



COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS' / CARERS' POLICY





EPT Document Control

This policy applies to all Education Partnership Trust Schools.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Heights Free School (THFS) recognises the importance of clear and effective communication with all stakeholders and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school.

1.2 THFS will seek to engage and involve parents in all aspects of the school operations from parent governors to curriculum design, supporting the delivery and in particular for all parents to support and encourage their child to succeed. Parents' evenings and meetings will feature within the school calendar and parents will be encouraged to visit the school at other times to ensure that they are kept fully informed of their child's progress (**see specific details below**). The curriculum will be extended to actively engage parents/carers in their child's learning and progression through their education. Most students will be at the THFS either part-time or for short term 'blocks' of time (usually then reintegrating back into mainstream education) and this means that our communication with parents is crucial to give them clarity about their child's progress and well-being.

1.3 Parents and carers will be encouraged to be involved with their child's success within the school and will be invited to coffee mornings, Christmas parties and open days. There will also be regular phone calls home on the positive progress their child is making together with a weekly sheet outlining the student's timetable within the school

1.4 The key stakeholders for a school are parents, carers and students and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and the school.

1.5 In this policy the term 'parents' refers to both parents and carers.

2. Parents as partners in their child's education

2.1 It is widely acknowledged in Government guidance, legislation and research that parents have a key role to play in their child's education. Early years' provision, schools, Academies and Local Authorities are all required to encourage and make arrangements for parents to contribute to the shared view of their child's needs.

2.2 The parent of every child of compulsory school age must make sure that they receive efficient full-time education suitable;

- a. To their age, ability and aptitude



- b. To any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

2.3 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states,

'Parents have a vital role in their child's education. In working with schools they should;

Communicate regularly with school staff and alert them to any concerns they have about their child's learning or provision;

Fulfil their obligations under home-school (academy) agreements, which set out the expectations of both sides'.

2.4 **DfE guidance updated on April 26th 2012 states;**

'All children of compulsory school age (five to 16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly'.

3. Aims of the policy

3.1 To ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between THFS, parents, students and other stakeholders.

3.2 To ensure robust processes for consultation between THFS, parents and students on key service areas.

3.3 THFS recognises that engaging and working with parents is a vital component in providing their child with an excellent education. At regular opportunities throughout the year, the school will ask parents what they expect from and what they think of the school. We intend to involve as many parents in their child's education as possible as part of the community aspect of the school's work.

Our communication aims are listed below.

3.4 To make the school as welcoming and inclusive as possible. Signage will be clear, informative and positive.

3.5 All written and telephone enquiries from parents are to be dealt with promptly.

3.6 A variety of forms of communication with parents, for example, telephone contact, email, post, text and home visits are encouraged.

3.7 Parents are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.



3.8 Information is given to parents on what students are being taught and tips for helping their child circulated.

3.9 Parents will be encouraged to help or support their children's learning at school and at home. Information or training will be provided to enable this support to be effective.

3.10 The school will encourage the use of parents as volunteer helpers within the boundaries relating to safeguarding children.

3.11 The school will promote family fun activities, such as our Christmas Lunch, Open Days and Year Group Celebratory Events.

4. Communications

4.1 Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, post cards to home or email) or through the School website. **Our aim is to utilise all means of communication effectively.**

4.2 Staff will endeavour to reply to parent's letters as quickly as possible. Any letter of complaint will be referred to the Headteacher or Deputy (or Assistant) Headteacher for advice prior to response. **Please (if necessary) also refer to our Complaints Policy, which explains this in more detail.**

Communication between the School and parents will operate in the following ways:-

4.3 All prospective parents will receive a THFS prospectus upon request or in person at various community locations, within local schools or by coming to the school reception.

4.4 Prospective parents are invited to any Open Days (1 or 2 a year).

4.5 Reports on progress will be provided three times a year for every subject. Every term a Progress Report will be sent to parents and carers and referring schools. During the Spring Term, this will take the form of a full written report. The reports will include curricular target grades for every subject and an indication of how a pupil is progressing to that target. The report will also include assessment of a pupil's behaviour, motivation and progress. The reports will:

Enable parents and carers to support and encourage their children by discussing their targets with them

Strengthen the liaison between The Heights Free School and referring schools

Allow key staff at The Heights Free School to use the information to review and plan next steps for each pupil.

4.6 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school as staff may be teaching full time and running clubs or working with students at lunchtime or after school.

