

Effective Communication with Parents/Carers Policy



*Learning together in a changing
world, creating success for all.*



Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre

Policy for developing effective communication with parents/carers

Trinity Fields is a Rights Respecting School, a Healthy School, Investors in Families School, an ECO School, a MOVE school and an Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Flagship School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our pupil friendly and adult version of our “**Shared Values and Aims**”.

School context

Trinity Fields is a **Rights Respecting School**; we are committed to the principles and values of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all areas of our work. We are a school where pupils are at the heart of everything we do. We successfully achieved UNICEF’s “Rights Respecting School Award” in **January 2017** and we have a well-established record of developing pupil engagement at all levels.

Refer to pupil friendly “**Pupil Participation**” policy and our whole school “**Pupil Participation**” policy for further details.

We are a **Healthy School**; we take responsibility for maintaining and promoting the health and wellbeing of the Trinity Fields team (pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors etc.). This includes teaching pupils about how to lead healthy lives by enabling them and staff to take control over aspects of the school environment that influence their health and wellbeing. We achieved the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes National Quality Award in **March 2018, with re-accreditation in December 2020**.

Refer to “**Health and Well-being for Pupils**” policy and our whole school “**Health and Well-being**” policy for further details.

We are an **Investors in Families School**. We are committed to developing active and effective relationships with parents/carers and families and recognise the value of close partnership working to improve outcomes for our pupils. We were the first Special School in Wales to achieve the Investors in Families Quality Mark, and regularly share our excellent practices with other settings.

We demonstrate our commitment to the Rights to Action agenda and value and support the important role that families play in the education of their child. We strive to promote social inclusion and a sense of wellbeing for families through positive participation in their child’s education.

During the re-accreditation process (2019), the school’s work was judged to be of a very high quality. Family and Community Engagement are fully embedded and it was evident that the school works hard on its journey towards excellence. The assessor was very pleased to award the school the **Diamond Standard**.

We have demonstrated through a national annual assessment that we have the capacity to play a strong leadership role in developing inclusion best practice across a network of schools; as well as being committed to extending those networks and develop classroom-based research.

Refer to “**Inclusion**” policy and to **IQM assessment reports** for further details.

In **summer 2022** we gained our **Platinum ECO Schools Award**; the Eco-Schools programme is designed to be pupil-led and looks at the impact of our actions on the environment.

Our sustained journey towards attaining the Platinum Award showcases pupils’ ideas and helps to inspire others to make the right environmental choices.

More recently (2019), the school started its journey towards becoming a **MOVE school**; successfully accredited at Silver level in **December 2021**. The MOVE Programme is an activity-based practice that enables children and young people with physical disabilities to sit, stand, walk, and transition as independently as possible.

Our overarching philosophy is summarised in the following statement:

“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning experiences. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.

Education in Wales: Our National Mission

Our work with pupils and their families will be developed building upon Wales’ National Mission. This national mission is ambitious, innovative and confident ensuring that we all take responsibility for all of our pupils to have equal opportunities to reach the highest possible standards.

Trinity Fields will continue to develop as a learning organisation to ensure it has the capacity to adapt to and explore a range of new approaches which results in improved outcomes and well-being for all of our pupils.

In order to realise our shared vision and approaches in delivering Wales’ transformational curriculum that will enable all of the pupils at Trinity Fields to make the progress commensurate with their individual needs we are committed to the 4 key enabling objectives, detailed in “**Education in Wales: Our national mission (2017)**”. These are:

- **Developing a high-quality education profession.**
- **Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards.**
- **Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellent, equity and well-being.**
- **Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.**

The core purposes and values that are associated with these prestigious national awards are encapsulated in our vision and aims:

“We believe that everyone at Trinity Fields is entitled to have access to the very best learning opportunities. These will be provided within a safe, caring and stimulating environment that will enable all learners to achieve their full potential through learning opportunities that meet their individual needs”.

