

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Revised August 2018. Also available on School website for parents.

(a) Routine Communications

A successful partnership between Sevenoaks School and parents and educational guardians is based upon open communications. We foster links with the community, parents, pupils and former pupils. The Tutor is the first point of contact for parents, and he or she should be contacted in the first instance about any concern regarding an individual pupil. Tutor details are included in the blue book that parents receive at the start of each academic year. More wide ranging queries should be addressed to your Divisional Head or the appropriate Deputy Head. admin@sevenoaksschool.org should always be copied in.

(i) Bulletin and School Calendar

A daily bulletin is published within school and a summary placed on the school website giving details of events and activities, such as sporting events, plays and concerts. All parents and educational guardians are provided with a hard copy of the termly calendar. The sports calendar is available on the school's website.

(ii) Letters to Parents

The Headmaster writes to all parents at the beginning of each academic year to give general information on a range of matters that are likely to be of interest to all parents as a whole. Housemasters/mistresses/form tutors and other members of staff will also write to parents from time to time about matters of concern to a particular group of parents, such as a trip or visit involving one year group. Most letters to groups of parents are sent by email. Several termly newsletters are also sent out, detailing events, photos, videos and school news.

(iii) Email

Email is the simplest form of communication. Your son/daughter will be given an individual email account during his/her time at the school, which they are expected to check daily. Pupils can send and receive emails from many computers in the school and remotely.

Parents may wish to use email for contacting staff. The format for staff emails is: initials [abc]@sevenoaksschool.org; initials can be found at the front of the blue book. Staff may take time to respond because of teaching commitments, but you should receive a reply within 24 hours during term time.

Where parents are separated or divorced copies of letters and emails will normally be sent to both parents.

(iv) School Website

The website provides a range of information about the school. There is a dedicated area on the website for parents to access additional information.

(v) Telephone

Mobile phones are allowed on the understanding that they are not used during lessons or during periods of private study. Mobile phones must be clearly and indelibly named and are the responsibility of the pupil. Cameras on mobile phones must not be used in such a way as to harass or cause distress to another pupil or member of staff.

The school monitors the use of ICT to protect from inappropriate sites but parents need to be aware that it is not possible for the school to filter or monitor websites accessed by students on personal mobile phones with 3G internet access.

Most pupils have mobile phones. Boarders have access to in-coming phones. In an emergency pupils should go to Manor House and ask to be able to phone; boarders can ask house staff.

(vi) Video-calling

Those boarders with laptops or other internet-enabled mobile devices may use Skype, Facetime or other video-calling services to contact friends and family at any reasonable time of day, subject to technical restrictions of the school's network.

(vii) Parents Online

The school publishes all academic reports to Parents Online.

(b) Emergency Communications

Parents must ensure the school always has current contact telephone numbers and email addresses so that contact can be made in an emergency, such as unplanned closure due to power failure, or an injury to your son or daughter. We will attempt to contact you by telephone if your son or daughter is injured or taken seriously ill.

Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or text message directing them to a special message posted onto the school's website. If the school is closed for more than one day, due to adverse weather or some similar problem, an update will be posted on the website at least once a day.

In the unlikely event of a more serious incident, the response will, inevitably, depend on the circumstances. The **first and greatest priority will always be to look after the pupils**. The second priority will be to give parents the fullest possible account of events as soon as possible; we will always tell you personally if your son or daughter is injured, or has suffered some mishap unless the emergency services take this responsibility and instruct otherwise.

(c) Parental responsibility

The school will assume both parents have parental responsibility unless notified to the contrary. We would require proof if other family members (e.g. step-parents, other relatives) have parental responsibility.

The school cannot get involved in disputes between parents in the event of separation or divorce. All correspondence and information will be sent to all holders of parental responsibility (letters, school reports, calendar, invitations to school events) unless there is a court order to the contrary (which is rare). We would hope that parents can agree about attendance at parents' evenings. In rare cases, we will endeavour to arrange for separate appointments at parents' evenings if required, but will not do so if staff will be very busy and therefore unable to meet other parents and pupils. Parents who have requested separate interviews in principle will be advised in advance if we cannot do so. Pupils also attend from Year 8 and above; they may not wish to sit through each interview twice, nor may it be desirable for them to do so.

The interest of the pupil must always be paramount and it is important that parents agree on decisions to avoid the child or the school being involved in disputes including, for example, participation in school trips, or subject choices. Parents should be aware that in the event of disagreement, the school will endeavour to meet the pupil's choices or preferences where we judge it to be in his or her best educational interest. If one parent asks for a detention to be deferred, we will assume that this has been agreed by both parties.