

PENRYN COLLEGE

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Approved by: Full Governing Body – July 2021

Responsible SLT member: Operations Manager

To be reviewed: July 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1. Schools have many lines of communication to maintain with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school. Good communication between all these groups is essential, and children achieve more when everyone works together. Parents, carers and friends of the school can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. In our school, we strive to maintain clear and effective communications with all parents, carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values by keeping parents and the community well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents and members of the community play in supporting the school.

2.2. We have various strategies for communicating with parents and the community which reflect what we believe is important for our school.

2.3. We make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font and add pictures where appropriate. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We recognise and celebrate the contributions made by groups represented in our school and community.

3. Policy Relationships

3.1. Communications cut across many policy areas, so the intention of this policy is not to replicate the information contained elsewhere but to point the reader in the direction of the other policies which can be found on the school website and the VLE. These policies are:

- a. GDPR Policy
- b. Freedom of Information policy
- c. Child Protection and Safe Guarding Policy
- d. Keeping Children Safe in Education Policy
- e. E-Safety Policy
- f. E-Safety Advice for Parents
- g. E-Safety Factsheet for Parents

4. Integrated Communications

4.1. Integrated communications is about ensuring a consistent and clear message across the key areas of output, meaning the messages get stronger and reinforced as they are replicated across the various platforms.

4.2. In terms of methodology, the following process will be used:

- a. News story researched, content drafted, content approved.
- b. News item uploaded to website

- c. If newsworthy for local press, draft into press release
- d. News item incorporated into latest newsletter
- e. News item reworked for social media
- f. If appropriate, text parents about news item

5. Communications Team

5.1. The communications team is made up of 2 members of staff managed by the Operations Manager as follows:

- a. Press Officer & Web & Social Media Co-ordinator. The Press Officer & Web and Social Media Co-ordinator is a permanent, part time member of staff who is responsible for all written, visual and aural communications with newspapers, magazines, journals, television and radio outlets. They are also responsible for ensuring that the website, Facebook, Twitter and any other social media outlets are relevant, informative and up to date with latest news and information about the college. Their principle role is to ensure that the college remains in the public eye through the publication of relevant, informative and eye catching copy in a variety of outlets.
- b. Events Co-ordinator. The Events Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that all events run by the college are planned and executed effectively through timely and appropriate consultation with concerned members of staff responsible for the organisation of such events.

6. Range of Communication Methods

6.1. Existing methods of external communication include:

- a. Celebration Events. The college holds a number of celebration events such as achievements evenings and graduations which are designed to celebrate the successes of our students with their families and friends.
- b. Facebook. The school has a Facebook account which is managed by the Web & Social Media Co-ordinator. They are responsible for ensuring the account remains relevant and carries important news and information to keep the Facebook community up to date with events in the school.
- c. Friday Email. All parents that have registered to receive emails, will receive an email from the school every Friday specific to their child. It contains details of attendance, AMs and BMs, set homework and due dates, timetable for the week ahead and any dates of any forthcoming events.
- d. Governors Meeting Minutes. The Full Governing Body and its supporting Committees meet at least once per term to monitor the progress of the school and the performance of pupils and staff. Minutes of the meetings can be viewed.
- e. Letters for Particular Issues. The school uses letters to communicate important information to parents and carers about events, visits or other concerns. Letters are generally preceded by a text message alerting parents and carers to the incoming letter.

- f. Newspaper, Magazine, Journal, Television and Radio Articles. The school's Press Officer is responsible for ensuring that the school is represented in local media outlets by ensuring that relevant and appropriate events and celebrations are communicated to them in a timely fashion to meet publication or broadcast deadlines.
- g. Open Days. The college holds an Open Day once a year which is designed to show the school to prospective students and their parents/carers.
- h. Parents' Evenings. The college holds a variety of Parent's Evenings designed to showcase pupils work and to give an opportunity for parents/carers and staff to discuss the progress of students towards their final examinations.
- i. Parents' Forum. The Parents' Forum is a small committee of interested parents and carers who contribute to the running of the college through interaction with the Senior Leadership Team, offering advice and recommendations to improve communication with parents, carers and the wider community.
- j. Parents' Handbook. A handbook is available to all parents and carers on the school website which lists a range of services and assistance available to them.
- k. Parent View (OFSTED). This is a system used by OFSTED to gather feedback on our school. It is accessible through the school website.
- l. Questionnaires and Surveys. The school conducts formal surveys with parents, staff and students once per year using an on line survey tool. Other surveys and questionnaires are carried out on an ad hoc basis as they are required using iPads.
- m. Reports to Parents. It is a statutory requirement for parents and carers to receive a report on their child's progress each year. At present the school continues to offer these in paper form but is moving towards a constantly updating 'live' reporting system which will be available electronically at any time.
- n. School iPads. Every pupil and member of teaching staff have a school-owned iPad which are used for communicating and teaching. The iPad remains the property of the college but is lent to a pupil for their time at the college.
- o. School Prospectus. The school prospectus is updated on an annual basis with relevant information and is available to all prospective parents/carers and students.
- p. School Website. The school website is managed by the Web and Social Media Co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring that the website remains relevant and current with news and information for the whole community. They are responsible for uploading information at the request of other members of staff.
- q. Text Messaging. Where a parent has registered a mobile telephone number with the college, the college will use text messaging to communicate short, relevant messages to those people. They are generally used to point parents/carers to other information.