Rationale

This policy has primarily been developed to ensure that all staff communicate effectively with of the parents/carers. As an Investor in Families school we are fully committed to creating and sustaining effective communication links with all parents and carers.

By following the principles within this policy document we will ensure that all communication between us and a pupil's home is clear, professional, timely and relevant.

We always encourage parents/carers to contact the school if there any issues regarding their child's progress or well-being. The sooner we are made aware of any issues or concerns then the sooner we can work with parents/carers to rectify the situation.

Aims of the policy

To provide a welcoming and friendly school environment by:

- Making sure our reception staff are able to respond to the needs of parents/carers;
- Asking parents/carers in what ways were they made to feel welcome;
- Making the school a safe and vibrant environment;
- Providing clear signs around the school to help parents/carers.

To communicate fully with parents/carers by:

- Providing a regular and up-to-date information service through: annual planner, newsletters, Parent/Carer Guides, use of "Teachers to Parents" texting service, Seesaw App, effective use of social media such as Twitter, the school website etc.;
- Providing parents/carers with advance notice of all school events and dates, with updates as appropriate;
- Actively involving parents/carers in the celebration of their child's success;
- Promoting systems of active communication between home and school.

To actively involve parents/carers in the education and progress of their child by:

- Offering parents' evenings once a term to meet class teams;
- Holding PCP annual review meetings;
- Producing an annual report for their child which fully reflects their progress and achievements;
- Making effective use of Seesaw and T2P texting service for daily contact;
- Providing termly information on class themes and contexts for learning.

To involve parents/carers in all aspects of school life by:

- Welcoming parents/carers to school;
- Encouraging parents/carers to be part of our Parent Teachers Association;
- Making relevant school policies available to parents/carers and ensuring appropriate procedures are clear;
- Providing opportunities for prospective parents/carers to find out about the school through the induction process;
- Providing impartial guidance and opportunities for parents/carers to discuss transition and pupils' futures when they are ready to leave Trinity Fields;
- Offering training opportunities and information as and when required.

How we communicate with our parents/carers

We will make use of a wide range of communication systems to ensure that our communication with parents/carers is as effective as possible. The following list gives some examples of the strategies that we currently use; this list is by no means exhaustive and will change over time.

Parents/carers of pupils new to the school

- The parents/carers of prospective pupils are invited to visit the school.
- The school may also visit the prospective new pupil at his/hers current school, if they are of school age.
- Transition meeting(s) are arranged for parents/carers in the half-term prior to their child starting the school. **See Transition Policy and flowchart for further details.**
- Parents/carers are provided with a school pack that contains relevant forms, information, school prospectus etc.

Parents/carers of existing pupils

- Parents/carers receive regular update letters from the headteacher.
- Parents/carers meet with their child's class team 3 times a year for a parent/carers meeting to review and discuss progress.
- All of the school's key information and documents can be found on the school website.
- Questionnaires are sent to parents/carers on a range of issues and throughout the year.
- Annual reviews are held once a year. Parents/carers are encouraged to attach their views to the review paperwork.
- All parents/carers receive a copy of their child's annual report; again parents/carers are encouraged to complete a "Parents/carers views" page.
- Staff also make telephone calls to parents/carers as and when necessary; staff record the main details of the telephone conversation within each pupil's chronology book.

Special arrangements

We will always make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent/carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand any communication from us. An example of this would be providing an interpreter for a parent with hearing impairment to participate fully in school meetings (PCP annual reviews, parent/carer evenings etc.), texting and messaging (Seesaw) that parent/carer rather than making telephone calls.

Home-school diaries

Following on from the COVID-19 pandemic our use of home-school diaries has been replaced by using the "**Seesaw**" App to maintain regular contact with the majority of our parents/carers. This confidential messaging service is far more dynamic and allows class teams to share privately photographs and videos as they happen.

Home support worker

We have a full-time home support worker who is in regular contact with many of our families. She has been issued with a school mobile phone which is solely used for school purposes. In a few cases where there may be difficulties in communicating with parents/carers then class teams will often go through the home support worker if the pupil is open as a current case; this also happens where parents/carers are not so comfortable speaking directly with school staff or with other agencies. This happens in a very small number of cases.

