



The Marlborough Science Academy <u>Home School Communications Policy</u>	
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Relationship with other policies/documents:

Complaints Policy and Procedures
 Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

Introduction

Parental involvement and support is important to us; as an academy, we place significant emphasis on clear communication and collaboration. We work hard to ensure parents and carers are able to keep in touch with the school and feel effectively informed about their child's progress and the opportunities that exist for them. It is recognised however, that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; and it is recognised that parents and carers also have very busy lives. Modern communication methods can mean more efficient sharing of information, though this needs to be structured to ensure that it is manageable for staff whose primary responsibility is to teach young people.

Keeping up to date with The Marlborough Science Academy

There are a number of ways of helping parents to keep up to date with what is happening at school.

- The vast majority of the information that is required is on the website <https://www.themarboroughscienceacademy.co.uk/#> including letters home, newsletters, school calendar and details about the curriculum your child is studying. This can also be accessed in a variety of languages.
- The Marlborough Science Academy's social media pages:
<https://www.instagram.com/themarboroughscienceacademy/>
<https://www.facebook.com/TheMarlboroughScienceAcademy>
<https://twitter.com/marlboroughsch>
- Communication Hub on SIMS In Touch– which allows generation of whole school e-mails or to target year/form groups, individuals or specific distribution groups.
- EduLink

Contacting the Academy

There may be times when a parent may wish to contact someone at school about your child.

TELEPHONE

If a parent wishes to discuss a matter concerning their child, telephone the school and reception will know who to forward the call/message to the relevant member of staff. If the matter is urgent and the person required is unavailable, a member of staff will get back to the parent as quickly as possible. For routine queries or concerns, we have a policy of getting back to you within one working day. The issue will either be resolved over the phone or a meeting will be organised to discuss the matter.

The academy telephone number is 01727 856874.

Please note that lessons cannot be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

EMAIL

The preferred method of getting in touch with school is via email. For general enquiries, or if unsure you to speak to, please contact the school office: admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk

Please note the following:

- Teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work emails to be checked during a teacher's personal time.
- Academy staff are generally not in a position to respond to emails during holiday periods. We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within three working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply.
- Teachers on occasion may find it easier to email you regarding your child using the contact details we have on or via EduLink messaging. It is acceptable to continue these conversations directly with the member of staff once they have contacted you, but any subsequent new question or issue should be raised through the admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk address so that it can be tracked and routed accordingly.

MEETINGS

- From time to time it may be necessary to arrange a meeting with staff in the academy. Please do so through contacting the relevant member of staff via admin. Meetings with parents without an appointment are not possible, parents should only attend school where a meeting has been pre-arranged.
- Subject Enquiries
For subject specific matters, parents should email the office at admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk marked for the attention of the relevant teacher.
- Pastoral Matters
To discuss matters such as learning, progress, welfare, behaviour, health, attendance etc., parents should contact their child's tutor in the first instance by emailing admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk and marking it for the attention of the relevant member of staff

Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff.

- It is recognised that sometimes parents receive news that may cause upset. It is not appropriate to come to school expecting to speak to a particular member of staff without an appointment. It is unlikely that a member of staff will be available to see a parent without an appointment. Appointments can be arranged via reception; a pre-arranged meeting will allow staff to have the right information to hand and to meet at a convenient time that both suits the parent and fits with that member of staff's timetable and other fixed commitments.
- If a parent urgently needs to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, they should phone ahead and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see them.
- For non-urgent meetings staff aim to meet with within five working days. The academy will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

Contacting You

The preferred method of contacting parents is via email and messaging via EduLink, and occasionally through SIMS In Touch.

EduLink will give parents current information on attendance, rewards and consequences and reports. Home Learning is also signposted on EduLink.

For all year groups, parents' evenings will be booked via Edulink for both face to face and online parental consultations. If you need support with accessing this system please email admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk

School Social Media Feeds

The school uses our social media channels to promote student achievements, subject information and key events. This is for the benefit of parents and students. Social media feeds are not monitored for inbound messages. If a parent has a question about an event or other post on social media, they should contact the school either email or call the school to be assured of a timely response.

Social media feeds operate on a 'best efforts' basis by staff whose primary commitment is to the teaching and learning of students. Expectations around frequency and timeliness of updates need to be moderated accordingly, particularly after normal school hours or during holiday periods.