- r. Twitter. The school has a Twitter account which is managed by the Web & Social Media Co-ordinator. They are responsible for ensuring the account remains relevant and carries important news and information to keep the Twitter community up to date with events in the school.
- s. Virtual School. An adjunct to the school website, the Virtual School allows parents/carers, staff and students to see progress being made and to access critical learning information.
- t. Weekly Parent Newsletters. A weekly newsletter containing important and interesting information is produced by the Press Officer and released to parents via email every Wednesday.

7. Home-School Communications

7.1. We send a newsletter to parents in the middle of each school week. 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 or specific nature when necessary. Parents are encouraged to receive information by e-mail.

7.2. We invite parents to support their child's work through a range of activities held in the school throughout the year.

7.3. The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. The website shows how to contact a student's Tutor by email. A parent should expect a response within 48 hours and there is a system for follow up if this is not the case. Parents can have the opportunity to talk with staff when they bring their children to school, or when they collect them after school if they wish.

7.4. If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent or carer by telephone on the first day of absence, to find out the reason for the absence. If no contact can be made with any named person, we will ask our Education Welfare Officer to investigate to ensure the child's safety.

7.5. There is a Parent's Forum designed to integrate the ideas and considerations of parents and carers in to the way the school operates. Parents are encouraged to participate if they wish.

7.6. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. Outside the family home, we are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help children. When any member of staff has concerns about the welfare of a child, these will be passed on to the Safeguarding Officer, who may share this information when it is in the child's best interests to do so.

7.7. 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, full details of which are in our Data Protection Policy. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

7.8. We use the Internet, e-mail, a school website, a virtual school and issue each student with an iPad. Parents are required to sign an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which states what the iPad can be used for and parental responsibility in the case of damage, loss or misuse. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by software, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.

- a. Our school web site provides information about the school and contains essential information for parents and pupils. It also provides an opportunity to celebrate our work with the worldwide learning community and contains updated news items which are linked to our social media sites. It complies with the OFSTED requirements for school websites.
- b. The virtual school provides specific information about your child's progress through their school life and can be used to track their successes in lessons as well as guide parents through the myriad of assessments and reporting structures.
- c. Our social media sites, Facebook and Twitter, are linked to our website and carry similar, if not identical information. Primarily Facebook will be used for the early notification of events and functions while Twitter will primarily be used to communicate immediate events and stories as they happen.

8. Feedback and Complaints

8.1. We welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about this communications policy. If you want to make any comments about this publication or if you require further assistance then please address this to business@penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk.

9. Monitoring and review

9.1. This policy will be reviewed by the Student and Curriculum Committee and approved by the Full Governing Body.

Annexes:

- A. General Social Media Communications Policy
- B. Facebook Communications Policy
- C. Twitter Communications Policy

General Social Media Communication Policy – General Guidelines for using the Website, Facebook and Twitter.

1. The aim of the school’s social media pages is to increase our reach to parents and the local community, to inform them of events and to uphold and boost the schools reputation. In all areas of posting and responding common sense, politeness and honesty must be used as well as correct grammar and spelling.
2. At all times the school respects and protects individual’s privacy. All parents are invited to sign a consent form when their child joins the college which controls where and by how much the college may publish details of individual children. This consent is equally applicable across all social media sites.
3. In order to ensure a cohesive approach to the information being posted across social media we will post;
 - a. information directly linked from the school’s website.
 - b. Other information linked will be only through reputable businesses or organisations that the school is associated or affiliated with for example reports from local newspapers, information or events shared by the local councils or information from Duke of Edinburgh website.
 - c. Events.
 - d. Results.
 - e. Achievements.
 - f. Other news that may affect students such as severe weather warnings and transport.
 - g. News about the school.
4. In order to ensure our social media is used effectively and appropriately, we will not post;
 - a. Links to spam.
 - b. Anything considered offensive or inappropriate.
 - c. Personal Information about pupils or parents unless permission is gained.
 - d. Misleading or False information.

