

The Cornerstone Academy Communications Policy

Approved By: Ofsted – Pre-Opening

Reviewed by: Cornerstone Local Support and Scrutiny Board

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Introduction

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 the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. Parents/carers can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

At Cornerstone we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents/carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents/carers play in supporting the school.

We have various strategies for communicating with parents/carers. Some of our communications are in accordance with a statutory requirement; while others simply reflect what we believe is important for our school.

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

Home-school agreement

Our home-school agreement is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the schools aims and values, the schools responsibilities towards the students, the responsibilities of parents/carers, and what the school expects of the students. We ask parents to sign this agreement when their child starts at Cornerstone.

The agreement covers the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the school, and our expectations regarding attendance and behaviour.

Written report to parents/carers: student's achievements

For full time students, we provide a written report to each student's parents/carers on the progress and achievements in the time they have been with us. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. For all other students, there will be a number of both verbal and written communications regarding progress and achievement for parents and carers to review.

For full time students, as well as receiving the annual written report, parents/carers meet their child's learning mentor 3 times a year for a 'structured conversation'. 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 improvement. Parents/carers are able to see their child's work during these meetings. We encourage parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. For part time students, 'structured conversations' will be held as part of the referral process. Other conversations will be had throughout the placement.

We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent/carer wishes to invite to a school meeting. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent/carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

Cornerstone Brochure

The Cornerstone prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents/carers a full picture of provision at our school. We update this constantly throughout the year.

Cornerstone Website

Cornerstones website contains a range of specified information on our school. It also contains a live Twitter feed and blog that is updated on a regular basis.

Public Access Documents

The Trust makes a range of documentation available to parents/carers on Cornerstones website which includes our policies, school development plans and Ofsted report.

Home-school Communication

The Trust encourages parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers see parents/carers immediately, if at all possible. Where this is not possible, the parent/carer makes an appointment.

If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent/carer (by telephone and text) to find out the reason for the absence.

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

We recognise that students have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so those students may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare and Social Services.

We recognise that students have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our students, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused students. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the child protection lead (Principal), who may share this information with the Social Services.

We hold information on students in Cornerstone, 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/carers 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. Parents/carers have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

Communication within Cornerstone

- All our procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- Written communications are delivered by e-mail.
- Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff.

Electronic communication

- We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have school website.
- All school members may communicate with others through the Internet.

There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our Safe Use of the Internet policy. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines.

Use of photographs and names

Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes, including displays, records of practical work (for example art or technology projects), and records of important school events.

We may use photographs of students or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the academy prospectus, on the academy website, or in report to parents/carers. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of student participating in events at academy.

Parental/carers permission is obtained during induction. The office holds a list of those students for whom permission has NOT been given and all academy staff are aware of the names on it.