



## Communicating with Parents/Carers

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### Statement of Intent

In line with the explicit aims within the School Mission Statement all employees are expected to show courtesy to all other people in school. Our aim is also to provide a welcoming environment to visitors and telephone callers. St Mary's places the highest value on the very positive and supportive relationships that exist between teachers and between teachers and pupils. All employees are expected to set a positive example to others in this respect. Equally we ask that Parents, however concerned they may be, remember to be courteous to our staff; in this way relationships are preserved and issues can be dealt with fairly.

### Some General Points

St Mary's Catholic High School always welcomes contact with parents and carers because this fosters mutual understanding and support that has a positive effect on student performance. Communication promotes a partnership. Our aim is to ensure that parents and carers always have an appropriate and helpful response to their communications. However, the professional duties of teachers can sometimes make it difficult for them to speak or meet with parents and carers during the school day. In order to achieve the most effective balance for students, parents, carers and teachers, we will follow the following principles:

- Welcoming contact from parents and carers
- Responding as quickly and as fully as possible to parents and carers
- Being proactive with information which will help parents and carers
- Involving parents and carers in our work with students
- Sharing information as often and as fully as possible with parents and carers.

## Ways in which we communicate with parents/carers

***These are only examples and in some cases communication may be via alternative means***

**By written letter (POSTED):** Examples: - detention/exclusion letter; attendance/punctuality letter; invitation into school to discuss progress or behaviour; any correspondence specifically relating to the individual child where there has been a cause for concern.

**By written letter (HANDED TO CHILD):** Examples: - Progress Evening invitation; non-uniform days; notification of early closure; notification of topical information; uniform & appearance/ behaviour reminders from the Headteacher; Pupil Progress reports; school visits; policy updates; newsletters etc.

**By Schudio App & email:** Examples: - reminders connected to the website; invitations to liaise connected to a school project; pupil Progress Evenings, school visits, policy updates, newsletters etc.

**By text message:** Examples: - First day contact for absence, Educational visit payment reminders.

**By a telephone call:** Examples: - specific concern regarding child; response to a parent concern.

- **Urgent calls:** *If the member of staff asked for is not available, the call will be put through to the most appropriate or available senior member of staff*
- **Non-urgent calls:** *If the member of staff asked for is not available, office staff will normally take details of the parent's/carer's name and telephone number and purpose in calling. This information will be given to the member of staff concerned who will try to respond as soon as possible and by the end of the next school day whenever possible*

**The school website and App:** We try and use our App and website ([www.lsmchs.com](http://www.lsmchs.com)) as an information portal. Letters and forms are uploaded. It is impossible to ensure that every single page on the website is updated regularly but we try to keep the home page alive with new reports etc. We urge parents to tell us what they would like to see on the website.

**ClassCharts:** Both Pupils and parents have access to ClassCharts. This facility allows for homework to be uploaded, so that pupils and parents are clear in what work has been set, and what deadlines are required to be met. ClassCharts can also be used to deliver messages and information to specific user groups.

**Social Media:** This is an excellent way to keep in touch with events that are going on in school. You can pick up the links via the school website or go to **@leylandstmarys** for Twitter, **@StMarysLeyland** to view our Facebook site, or **@leylandstmarys** for Instagram. Certain individual departments also have their own Twitter, Facebook or Instagram accounts.

### How should I communicate with school and what I can expect?

Whilst a telephone call is immediate, there is a high possibility that the teacher you want to talk to is teaching at the time called. It is more effective to communicate via email at the **head@ismchs.com** address.

We will respond to communication as soon as is possible. May we remind you that you should only turn up to school if you have an appointment or there is an emergency. If you arrive at school without an appointment we will be polite and check the availability of the person you wish to see. It is never a good idea to address a complaint directly to the person involved. In most cases an email to the Headteacher is the most effective route.

### Reply Slips

On several occasions throughout the year you will be asked to complete **reply slips** relating to a letter about a specific aspect of school affecting your child. We have limited the need for such responses to the bare minimum, not just to reduce the burden for parents, but also to reduce the administrative work for busy teachers. These slips are essential for ensuring that some aspects of school run smoothly. We require a “nil return” and as such Form Teachers will check and chase slips from pupils.

### Progress Evenings

Parents should expect teachers to be prepared, give honest feedback and impart advice on how they can help their children. The main purposes of Progress (Parents’) Evenings are to:

- give parents a clear view of pupil progress
- enable parents to give their views of their child's progress that will help teachers to understand more about the child
- allow parents to discuss their child’s progress with teachers (and in some cases alongside their children)
- allow parents and teachers to agree the support that they can each give to help meet the child's next steps in learning and what in turn the child can do by their own means.

Anxious parents will be given a combination of reassurance, clear information and a real sense of being listened to.

- Issues often arise in the evening when it is easier to send an e-mail and to check a day or so later for a response rather than to wait until the next day to try to phone while at work; this allows teachers to respond effectively.

## Respect

All partners – parents, teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff—have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy. By respecting one another, we will be in a strong position to work together for the benefit of the children whose interests we serve. We hope that by putting our Communication Policy in place, we shall build on our current good relationships with parents, and continue to improve them.

### **What Parents can expect of us:**

St Mary's expects its employees to behave in a respectful and polite manner towards parents, carers and visitors to school.

### **What We Expect of Parents & Carers:**

Equally, school staff have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. In common with all employees, they should not have to endure abusive, disrespectful or threatening behaviour whilst at work.

### **Recording of calls:**

If you call school with an enquiry you will hear a message that says that calls can be recorded. Virtually all organisations have a similar mechanism that helps maintain the mutual respect necessary to address any issues. If school calls you we would only record a call **after informing you** that we intended to do so.

## Complaints

Making a complaint - who to complain to:

If the complaint is about:

- something that has happened or failed to happen in School, contact the Headteacher;
- the actions of the Headteacher, contact the Chair of Governors via the School;
- the actions of a governor, contact the Chair of Governors via the School;
- the Chair of Governors, contact the Clerk to Governors via the School;
- the actions of the governing body, contact the Clerk to Governors via the School.

The School and Governing Body would in most cases hope to resolve concerns and complaints at an informal stage, but the procedures allow for formal consideration of a complaint and an appeal stage if matters cannot be resolved. The School is committed to dealing with complaints as speedily as possible and would plan to complete each stage within 20 school days. From time to time, it may not be possible to complete the process in that timescale. Where that is not possible the complainant will be informed of any delays. Where complaints are made against an individual member of the School staff, that person will be informed of the complaint at the earliest opportunity.

Should you require further guidance you can pick up the full detailed guidance from the school website.