The Academy understands that parents and carers particularly enjoy updates and photographs from school trips. The primary concern of staff needs to be the safety and learning of students on the trip and there may not be time to post about trips in detail. Parents/carers should also be aware that we are often in parts of the country or abroad where there is limited signal, so it may only be possible to update at the end of the day. The school endeavours to update parents on the return time for trips, though students are encouraged to contact home themselves directly.

Appropriate use of Social Media

The Academy's social media sites contain terms and conditions relating to acceptable comments and posts. These terms and conditions are available on the main school Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages. The Academy reserves the right to remove posts on these pages that breach the terms and conditions. The Academy is aware that some parents set up group chats for classes or year groups on WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms. Whilst the Academy recognises that these can be useful for some parents, these are not endorsed by the academy, and we will never post official messages on these forums. On occasion, information provided by parents on these forums can be inaccurate or not representative of the academy's view. Parents should rely on official social media channels, the school website (<https://www.themarlbroughscienceacademy.co.uk/#>) or emails received directly from the academy.

The Academy's teachers and staff have a right to a personal life and to be protected from harassment online. The Academy asks that parents avoid addressing staff members directly via social media and avoid posting inaccurate or defamatory statements about staff or the academy on social media platforms. Contact with the Marlborough Science Academy should be made using telephone, email or in person by appointment.

Complaints need to be in accordance with the complaints policy which can be found on the school's website.

No response

If a response has not been received within three working days, please contact by emailing admin@marlborough.herts.sch.uk or telephone and we will follow up your enquiry.

Communication with parents and carers is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

If things go wrong

At The Marlborough Science Academy, we value the positive relationships forged with parents and visitors. Close links with parents and the community are encouraged and we believe that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. We also strive to make The Marlborough Science Academy a place where, as adults, we model for students the behaviour we teach and expect. In general, we place a high importance on good manners, positive communication, and mutual respect.

Almost all parents, carers and visitors to The Marlborough Science Academy are keen to work with us and are supportive of the academy. It is very rare for things to go wrong. However, on these very rare occasions the behaviour of a small number of parents falls short of what we expect, and this can have a significant effect on the members of staff involved. This sometimes manifests itself in an inappropriate tone, aggression, or abuse towards members of the academy community. This can be in written communication (including social media), on the telephone or in face-to-face incidents.

In these situations, we expect members of staff to behave professionally, attempting to defuse the situation where possible and seeking the involvement and support as appropriate of other colleagues. Staff who face these situations have licence to end any conversation (face to face or on the telephone). They should then refer the incident to a senior member of staff who will take appropriate action or invoke the provisions of this policy.

The overriding principle is, however, that all members of the Marlborough Science Academy community have the right to work or be in the academy without fear of any kind of threat, aggression, or abuse from parents. The board of Governors has a requirement to protect staff and students from such behaviour.

The progress and well-being of the parent's child(ren) will be fully considered. Actions taken against the parent will be reasonable and proportionate. The parent will have the opportunity to put their views forward at every stage. In the case of the imposition of conditions or a ban from school, robust review processes involving the Chair of Governors and then the board of governors are in place to ensure fairness.

Definition of unacceptable communication

The Academy considers that aggressive, abusive, or insulting behaviour or language from a parent presents a risk to staff or students. Unacceptable behaviour/communication is such that makes a member of staff or student feel threatened, demeaned, harassed, or upset. This includes frequent, persistent, or demanding communication which puts a strain on members of staff. This can be through face-to-face contact, on the telephone or in written communication (including social media). The following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour:

- frequent or inappropriate communications of a superficial nature or about information that can easily be found on the website
- persistent and frequent communication, often about issues which have already been addressed
- any kind of insult as an attempt to demean, embarrass or undermine
- any kind of threat
- raising of voice so as to be intimidating
- physical intimidation, e.g. by standing very close to him/her or the use of aggressive hand gestures
- use of foul or abusive language
- any kind of physical abuse
- allegations which turn out to be vexatious or malicious.

The Marlborough Science Academy's Approach to Dealing with Incidents

If a parent/carer/visitor behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the academy community, the headteacher or appropriate senior staff will assess the level of risk before deciding on a future course of action. The course of action will be reasonable and commensurate with the assessed level of risk.

Risk Assessment

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment in order to help make a decision about the level of response. In all cases the response will be reasonable and proportionate.

