

# Getting it Right for Every Child in Aberdeenshire



School Communication Policy

Devised: November 2017

Review: November 2019

*Portlethen Primary holds Rights Respecting School Level 2 status. Article 28 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that: "Children' have the right to a high quality education." Effective communication by all stakeholders supports the provision of an appropriate curriculum for Portlethen's pupils.*

## Definition of Communication

- Effective and interactive communication develops a shared understanding, builds trust and respect and enables coordinated and appropriate actions to occur for the benefit of our pupils.
- Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communication and recognise that the quality of their communication impacts on the school's reputation.
- Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated.
- Communication includes a variety of forms; verbal, written and non-verbal. It is also vital to actively listen during communication.

## Rationale

At Portlethen Primary we recognise that clear and effective communication underpins strong home and community reciprocal partnerships with school and promotes inclusion. We believe that it is the shared responsibility of every member of the school community to nurture positive attitudes and work as a team to build positive relationships which are valued within the school and the wider community. In June 2015 a parent questionnaire revealed that 36% of parents who responded did not feel well informed about their children's progress. After introducing a school Twitter page, increasing the frequency of newsletters and introducing a class termly newsletter, two questions were asked in relation to communication in the 2016/17 survey. Sharing of pupils' progress and general communication with parents showed that 19% and 23% of parents respectively, either did not agree it was effective or did not know. It is therefore imperative that a communication policy informs all parents and staff very well.

## Values

**T**rust   **T**eamwork   **R**espect   **A**chievement   **I**nclusion   **N**urture

## Aims

This policy provides information in order to:

- Outline the ways in which different types of information will be communicated by the school to parents and the community; and
- Suggest the most suitable ways for parents/guardians to communicate with the school.

## Policy Statement

The school holds personal and emergency contact details for all pupils, and parents are contacted on an annual basis to ensure that these are updated. Families are encouraged to alert the school immediately in the event that contact information needs to be revised. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact a parent/carer.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Senior Leadership Team**

- Ensure information is made available to pupils, staff, parents and the community in a timely manner and via appropriate methods as outlined in this policy.
- Maintain open channels of reciprocal communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all pupils, staff, parents and the community.
- Keep Parent Partnership informed of developments through policy, face to face meetings and on-going dialogue.

### **Staff**

- Communicate effectively with pupils to ensure opportunities are maximised for pupils to meet their full potential.
- Communicate effectively with parents and the community via appropriate methods as outlined in this policy.
- Communicate regularly with each other to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- Maintain open channels of reciprocal communication to support the work of the school and keep leadership team and colleagues informed.

### **Parents**

- Communicate effectively with the school in a timely manner and via suggested method as outlined in this policy.

### **Pupils**

- Communicate effectively with staff and each other to ensure opportunities to meet their full potential are maximised.

## **Methods of Internal Communication Used at Portlethen Primary School**

- Staff Handbook is updated annually and distributed in hard copy to staff and student teachers (August and on joining the school)
- Weekly whole staff briefing meetings, notes and actions are shared with all staff via email.
- Collegiate program of meetings and training related to the school improvement plan including whole school teaching staff, departmental, stage and working group meetings.
- Program of meeting and training related to the school/nursery improvement plans including Early Years Lead/Practitioners, Pupil Support Assistants, non-teaching staff, Senior Leadership Team, A Support for Learning Team.
- Curricular and non-curricular updates, initiatives and news is communicated either face to face, via the staff noticeboard, pigeon holes or by email, whichever is most appropriate.
- Weekly calendar is shared on the staff noticeboard.
- Information is shared with children via assemblies, face to face by staff or other pupils or via the pupil noticeboard.
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This is often via a noticeboard or verbally.
- Widget symbolisation is used across the school to promote inclusion by total communication.
- It is aimed to have all staff trained in Makaton signing to further enhance total communication.
- Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.

# **Methods of External Communication Used at Portlethen Primary School**

## **General**

We maintain many lines of communication: with parents and carers, other schools, the community, our business partner and with outside agencies. Effective communications enable us to share our vision, aims and values through keeping parents well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting school. Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional.

## **Parents/Community**

### **Open Door Policy**

Parents are welcome to visit the school by appointment to discuss their child's progress, ask questions, gain support or to have the opportunity to share information or discuss issues with either the child's class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team.

- Telephone or call at the office to make an appointment.
- We aim to see parents as quickly as possible, either on the same or next day.
- Teachers are unable to meet at the start of the school day. We appreciate that parents understand that a teacher cannot leave a class unattended.
- Parents may request that prescribed medication is administered to a pupil during the school day by submitting a medication request form to the school office.

## **Electronic Communications**

### **Xpressions App**

- The preferred and main form of communication which allows parents to receive and view information directly to their mobile phones or tablets. All parents are urged to download the free app. It is the least costly form of communication for the school and is also the main form of parental communication at Portlethen Academy.

### **Email**

- The school also uses email to communicate with parents. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents using this system will be approved by the Senior Leadership Team. If a parent communicates with the school using email and requires a response, we aim to respond within 48 hours.

### **Text**

- Texts are only used in emergency situations or if we are unable to contact parents by other methods.

## Telephone Calls

- Telephone calls are made where immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for pupil injury or pupil incident. A member of staff will call the first named emergency contact as listed and, where no contact is made, will continue to call other emergency contacts. In the event that no contact can be made, either an answer phone message will be left or repeat calls will be made to the contact numbers, where possible.
- Parents should report pupil absence by telephone by 9am of the first day of absence.
- Telephone or letter contact should also be made in relation to any information that the parent deems appropriate to share with the school for example, change of family circumstances or circumstances that may affect how the child is feeling at school.

