.
Once a year we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Parents will personally pick these up from school and sign for them.

Face to face meetings
Parents have the opportunity to meet their child's teacher [either in person or virtually via zoom] three times during the year for a private consultation at Parents' Evening or informal 'drop in' session in the Summer term. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.

When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we find it helpful to meet with parents more regularly. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

Staff may also meet with parents throughout the year to discuss a variety of issues. Wherever possible these should be done in person. The HT or FSW will be available if necessary to support. Staff should be calm, considered and non-judgemental. A follow-

up conversation or progress meeting will be booked in to discuss the success of strategies put in place.

School Prospectus
The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated every year.

School Website
The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

Home-school communication
A school Newsletter is sent to parents at the beginning of each half term. It contains general details of school events and activities. Parents expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies.

Children in all classes have a reading diary. This enables parents to record any reading related information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher.

Parents to send any other information or questions via email in order that the teacher can respond and for the information to stay confidential and within GDPR.

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers arrange to see parents as soon as possible.
Many parents have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher when they collect them after school or before school from 8.45 onwards.

We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements. A meeting for new parents is organised each June/July.

Updates will be shared by class teachers via ParentHub to share what has been been happening in class. These will be sent each week.

Communication with other schools and outside agencies
Prior to pupils joining school, they are invited to visit the school to enable us to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to Stonelow.

We recognise that children 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 children may 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

specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Child Protection Units.

We recognise that everyone in our school has a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment.

Staff are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the Designated Officer for Children Protection, or the Deputy Designated Officer, who may share this information with the Social Services. The information will be recorded on MyConcern.

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

At Stonelow Junior school we recognise that we all need to work on effective strategies for communication and understand that the words we speak can have a huge impact on others – either negatively or positively.

See Appendix 3

'Everything becomes a little different as soon as it is spoken out loud.'

Hermann Hesse

Appendix 1.

As a school we have recognised that ineffective communication includes:

Being abrupt
Not giving someone time to listen effectively
Not getting back to someone when you say you will
Negative, argumentative, impatient, dismissive
Sarcasm
Lack of respect for the speaker
The inability to take and accept constructive criticism
Talking over each other
Information not being shared effectively
Lack of enthusiasm as a listener
An aggressive or negative tone of voice
Lack of eye contact / negative body language
Shouting
Pointing a finger
Sarcasm / making fun of the speaker
Communication involving moaning but no willingness to change / tackle the issue
Second or third hand conversations
Gossip
Lack of clarity, instructions not clear
Being put 'on the spot'
Dismissive responses – not feeling 'listened to'
Conversations with no solution 'going round in circles'
Derogatory comments and put downs

Appendix 2

We recognise that effective communication includes:

Maintaining eye contact
Positivity and smiling
Giving time as a listener – patience
The listener making us feel comfortable enough to express opinions
Positive body language
Greeting each other
Praise
Calm tone of voice
Listening then responding
Willingness to compromise
Respectful language
Opinions being acknowledged and valued [even if they are not agreed with]
The ability to say thank-you, well done, can I help, please understand
A range of types of communication for different purposes – eg face to face conversations, information sharing e-mails etc
Supportive
Privacy and confidentiality when needed
Consistency
Being talked to on the same level [literally and physically]
Manners – please and thank-you
Using the persons name when you speak
Admitting when you are wrong and accepting apologies from others
An ability to discuss in an open forum
Non-verbal reassurance – smiling, nodding, sympathetic gestures

Appendix 3

<u>Stonelow strategies for building effective relationships [staff and pupil 2019]:</u>

Don't treat anyone how you wouldn't want to be treated yourself
Approach people and situations with positivity
Look for a way forward, don't just put up barriers
Create a culture of trust, honesty and openness
Employ positive body language – smile and give eye contact
Give difficult messages without criticism
Don't shout
Balance the need for improvements with positive feedback
Be fair
Be part of the team
Be an active listener. Make time to listen
Show empathy
Don't interrupt
Show kindness, care and consideration
Look for the good in people [no matter how hard sometimes!]
Try and think about where others are coming from in their responses [eg – sullenness or anger may mask anxiety or worry]
Don't always find a solution – sometimes people just want to be listened to
Understand that people make mistakes [and be willing to forgive them], that difficult decisions need to be made
Be reflective
Work in collaboration with others – take people with you, don't order them about
Be grateful for each other. Show small kindnesses
Say please and thank-you and sorry
Don't presume the worst before finding out the full story
Consider all as equal, don't make judgements
Don't apply your own life experience to someone else – we are all different!
Take time to enjoy each others company – laugh and be silly – socialise together!
Be tactile when appropriate
Be interested in each other