



DISCOVERY
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Communication Policy

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1. Introduction and Aims

St. Martin's School (SMS) believes that clear, open communication between the School and parents/carers has a positive impact on students' learning, as it:

- Provides parents/carers with the information that they need to support their child's education;
- Helps SMS to improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers;
- Builds trust between home and School, which helps School to better support every child's educational and pastoral needs;

The aim of this Policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how SMS communicates with parents/carers;
- Setting clear standards and expectations for the School's response to communication from parents/carers;
- Helping parents/carers to reach the member of SMS staff, who is best placed to address their specific query or concern, meaning that they receive a response as quickly as possible.

Throughout the remainder of this Policy, the term "parents" refers to both parents and carers.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Executive Headteacher

The Executive Headteacher (EHT) is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware and understand this Policy;
- Monitoring the implementation of this Policy;
- Regularly reviewing this Policy.

2.2 Network Manager

The Network Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Satchel platform is up-to-date;
- Ensuring that all users have login details for the Satchel platform;
- Monitoring the effectiveness of communications software (Outlook, Insight), and ensuring that these are updated and fit-for-purpose;
- Updating the SMS website on a timely basis, as appropriate, and as requested.

Note that the final responsibility is shared with the PA to the Deputy Headteacher (DHT).

2.3 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this Policy, the Trust’s Acceptable Personal Use of Resources and Assets Policy; and the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Working with other members of staff to ensure that parents receive timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves).

Staff **aim** to respond to communication during core School hours (08:00 to 16:00, Monday to Friday) or during their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping all staff to find a suitable work/life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

2.4 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all communication with SMS is respectful;
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff, in the first instance;
- Responding to communications from SMS, for example, requests for meetings, in a timely manner;
- Reading all communications from SMS in a timely manner;
- Contacting the School for clarification if they are unclear about any communication they have received.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core School operating hours (08:00 to 16:00, Monday to Friday), or during School holidays.

Refer to the SMS Parent Handbook available via the School website.

3. How St. Martin’s School Communicates with Parents

The sections below explain how SMS keeps parents up-to-date with their child’s education, and what is happening in School.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to ensure that they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

Please note that, in the event of any local and national crisis, or SMS closure, the method of communicating with the School will be subject to amendment. Online and virtual platforms will be utilised, and person-to-person engagement may be limited according to local and national Government guidance.

3.1 Email

SMS uses email to keep parents informed about the following:

- Upcoming School events;
- Scheduled School closures, for example, for staff training days;
- School surveys or consultations;
- Class activities or teacher requests.

3.2 Text messages

SMS texts parents about:

- Emergency School closures, for example, due to bad weather.

3.3 School Calendar

The SMS website includes a calendar for each half term:

- <https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk/calendar-2/>.

Where possible, SMS tries to provide parents with, at least, two weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including special assemblies or key visitors).

Any such event is included in the School Calendar.

3.4 Phone Calls

Staff may contact parents by telephone to discuss a range of matters. Staff use the primary contact provided by the parent on enrolment to the School in the first instance, but may then use alternative contacts, as advised on the student's admission form.

3.5 Letters

SMS regularly sends the following correspondence via email:

- Letters about educational visits and trips;
- Requests for consent forms to be completed;
- The SMS weekly newsletter "News and Views".

3.6 Homework

Homework is logged and communicated to students and parents via the "Satchel" platform.

3.7 Reports

Parents receive reports from SMS about their child's learning, including:

- Termly progress reports covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance;
- A report on the results of Pre-Public Examinations (PPEs).

SMS also arranges regular meetings where parents can speak to their child's teacher(s) about their achievement and progress (refer Section 3.8 below).

3.8 Meetings

SMS holds one parents' evening per year. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other areas of concern. These meetings are currently undertaken remotely using a system called "School Cloud". Parents can find additional information here <https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk/parents/parents-evenings/>.

SMS may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to discuss these additional needs.

3.9 School Website

The SMS website complies with the DfE guidance 'What academies, free schools and colleges must publish online' <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-academies-free-schools-and-colleges-should-publish-online> .

SMS has a number of social media accounts:

- The main Twitter account is @StMartinsSch.

These accounts are for information only, and direct messages are not responded to. Parents should always contact SMS through the communication pathways referenced in this Policy.