- e. Opinions that don't fit in with school views.
 - f. Anything that goes against current school policies.
 - g. Images of children whose parent or guardian has not given consent for use on the web.
5. If at any time a parent, guardian or member of the public has any concerns about the content of the college's web or social media sites they are requested to get in touch using the secretary@penryn-college.cornwall.sch.uk email address.

Facebook Communications Policy

1. Unlike the website, Facebook allows public interaction between the college account and other users. Therefore there are a few other points to consider when using this platform, as well as an increased need to monitor it.
2. With regard to the school's Facebook account, the following general guidelines will be adopted:
 - a. We will always respond to messages in the school's private inbox.
 - b. We will not remove comments based on opinions or statements.
 - c. We reserve the right to remove comments based on language and content.
3. In order to reduce the risk of inappropriate content from other Facebook users we will:
 - a. Turn on content blockers for inappropriate words.
 - b. Enable the review before posting feature which will allow the college to check for inappropriate content.
 - c. We will avoid posting controversial opinions or views which might cause arguments within the comments area.
4. In the event of inappropriate content being posted, the college will:
 - a. Whether by accident or not, print screen the content.
 - b. If it has been commented on make note of those that have commented.
 - c. Delete the post.
 - d. Write a new post acknowledging the previous post occurred and apologising to all those who saw it, and explaining that all those who commented will be contacted directly.
 - e. Contact those that commented directly with apologies, explanations and assurance that we have followed our policy and will be taking action to ensure this does not happen again.
5. In the event of negative, but not inappropriate, content being posted e.g. complaints, we will:
 - a. Reply as soon as possible.
 - b. Answer any questions so that others with the same queries can also see the response.

- c. Link to the website to provide information.
- d. If we don't know the answer we will let you know, seek the information and respond in due course.
- e. Refer to school contact details if the question is very specific.

6. Monitoring.

Monitor duties will be the responsibility the Web & Social Media Co-Ordinator during their work hours, and also jointly by the designated team of staff with Facebook access. The Facebook page will be active and posted to when the WSMC is active unless events require immediate attention.

Twitter Communication Policy

1. Unlike the website, Twitter allows public interaction between the college account and other users, however this is usually less frequent and more formal/professional.
2. The College's general guidelines for the use of Twitter are as follows:
 - a. It is checked daily by the Web & Social Media Co-ordinator during work hours.
 - b. We will report comments based on offensive language and content. A key difference between Facebook and Twitter is that we cannot delete tweets we dislike and must instead report them to Twitter.
3. In order to reduce the risk of inappropriate content from others we will:
 - a. Accounts are informed before viewing media that may be sensitive.
 - b. Only accounts we follow can tag us in photos.
 - c. Only accounts we follow can send us direct (private) messages.
 - d. Web & Social Media Co-ordinator is directly emailed whenever the account is mentioned in a tweet or sent a direct (private) message to ensure quick reviews and responses.
 - e. Any suspicious, repeatedly offensive or inappropriate accounts can be blocked.
4. In the unlikely event of inappropriate content being posted by or to Penryn College account, we will:
 - a. Whether by accident or not (accidental click on a spam link or hacking could cause this) print screen the content.
 - b. If it has been replied to or commented on make note of relevant accounts.
 - c. Write a new tweet acknowledging the previous tweet occurred and apologising to all those who saw it, and explaining that all those who commented will be contacted directly.
 - d. Block the offending account.
 - e. Contact those that commented directly with apologies, explanations and assurance that we have followed our policy and will be taking action to ensure this does not happen again.
 - f. Change account password immediately.

5. In the event of negative, but not inappropriate, content being posted e.g. complaints, we will:
 - a. Reply as soon as possible.
 - b. If possible answer any questions so that others with the same queries can also see the response.
 - c. Link to the website if information needed is there.
 - d. Refer to school contact details if the question is very specific.

6. Monitoring:

Monitor duties will be the responsibility the Web & Social Media Co-Ordinator during their work hours, and also jointly by the designated team of staff with Twitter access. The Twitter page will be active and posted to when the WSMC is active unless events require immediate attention.

Separated Parents Policy – Appendix to the Communication Policy

As a school, we have a legal duty in education law to treat both mothers and fathers equally, subject to any court order that is in place

Parental separation is very often traumatic for any child concerned and unfortunately these personal family problems can have an impact on the schools the children attend. This policy is an attempt to minimise any impact and to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the school and its staff.

