



HYDESVILLE
TOWER SCHOOL

**OUR
COMMUNICATION
CHARTER
2021**

Introduction

Hydesville Tower School believes emphatically in the importance of the Home-School partnership. The stronger that partnership is, the better a pupil's chances are of fulfilling their potential. Effective communication is a keystone for that partnership, both to and from school, so that staff and parents are able to properly co-ordinate the support for the child.

There is considerable evidence that increased parental engagement leads to improving motivation for a child to do well at school. We are grateful for the level of support that already exists for parents and families enabling their child to attend Hydesville Tower School, but know that the additional home input and interest makes a key difference for outcomes.

The Hydesville Communication Charter

This Charter was produced to help forge this strong link between Home and School. It has drawn on points raised by parents through VoP surveys, PEG (Parental Engagement Groups) and other feedback provided informally, as well as the views of the Senior Leadership Team.

It considers key aspects of communication, whether day-to-day information, calendar events or wider aspects of school development. Implementing the various elements within this Charter will help to strengthen the communication between Home and School, allowing us to work together to support your child's development.

The Charter will give clear indications of what can be expected in realistic communications. We will look to review the success of the elements within, and strengthen according to feedback. I hope that you find our Charter helpful in your dealings with the school.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warren Honey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'W'.

Warren Honey

Headmaster

Our Aim

Hydesville Tower School aims to provide pupils with a first-rate education for children of all ages, so they can develop their potential in all areas. This requires excellent communication between staff, with our pupils and their parents, and with other professionals as required.

If communications are to be effective, they must be timely, appropriate, clear and professional.

Our Principles

Hydesville Tower School recognises that:

- Parents and families are a crucial influence on the education and development of their children and that effective partnerships between home and school have a positive impact on pupils' learning
- It is essential that parents have access to relevant information and that they receive our support, guidance and help in a timely and effective way
- It is vital that parents are consulted and given opportunities to provide feedback to the school
- Parents, siblings, family members and peers all play an important role in supporting learning

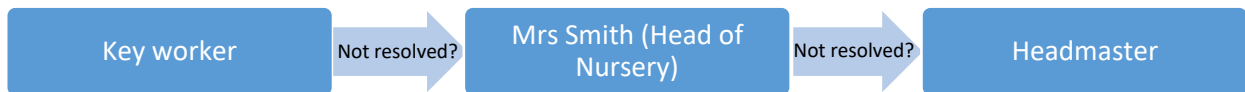
Schools have many lines of communication to maintain, as described in Our Aims. The complexity of the inter-relationships can sometimes result in challenges to keep communication as effective as possible. We appreciate feedback to ensure that we keep developing and improving our standards of communication, where there is something that can be done better without negatively impacting on the core role of educating the children.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications. They must appreciate that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation, and impacts on the trust placed in us by parents or carers.

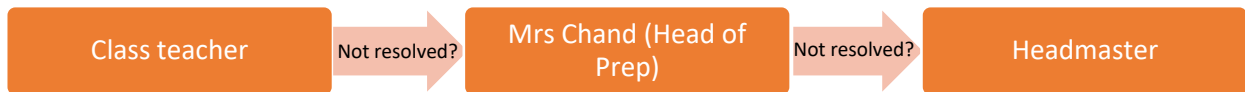
Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, it is important that this remains professional. As such, parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner, a courtesy that staff can also expect in return.

Parents will be provided with various opportunities for contact and means of communicating with school during the course of a year. There is a specific protocol for parents with concerns over academic or pastoral matters, as illustrated in the flow diagrams overleaf:

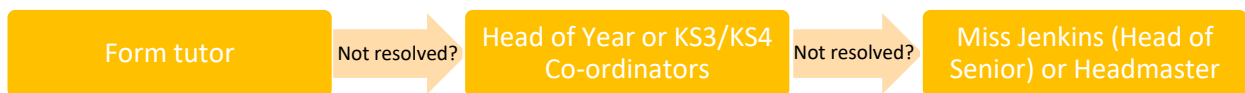
Nursery: for any concerns, speak to the...



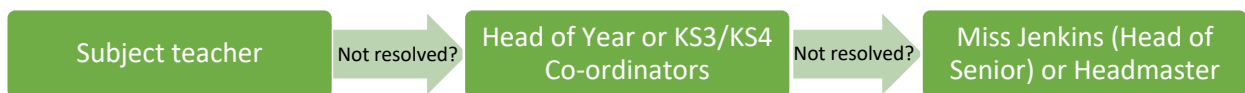
Prep School: for any concerns, speak to the...



Senior School: for any pastoral concerns, speak to the...



Senior School: for any academic concerns, speak to the...



Our Communication Charter is designed to provide open dialogue between parents and school, and for school to provide multiple communication points with parents. This will enable the latter to access useful information during the school week. By following the protocol above, we will try to ensure that any matters are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible.