Key information about the School is posted on its website, including:

- The timings of the School day and term dates;
- Important events and announcements;
- Curriculum information;
- Important policies and procedures;
- Important contact information;
- Information about before- and after-school provision;
- All communications in letter form can be found at:
 - <https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk/parents/letters-home/>;
- All "News and Views" for the current and previous academic years can be found at:
 - <https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk/parents/news-and-views-2/>

Parents should always check the website before contacting the School directly.

3.10 Home-School Communications Application

As referenced earlier in this Policy, SMS uses the communications application "Satchel", which allows parents to track their child's attendance, detentions, achievement points and homework set.

4. How Parents Can Communicate with St. Martin's School

Parents should use the contact detail in Appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue.

4.1 Email

Parents should always email the School, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues, in the first instance. All members of the SMS community are required to follow email etiquette (refer Appendix 2).

SMS aims to answer all emails in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call, if appropriate) within two School days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should telephone the School.

The use of personal email addresses by staff for any official SMS business is not permitted. All members of staff are provided with a SMS email address, which they use for all official communication.

Members of staff are encouraged to have an appropriate work/life balance when responding to emails, and guidance is that communication is only sent during core School hours (08:00 to 16:00, Monday to Friday) or during their working hours (if they work part-time). Staff are not expected to reply to emails in the School holidays.

Reminders for Staff

- All language and content should follow professional etiquette and standards (refer Appendix 2) at all times;
- If a member of staff is unsure about the tone/content/spelling/grammar of any communication, be it to an internal or an external audience, they should ask their Line Manager for support and guidance before sending;
- Staff must follow all safeguarding and professional standards at all times in the language and content of their communication;
- If a member of staff is concerned about any aspect of correspondence with any student, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or deputies) should be contacted immediately;
- If a student fails to follow the agreed protocols, staff **MUST** stop all correspondence and report the incident to the DSL (or deputies).

Student Email

- Students must use their SMS email and MS Teams accounts for educational purposes only.
- Students are made aware of the expectations and the 'responsible internet and network usage' policy through the Home-School Agreement signed by the parent/student on joining SMS, and receive education regarding safe and appropriate email/MS Teams etiquette throughout their time in School.

4.2 Phone Calls

Parents should only telephone the School Office for urgent issues.

Urgent issues might include such matters as:

- Family emergencies;
- Safeguarding or welfare issues.

For more general enquiries, parents should email the School Office on enquires@st-martins.essex.sch.uk

4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (refer Appendix 1), or email the School Office to book an appointment.

SMS tries to schedule all meetings within two School days of receipt of the request.

Parents may book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns that they have about their child's learning;
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing.

4.4 Letters

Staff should ensure that all letters are quality assured before sending. Approval should also be sought from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) before publishing to the wider School community.

It is important that the security of the official School headed paper is maintained. Therefore, staff with access to this stationery must ensure that security is not compromised.

4.3.1 Expectations of Conduct During Meetings

SMS expects all meetings to be conducted in cordial terms, even if a parent is unhappy with the School. The School listens to parental concerns and attempts to resolve them. Parents are expected to use a cordial and low tone, and not to raise their voice when talking to staff. Recordings of the meetings are not permitted as the School does not consent to any recording of any meeting with parents. If a parent records a meeting covertly, the Trust Board and the Local School Committee do not allow a parent to use any such recordings as evidence in any complaint that may be raised subsequently.

In accordance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), it is not a criminal offence for a private citizen to make a recording in secret provided it is for personal use only. However, if the recording is then shared without the consent of the participants, sold to a third party, or released in the public domain without the consent of the participants, this might then become a criminal offence.

If the member of staff cannot immediately resolve a parental concern, they provide a timeframe for when they will revert. Brief notes are kept of the meeting. A copy of these notes can be sent to parents on request.

Ground rules that support a conducive and productive environment are based on:

- Allowing all parties to participate;
- Listening with an open mind;
- Thinking before speaking;
- Attacking the problem and not the person.

5. Social Media Expectations

In accordance with the Discovery Educational Trust Online Safety Policy, the expectations regarding safe and responsible use of social media applies to all members of the SMS community.

The term social media may include, but is not limited to: social networking sites, blogs, wikis, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and instant messenger.

All members of SMS are expected to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner.

6. Inclusion

It is important to SMS that everyone in its community can communicate easily with the School.

The School website can be translated into many other languages in order that parents and students can opt to read School information in their first language.