## Letters

- We are an eco-school and endeavour to keep letter communication to a minimum. However, there are occasions when hard copy letters are prepared.
- Information about trips or events that require a written response are currently communicated by letter.
- Parents should provide a letter to confirm the reason for absence on a child's return to school.

## Social Networking

- School Twitter page shares pupil achievements. (@Portyschool)  
The Twitter page promotes the school within the Portlethen community and beyond.
- School Facebook page provides news and updates. Please note that this page is not intended for communication from home to school as it is only monitored periodically. Only appointed staff administrators can post items.
- Nursery Facebook page provides news and updates. All posts with picture images of children will relate solely to the children's learning. Please note that this page is not intended for communication from home to school as it is only monitored periodically. Only appointed staff administrators can post items.
- Friends of Portlethen Primary (FOPP)/Parent Partnership Facebook page provides details of upcoming meetings and events.

## Home/School Contact Books

- Provides opportunities for daily written dialogue between home and school and vice versa. It may include homework expectations, curricular communications or general questions/information about routines. These are especially useful in the early years as pupils and parents become acquainted with school life.

## Start of Term Overview

- Class teachers provide an overview of the term by the end of week 1 of each term.
- Includes the main focus of curricular areas that children will learn about in the upcoming term including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.
- Special class events, visitors, trips and assemblies.

## Monthly Newsletter

- Sent via Groupcall to all parents and is uploaded onto the school website.
- Provides general details about class/school events and activities.

## Target Setting

- Targets are set on an on-going basis within school.
- Termly targets are shared with parents via the pupils' homework jotters by the end of week 2 of each term.
- Targets are evaluated periodically throughout the term and progress has an impact on the next steps set for the following term.
- Parents are encouraged to comment on progress.

## Individual Education Plans (IEP)

Pupils whose needs cannot be met through day to day grouping within the class will have an IEP to set agreed individualised targets and which is updated three times each session.

- Parents and the child meet face to face with staff to agree and set initial targets and to review progress prior to updating targets.
- Pupils with IEPs frequently revert to having their needs met via main class groupings.

## Reporting

Reporting is so much more than formal written reports. To ensure parents have regular opportunities to share in their children's learning, a variety of methods of reporting are employed at Portlethen School:

- Parent Consultations
- Pupil Presentations (through assemblies and other activities)
- Parent Drop-In Sessions
- On-going Activities

A reporting calendar is shared with parents at the start of each session.

## Written Reports

- From session 2017/18, biannual electronic reporting to parents through Book Creator will share each child's progress in learning from primary one to seven. These reports identify areas of strengths and areas for future development. The pupils' voice will also be incorporated into these reports so that they share responsibility for their learning and can identify their next steps.
- In addition, parents meet their child's teacher twice during the year for a private consultation at Parents' Evening.
- Nursery children's progress in learning will continue to be shared via the electronic 2Simple program.

## Curricular Open Sessions

Parents are most welcome within school and efforts to attend these sessions to share in children's learning are much appreciated. The following is held as a minimum each session:

- A literacy related session
- A numeracy related session
- A session relating to another curricular area or theme

## Severe Weather and Early Closure

In the event of severe weather preventing opening of the school:

- The school information line will be updated at the earliest opportunity. Please phone: 03700544999 and enter the school Pin Number: 022450.

- The school status will be updated on Aberdeenshire Council's website at the earliest opportunity <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/Apps/Schools-Closures/>
- Aberdeenshire Council will notify those who have signed up for online alerts. Sign up for notifications through *myaccount* on the Aberdeenshire Council website - if you already pay for school meals online, you will be registered.
- Regular local radio announcements of all school closures take place.
- The school Facebook page will be updated at the earliest opportunity.

In the event of severe weather preventing school transport running. In addition to the above:

- Parents should not attempt to transport children who normally travel to school by school transport.

In the event of severe weather necessitating school closure during the school day: In addition to the steps for school closure:

- Parents/emergency contacts will be contacted by telephone and asked to collect children at their earliest convenience.
- Pupils will be kept in school until collected by parent/emergency contact or another contact as advised by parents.

### **School Handbook**

- Updated annually and posted on the school website. (October/November)
- Informs parents and the community of as many aspects of Portlethen School as possible.

### **School Website**

- Provides a wide range of information about the school including staff, pupil and parent groups.
- Promotes the school within the Portlethen community and beyond.

### **Standards and Quality Report and Improvement Plan**

- Evaluated and reviewed on an on-going basis and posted on the school website annually. (October)
- Liaison and feedback from staff, pupils, Parent Partnership and parents informs the report and planned improvements.

### **Clochdighter**

- An article is submitted to the local Portlethen magazine for most publications (there are 4 publications per year).
- It shares school life with the community.

### **Communication with Other Agencies**

In order to meet the needs of all children, we may communicate with other agencies through a Multi-Agency Process. All parties who can have an impact on a child's wellbeing meet together to create a Multi-Agency Action Plan for individual pupils. This meeting could include parents, school, speech and language specialists, social work or a number of other agencies.

### **Child Protection**

We are the people most in contact with our pupils, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help any child in need of protection. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Child Protection Coordinator, Sandra McKechnie, Head Teacher or the Depute Child Protection Coordinators, Laura Watson or Douglas Bruce, Depute Head Teachers who may communicate concerns to appropriate agencies.