At whichever stage a concern has been resolved, the appropriate member of staff will communicate the outcomes with the parent (or child).

The Communication Charter

For communication between home and school to be as supportive as possible, the following commitments should be made by staff, parents and pupils. When all three parties are fully engaged in the 'triangle of communication', the partnership will be at its best.

Hydesville Tower School will:	Parents will:	Pupils will:
Update the Calendar on Cognita Connect at the start of each term	Make a note of those events that relate to their child	Look ahead each week to see which events relate to them
Send out a weekly newsletter on Friday, with details of important dates and messages for the week ahead	Read the newsletter within 24 hours of receipt	Read those items in the week ahead that apply to them to identify commitments
Code Cognita Connect messages with Yr Group and INFO or ACTION to assist parents	Read those Cognita Connect messages that relate to their child	Discuss any relevant items with parents and, if necessary, with staff
Provide a regular source of homework and learning resources , as per the homework policy	Monitor extent of time being spent on homework, and check HW diary for messages to be transferred	Record all homework in HW diary, and pass messages on to parents or staff without delay
Set clear targets for pupils at Parents' Evenings and in formal reports	Read reports fully and discuss targets from all feedback with child	Acknowledge the targets set and work hard to achieve them
Mark homework in a timely fashion, to enable feedback with appropriate timeframe	Look at books periodically once homework tasks have been completed to see feedback being given	Complete homework tasks carefully and thoroughly

<p>Respond promptly to e-mails and phone calls from parents, ideally within 48 hours</p>	<p>Appreciate that e-mails can lose sense of co-operation and that sometimes a message to arrange a meeting or call is better</p>	
<p>School to issue Voice of Parent survey in January each year and to respond to the concerns raised</p>	<p>Participate, be honest and open, and reply with key opinions and comments</p>	
<p>Provide Parental Engagement Group opportunities, for parental views to be shared</p>	<p>Participate, be honest and open, and reply with key opinions and comments</p>	
<p>Use Cognita Connect, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as communication channels to advise on upcoming events and share what has been happening in school</p>	<p>Follow the school on social media platforms, and share and like so the messages from school reach as wide a range of people as possible</p>	

The A-Z of School Communication, with top tips for success

Calendar

The Calendar on Cognita Connect will be updated at the start of every term, thus allowing for planning in the coming three months. Parents can access the Calendar by going on to their Cognita Connect app or desktop platform and clicking on the 'Calendar' globe underneath the Hydesville Tower School logo.



Regularly access the Cognita Connect app or desktop platform to see what events and activities are coming up.

E-mail

E-mails can be a useful way of communicating quickly between home and school. However, there are many occasions when its use damages the partnership due to inadvertent offence being caused. Some dos and don'ts of e-mail usage for staff (and parents) include:

- **Try and respond to an e-mail within 48 hours of receipt**, even if just a holding reply. This allows the original sender to know that you are dealing with the enquiry.
- **Be concise and to the point.** Reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications, and a long e-mail can be discouraging to read.
- **Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.** This helps prevent long trains of e-mails, as further questions need to be asked to follow up on missing points. If an e-mail is not going to be sufficient, a response to arrange a time to talk can be more profitable and economical on time.
- **Do not use CAPITALS for significant amounts of the e-mail:** it appears that you are shouting, which you would be unlikely to do in normal conversation.
- **Read the e-mail before you press 'send'.** Many typos and related errors are found on proof-reading an e-mail, and in some cases it becomes evident that the meaning of a statement has been lost. Similarly, it gives the chance to read it as if you were the recipient, thus avoiding the chance of a misunderstanding or offence being caused.
- **Beware of GDPR issues and data breaches.** Consider the use of bcc. for email addresses in case there are reasons why other parties should not have access to the personal details of other parents.

Holidays

During the school holidays, availability of staff is more limited. Phone lines will be available for a shorter period of time each day, and messages can be left. These will be checked each working day, so any message can be passed to relevant people. Emails can also be sent to info@hydesville.com and these will also be checked each working day and passed on as required.

It is worth appreciating that the key person required may be on holiday at the time of your enquiry, so wherever possible, we will ensure someone else is able to respond to your concern.

Homework

Homework serves various educational needs, providing an intellectual discipline, establishing independent study habits, easing time constraints on covering curricular material and supplementing or reinforcing the work covered in class. Additionally, it gives parents or carers a chance to monitor the work practice of the child and raise concerns should they arise.

Children should record all homework in their HW diary, including all relevant details about the task and its deadline for completion. They should show their parents any messages from teachers written in their diary for them, as well as comments in the reverse direction.



Build 'homework time' into your evening routines, so it becomes part of a habit rather than an ordeal to face each time.

Tackling homework on the night it has been set is a sensible strategy to avoid accumulation of tasks, and allows it to be completed whilst the concepts are still fresh in the mind.