7. Monitoring and Review

The EHT monitors the implementation of this Policy and ensures that it is reviewed every three years.

The Policy is approved by the Local School Committee.

8. Links with Other Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Acceptable Personal Use of Resources and Assets Policy;
- Parent Handbook;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Complaints Policy and Procedure;
- Home-School Agreement;
- Parent/Care Code of Conduct;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

Appendix 1: School Contact List

Who should I contact?

For questions about any of the topics in the table below, or to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address;
- Include the child's full name in the subject line.

SMS aims to respond to all emails within two School days.

There are two main communication routes into School that a parent may pursue, should they need to.

- **Pastoral matters relating to the welfare and wellbeing of a child**

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The child's Form Tutor;
2. The child's Head of Year/Deputy Head of Year;
3. The child's Director of Key Stage;
4. The DHT (Student Wellbeing);
5. The EHT.

- **Matters relating to the learning and progress of a child**

The different stages of contact, in order, are:

1. The child's class teacher;
2. The subject's Head of Department;
3. The subject's Head of Faculty;
4. The Assistant Headteacher (AHT) (Progress and Intervention);
5. The DHT (Teaching and Learning);
6. The EHT.

Following these stages of communication helps to ensure that the issue or concern is heard, dealt with and resolved as quickly and as effectively as possible.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
The Child's Learning/Class Activities/Lessons/Homework	The child's class teacher
The Child's Wellbeing/Pastoral Support	The child's Deputy Head of Year
Trip Payments and Parent Pay	Email: finance@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Educational Visits/Trips	The Educational Visit/Trip Leader (as stated on the visit/trip letter)
Uniform/Lost and Found	The child's Deputy Head of Year
Attendance and Absence Requests	To report a child's absence, call the Deputy Head of Year To request approval for term-time absence, email the Deputy Head of Year
Bullying and Behaviour	The child's Head of Year and/or Deputy Head of Year
School Events/the School Calendar	The EHT's PA: Email: zisaacs@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo): Email: SENDCO@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Health & Safety	The School Business Manager: Email: jchipperfield@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Before- and After-School Clubs	The child's Deputy Head of Year
Hiring the School Premises	https://www.st-martins.essex.sch.uk/our-school/lettings/booking-form/
Local School Committee	Chair of Local School Committee: Mr. Des Shillingford at the School address.
PE Fixtures/Clubs	PE Coordinator:

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
	Email: kbowler@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Safeguarding Issues	In an emergency, ring the School and ask to speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead Email: safeguarding@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Medical Enquires	School Nurse: Email: schoolnurse@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
Catering/Meals	Email: catering@st-martins.essex.sch.uk
The School Office	Tel: 01277 238300 Email: enquiries@st-martins.essex.sch.uk

Complaints

The procedure detailed in the Trust's Complaints Policy and Procedure should be followed in the event of any complaint. The document is available via this link <https://www.discoveryeducationaltrust.co.uk/policies>.

Appendix 2: Email Etiquette

The SMS community should carefully consider the email etiquette below before sending emails.

- Use a meaningful and professional subject line.
- Ensure that an email starts with a salutation even if it is informal, i.e. “Hi”. This is far more professional and courteous than an email without any salutation.
- Always sign off appropriate to the recipients.
- Always add a full SMS signature to all external emails.
- If a full SMS signature is not used on an internal mail, ensure that, at a minimum, a phone number is on the bottom of every email.
- If writing about something that relates to previous correspondence, keep all messages on the same chain and do not start a new chain.
- Ensure that the email is addressed to those from whom action/response is required, and that those copied are not required to action/respond.
- If a recipient should reply to all, state that in the email.
- If action is required by a certain deadline, state that in the subject line. For example:
 - Action - Pupil Premium Strategy Statement - Deadline 31 December 2022.
- Ensure that an Out of Office message is always switched and that the message includes details of an alternative contact point.
- If appropriate, add detail to email signature regarding any part-time working arrangements. For example:
 - *My usual working pattern is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, or*
 - *Please note that my normal non-working day is Friday. As a result, my response to emails arriving on a Friday may be delayed.*
- If appropriate, add detail around expectations for others to respond. For example:
 - *Please note – I sometimes send emails at times that suit my own commitments, there is no expectation that you will respond out of usual office hours.*
- If needed, ensure that spell check is switched on.
- If spell check is not relied upon, ensure that every email is proof read before sending.
- Do not use all UPPER CASE letters in any email.