Parents may be frustrated if they feel that a message gets no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

4.7 For this reason the school will be particularly proactive in encouraging use of a wide range of communication methods, with office email contacts being publicised regularly in newsletters and all parents being encouraged to give an email address for prompt and effective communication.

4.8 On request, key school documents can be translated in community languages and a translator made available, if required, to ensure more effective communication.

5. The School Website and Learning Platform

5.1 As the school moves towards the use of an online curriculum, much more information about learning expectations will be accessible to parents via the internet.

5.2 The Learning Platform will be a powerful tool for motivating students as it will give them more choice and flexibility about when and where they complete their learning. It will also encourage parental involvement in learning.

5.3 The school website will also be a good source of general information and will include;

- The school prospectus
- Curriculum resources
- Holiday dates
- Copies of letters to parents
- Information about lessons / additional study
- Special events
- Newsletters and updates
- Essential School Emergency details
- Access to certain key policies (Admissions, SEN and Behaviour)

6. Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc.

6.1 Staff are not permitted to communicate with parents or students via social networking sites (such as Facebook or Twitter) or accept them as their "friends". This is part of our safeguarding procedures to protect students and staff.

6.2 This does not apply to the school's own Facebook page and School-approved blogs, which will be monitored appropriately and are intended to facilitate communication with all stakeholders and supporters of the school.



7. E-mail

7.1 Parents may wish to contact the School via e-mail as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school e-mail address is enquiries@theheightsfreeschool.org.

8. Celebrating Success

8.1 Parents will be invited to special celebratory events and assemblies, events and presentations throughout the course of the school year to celebrate the students' achievements. These are particularly important at the end of Year 9 and 11 at THFS.

9. Parental Involvement

9.1 All parents will receive a questionnaire on many aspects of the service provided by the School. Replies are confidential and will be collated and analysed by the SLT. Issues arising will be shared with the Headteacher and discussed by Governors and the student council.

10. Supporting Parents of Young People with SEN

10.1 The SEN Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and user-friendly information and procedures. There should be no presumption about what parents can or cannot do to support their children's learning. Stereotypic views of parents are unhelpful and should be challenged. **Please also refer to our SEN policy for more details.**

10.2 All staff should bear in mind the pressures a parent may be under because of the child's needs. Professionals should make efforts to ensure effective communication with parents.

10.3 Staff within the school are expected to help parents understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and should make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way that parents can understand.

11. Home-school Communications

11.1 A calendar of THFS events is produced at the start of each term and issued to parents and students. Information will also be available to access via our web site at (www.theheightsfreeschool.org).

11.2 E-Newsletters will be sent out (3-6 per year). They contain general details of school events and activities. We will send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies on the school's website.



11.3 The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child with their tutor at the earliest opportunity. The relevant member of staff will arrange to see parents as soon as possible.

11.4 The school will arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements.

11.5 If a student is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, the school support staff will contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

12. Communication with Other Schools and Outside Agencies

12.1 We recognise that young people 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 they participate more fully. Support comes from the student's mainstream 'feeder' primary or high school, other commissioners, partner agencies (Engage, Brook, the police, social workers, education welfare officers and ELCAS) and other specialists.

12.2 We recognise that young people have 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. **(See also our Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare and Child Protection and Staff Training policies for specific details).**

12.3 We hold information on all students in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details will be 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. **(Our policies on Data Handling and Accessing Student Data cover this in more detail).**

12.4 Parents have a right to view the information we hold and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

13. Accessibility of Information

13.1 The school has a legal duty to anticipate the needs of our parents and to make adjustments in relation to those needs. Hence, we will be building adjustments to communications in to our routine practices.

13.2 When requests are made e.g. for alternative formats or languages, we will meet those needs quickly – delays can mean that some people are effectively excluded from the communications.

If material is requested in Braille, audio tape or in translation, we will aim to provide it within 5-10 working days. Other formats should be provided more quickly.



13.3 We will monitor our effectiveness in communicating to improve the quality of our service, anticipate and plan for needs of parents better and make best use of our resources.

14. Monitoring and Review

14.1 The Headteacher and Governing Body will review this policy. The review period will be decided by the Governing Body and they will also take note if/when legislation and guidance changes.

14.2 Its implementation and effectiveness will be monitored by the Headteacher.

14.3 This policy will be implemented by all staff at THFS who communicate with parents.