Newsletter

Hydesville Tower School sends out a weekly electronic newsletter to parents and staff.

This is sent at about 3.45pm every Friday during term time, and contains a round-up of the events of the week, and photos of the trips and visits. In addition, there are details of the clubs, trips and activities for the following week, as well as any key reminders, messages and notices for parents.

The newsletters are also uploaded to the school website, and can be found here: <https://www.hydesville.com/parents/newsletters/>

Parents' Evenings

Parents' Evenings are the important times in the year when there is a specific opportunity to discuss your child's progress with the Form teacher or subject teacher. Time is at a premium in these sessions, so it is helpful to be clear about the information that is required. Teachers will often provide you with the following aspects about your child's progress:

1. How your child is faring in the subject area, and the progress that has been made since the last reporting stage.
2. What are your child's key strengths and areas for development.
3. Most importantly, **what can be done together to help your child with the next stages of their improvement.**

It is valuable to look on the "areas for development" as a positive matter, rather than a reason to be defensive: children come to school to learn and improve, so great schools look to create pathways for children to achieve their full potential. Parents' Evenings can be a focal point for achieving this, by promoting the dialogue so Home and School are aligned in how the next stage will progress.

Reading Records and Pupil Planners

These are key methods of communication between parents and the school. Regular checking of what has been written will enable swift and focused attention on any challenging aspects of what is being undertaken.

Social Media



Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are popular communication channels that Hydesville Tower School uses to advise on upcoming events, and to report on things that have been happening in school. This provides parents with information on their PC, tablet or smartphone, allowing you to stay up-to-date with what is happening at Hydesville.



Follow [@HydesvilleTower](#) and [@HTS_Headmaster](#) on Twitter and 'like' the Hydesville Tower School Facebook page to receive current news of school. Sharing our stories and liking them helps to spread the word of all the good things happening in the school.

Cognita Connect



Cognita Connect is our parent app which will keep you updated with news of the school's and individuals' achievements, activities and upcoming events. You also need Cognita Connect to authorise trips, book After-School Clubs, pay for trips, lunches, transport and Wrap-Around Care.



Make sure you download Cognita Connect so you can access all the features that it offers.

Telephone Calls

Telephone calls will be made by school where immediate contact with a family member is required, i.e. when a pupil injury of significance has occurred. A staff member will call the first named emergency contact as listed. Where no contact is made, a call will then be made to the second named contact. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will either leave an answer phone message or ensure that repeat calls continue to be made to the contact numbers, where possible.



Ensure that we have current phone numbers for you and any other relevant contacts.

Voice of the Parent Survey

As a Cognita school, we undertake a structured survey annually to capture parent opinion and views on all aspects of our school. By having parents sharing their views and opinions on aspects such as catering, transport, admissions, extra-curricular activities, facilities and teaching, we can set further improvements in motion. This Communication Charter arose out of the survey responses in 2017.

The survey can be anonymous if so chosen but, in the spirit of the Communication Charter, we prefer people to be candid and open with us about their responses. If there has been a concern, we would rather know immediately and try to help resolve it rather than wait until the survey.

Parents' Evening Tips



The following 7 tips are from John Coe, a former Headteacher and chair of the National Association for Primary Education. These can help you make the most of Parents' Evenings in order to support your child:

1. **Arrange childcare for younger children:** this is a rare opportunity to have a frank discussion about your child's progress and those conversations are easier without a little eavesdropper hovering nearby. Having your child with you can be distracting and get in the way of an honest dialogue between you and the teacher, so avoid taking them if possible.
2. **Talk to your child:** before the event, ask your child if there is anything they want to mention. It's important that school and home work together, so if your child has concerns about something that's happening at school, their teacher should know about it.
3. **Make notes in advance:** having questions jotted down in advance prevents a difficulty of your mind going blank. It is best to stick to two or three main points that are really essential to discuss.
4. **Get up to date with their work:** look through their books during homework, or revisit the last report. Make a note of anything that you feel needs to be raised, or that you are particularly pleased about. This will provide a foundation for a two-way conversation, rather than just being about what the teacher wants to pass on.
5. **Focus on your child:** this is not the time to talk about policies. If you have issues regarding the school's approach to homework or other matters, direct them to the Deputy Headteacher or Headmaster. The time with the teacher should be about discussing your child's progress.
6. **Don't store up big issues:** if your child is struggling with maths or having friendship difficulties, raise it with the teacher when it occurs rather than waiting for Parents' Evening. Teachers prefer to know about problems sooner rather than later, and no one wants a child to struggle along for longer than they need to. Likewise, teachers should inform parents about issues as they happen, so there are no nasty surprises at Parents' Evening.
7. **Remember it's a partnership:** you and the teacher are both after the same goal – the improvement in your child. Regular contact with the teacher is beneficial, as is any act that strengthens the sense that you are working together at home and school to help the child's development.