School staff will always work closely with the home support worker to help gain parents/carers' confidence, trust and develop a good working relationship between them, and the school.

Any confidential or sensitive information is immediately passed on to a senior leader and where necessary notes are added to the pupil's chronology book and to the pupil's home support file. Our home support worker has regular contact with the assistant headteacher who provides line management; any less urgent concerns and daily logs are addressed in these meetings.

Letters

Staff will endeavour to respond to parent/carer letters as quickly as possible, usually via "Seesaw". Any letter of complaint should be referred to the headteacher.

Letters to parents/carers must be approved by one of the senior leaders before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed in pupil files.

Copies of all letters that are sent home will be saved on the "O" drive.

"Teachers2Parents" texting service and emails

The school has a text messaging and email system it uses to communicate to parents. If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be printed and included in the pupil's chronology book. Staff should forward e mails from parents to the senior leaders and should always do so if the content relates to their concerns.

Refer to protocols for using Teachers2Parents texting service for further information.

Telephone calls

Our admin team will check for phone messages each day. When staff speak to a parent/carer on the telephone they must record the key points of the conversation in the pupil's chronology book and should notify a senior leaders of any significant issues or concerns.

We encourage our admin team not to interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call, unless it is absolutely essential.

If a member of the admin team has a detailed conversation with a parent/carer either on the telephone or if they are visiting school the member of staff should email senior leaders/class teacher with the main points of the conversation. This is absolutely essential, especially if the parent/carer raises any concerns or issues. This information must then be printed out and attached to the pupil's chronology book.

Social networking/Blogs etc.

No member of staff must communicate with parents/carers or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". This also includes being "friends" with past pupils.

We also have parents who are employed in the school. This does present some further challenges with regards to the use of social media etc. **If staff, including those who are parents of our pupils have any concerns about this then they should speak with one of the senior leaders for further information.**

If staff are being requested to be "friends" with a parent/carers then should notify a senior leader as a matter of urgency.

Refer to Caerphilly's protocols for the responsible use of social media for further information.

School prospectus

The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents/carers a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated every year at the beginning of the autumn term and is available on the school website.

School website

The school website provides a wide range of current information about:

- the school;
- policies, useful documents and procedures;
- news stories;
- video clips about changes and development to education in Wales;
- governors and their work;
- reports on the school;
- how we use grant funding to support pupil and staff development etc.

The website is updated regularly to ensure that the information is accurate and relevant.

Pupil Centred Planning (PCP) Annual Reviews

We have excellent parents/carers attendance at PCP annual review meetings. These pupil focused meetings provide valuable opportunities for school staff and other colleagues to have face to face discussions with parents/carers about their child's progress and future learning.

Accurate minutes of these meetings are taken by an experienced member of the admin team and all attendees and those who are involved with that particular pupil receive the notes and any actions that are required.

Written reports

Once a year we provide a full written report to parents/carers on their child's progress. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.

Pupils, as well as their parents/carers are also given the opportunity to comment on their own progress and parents are invited to make a similar comment.

In addition, parents/carers meet their child's class team three times during the year for a private consultation. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for additional support and the practising of skills.

Annual planner

A calendar of school events will be produced at the start of each autumn term and sent home to all parents/carers. The annual planner is also available on the school website.

The above strategies for developing and maintaining effective communication between home and school are by no means exhaustive.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed as detailed in the school's policy review cycle. It may also be necessary to review and amend it sooner to reflect both local and national changes.

Signed		Headteacher
Signed		Chair of Governors
This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review cycle.		

As a Rights Respecting School we are committed to embedding the principles and values of the United Nation Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

This policy enables our pupils to access and enjoy the following articles of the convention:

Article 12: Every child has the right to be heard.

Article 28: Every child has the right to an education.

Article 29: Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Article 42: Every child has the right to know their rights.