The definition of a parent for school purposes is much wider than for any other situation. The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, including those that are not married;
- Any person who has parental responsibility but is not a natural parent e.g. a legally appointed guardian or the Local Authority named in a Care Order;
- Any person who has care of a child i.e. a person with whom the child resides and who looks after the child irrespective of the relationship

Parents as defined above are entitled to share in the decisions that are made about their child and to be treated equally by schools. In particular, these entitlements include:

- Appeal against admission decisions;
- Ofsted & school based questionnaires;
- Participate in any exclusion procedure;
- Attend parent meetings/school events;
- Have access to school records and receive copies of school reports, newsletters, invitations to school events, school photographs relating to their child and information about school trips

With regards to providing parents with information about their child, we also apply the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act. This states that, as students of secondary school age are deemed to have sufficient capacity to control their own personal information; therefore, if the student does not wish to have information about them, other than an annual report, shared with a parent, then we can refuse to do so. *It is important to note that the provisions of the Education (Student Information) (England) Regulations, which require maintained schools to give parents access to their child's educational record, do not apply to academies.*

The Governing Body recognise that while the parents of some pupils may be divorced or estranged, they are entitled to the above and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the school does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another.

The information provided to the school when the child was enrolled detailing whether parents have parental responsibility for the child will be presumed to be correct unless a court order or original birth certificate proving otherwise is provided to the school. Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the school.

At Penryn College, our sole wish is to promote the best interests of the child, working in partnership with all parents unless otherwise directed by a court order.

Upon receipt of any court order restricting access to a parent, the school retains the right to consult the Local Authority before taking immediate action. The school is only obliged to comply with an order if it is properly notified and has received a copy for its files, and only to the extent that it relates to the school. The school also has no responsibility for enforcing any court order. In the event that the school is not informed of the existence of such an order, neither parent will have rights superior to the other.

Parents are encouraged to resolve contact issues without involving the school directly. The interests of the child will always be paramount when deciding whether to accommodate a request from an estranged parent.

Change in parent responsibility:

- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform school when there is a change in family circumstances. The school needs to be kept up to date with contact details, arrangements for collecting children and emergencies.
- We encourage parents to tell us at an early stage if there is a change in family circumstances. Whenever possible, staff will be informed of such changes so that suitable support can be offered. We will, however, recognise the sensitivity of some situations and maintain the level of confidentiality requested by parents as far as possible
- Newsletters & general school updates can be sent to all parents via parent mail or on the college's Website. These updates will contain all the main events within school, including Achievement and Behaviour Points, weekly homework, parent's evenings etc. Occasionally letters are sent to individual students via their tutor group. These are paper copies only and not sent via parent's mail. We would expect parents to communicate these messages to each other as and when appropriate.
- We will hold one parents evening appointment per child, where all parents are welcome. We would expect parents to communicate with each other regarding these arrangements. The school will only consider separate appointments if there is a court order in place restricting parents attending the same appointment.
- We expect that parents should liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the ordering of school photographs; tickets for performances and other instances.

Summary Reports and Pupil records

Any parent has the right to Summary reports and review pupil records of their children. If the parents are separated or divorced, progress reports will be sent to the parent and address in the school's records specifying where the child resides with the expectation that he/she will share the report with the other parent. If the child is subject to a joint residence order and the school's records formally capture that the child resides at two addresses, then progress reports will be sent to both addresses.

The school will send copies of the progress reports to a parent with whom the child does not reside only if that parent submits a written request.

Disagreements between parents must be resolved between the parents and cannot be resolved by the school or local authority. In the event that the parents are unable to agree with one another on decisions regarding their child's educational programme, including but not limited to placement, participation in extracurricular activities, and consent to evaluation and services, the school will arrange a meeting with all parents (preferably together or separately if required) to attempt to assist the parents to resolve the situation.

Collecting students from school:

The school will release children to parents in accordance with arrangements notified to the school. If one parent seeks to remove the student from school in contravention of the notified arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally reside with has not consented, the following steps will be followed:

- A member of the SLT will meet with the parent seeking to remove the student and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally reside with and explain the request.
- If the parent to whom the child would normally reside with agrees, the student may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted orally.

- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally reside with cannot be reached, the SLT member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon all relevant information available to him/her.
- The Head Teacher or staff member may have to refuse permission if consent cannot be obtained.
- During any discussion or communication with parents, the student will be supervised by an appropriate member of school staff in a separate room.
- In extreme circumstances, if there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if the parent is disruptive, the police should be notified immediately.

All parents can have equal access to all school information via our parent mail system, or alternatively request in writing additional copies of communications which are not available on the school website (all parents are recommended to regularly use the school's website - it contains all back dated newsletters and has a range of information and links).

We will maintain our open door policy with all parents, and a member of the SLT or Head of House/Year will always be available by appointment to discuss any issues.