Recording of Incidents

Staff/students subject to inappropriate behaviour/communication and witnesses will make written statements about incident(s) which will be kept in a file with subsequent letters. This file will be kept by the Headteacher's PA. Depending on an assessment of the risk of retaliation to witnesses or individuals, statements made by adults these may be made available to the parent if they request it.

The School's Response

Following the completion of the risk assessment, the Headteacher will decide the level of action to be taken. All actions taken will be considered and proportionate. Please note that it is rare for these actions to be taken and incredibly rare to get beyond stage 2.

Actions will include the following:

1. Clarify to the parent what is considered acceptable behaviour by the school

In the vast majority of circumstances, it is sufficient to ensure the parent is clear about behaviour standards expected by the school. This could be explained by e-mail, letter or conversation with the Headteacher, pointing out the requirements of this policy. Depending on the parent's response a meeting may then be held to discuss the situation and how this can be avoided in future.

2. Invite the parent to an informal meeting to discuss events

This could be helpful to discuss and diffuse the situation.

Members of academy staff will always be accompanied by at least one other colleague at any such meeting.

The main points of discussion and any agreed actions should be noted, and a follow-up letter or e-mail sent to confirm the school's expectations and any agreed actions.

3. Impose conditions on the parent's contact with the academy and its staff

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Parents of enrolled students have an 'implied licence' to come onto academy premises at certain stated times. It is for schools to define and set out the extent of such access. Parents exceeding this would be trespassing.

Depending on the type, level or frequency of the unacceptable behaviour, the academy may consider imposing conditions on the parent's contact. These conditions may include (but are not exclusively):

- being accompanied to any meeting with a member of academy staff by a member of SLT
- restricting contact by telephone to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting written communications to named members of the senior leadership team
- restricting the academy's response to communications, particularly in a case where points raised have been addressed previously
- restricting attendance at events to those where the parent will be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team.

- any other restriction as deemed reasonable and proportionate by the Headteacher.
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In this case the parent will be informed by letter from the Headteacher the details of the conditions that are being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations in writing about the conditions to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the conditions. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the date of the parent's letter.

If the decision is to confirm the conditions imposed, this decision will be reviewed by the Board of Governors after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governors. This and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full Board of Governors. Governors may decide to maintain, extend or remove the conditions. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the Governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

When deciding whether it will be necessary to maintain, extend or remove the conditions, Governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the conditions, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

4. Imposing a ban

Where other procedures have been exhausted and aggression or intimidation continues OR where there is an extreme act of violence then the school may consider banning the individual from academy premises. This will include banning a parent from accessing staff by written communication or telephone.

In these circumstances, the individual would be advised in writing by the Headteacher that a provisional ban is being imposed. The parent would then be given 10 working days from the date of that letter to make representations about the ban in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors would then decide whether to confirm or remove the ban. This would be communicated to the parent in writing within 10 working days of the receipt of their letter.

If the Chair's decision is to confirm the ban, parents in these circumstances will be offered an annual meeting about their child's progress, usually with a member of senior staff.

A decision to impose a ban will be reviewed by the Board of Governors after approximately six months (and every six months after that, if appropriate). The parent will be invited to make written representation to the Governors; this and the evidence from the Headteacher will be considered at a meeting of the full Board of Governors. Governors may decide to remove the ban, extend the ban or impose conditions on parents' access to the academy. The decision of the review will be communicated to the parent by the clerk to the Governors within 10 days of the date of the meeting.

In deciding whether to remove or extend the ban or impose conditions, Governors will give consideration to the extent of the parent's compliance with the ban, any appropriate expressions of regret and assurance of future good conduct received from him/her and any evidence of the parent's co-operation with the school in other respects.

5. Removal from The Marlborough Science Academy

Parents who have been banned from the academy premises and continue to cause a nuisance will be deemed to have committed a section 547 offence. They will be considered as trespassers. In these circumstances the offender may be removed from the academy. This may be carried out by a police officer or a member of staff. Legal proceedings may be brought against the parent.

6. Complaints policy

Any parental complaint that arises from incidents of abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the complaints policy.

7. Monitoring by the board of governors

All actions taken under this section of the policy are also monitored by the board of governors. Details of incidents are reported to the governors as part of the Headteacher's report to trustee meetings, which take place five times per year. Parents' names and details are not identified to the board.

This policy is reviewed by the academy's board of governors every two years.