



New Direction School



Communication Policy

Reviewed Date:	Reviewed By:	List of changes	Next Review
August 2021	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> added Class charts to communication 	August 2022
August 2022	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed with no Changes 	August 2023
August 2023	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed with no Changes 	August 2024
October 2024	Adrian Anderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed with changes to MIS from Class charts to Arbor Minor edits 	August 2025
August 2025	Luke Collins	No major edits	August 2026

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Policy statement

New Direction Independent Special School is committed to clear, respectful, timely and accessible communication with pupils, parents/carers, staff, professionals and commissioning local authorities. Good communication supports safeguarding, attendance, learning, wellbeing and strong home-school relationships.

1. Aims

This policy sets out how the school communicates and how parents/carers and other stakeholders can communicate with the school. It is intended to ensure that communication is professional, consistent, inclusive, safe and proportionate.

- promote effective communication between home and school;
- support pupils' education, attendance, behaviour and wellbeing;
- ensure urgent safeguarding and welfare concerns are acted on immediately;
- set reasonable expectations about communication routes and response times;
- promote respectful conduct by all members of the school community; and
- ensure communication arrangements are consistent with safeguarding, complaints and data protection requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, proprietors, pupils, parents/carers and, where relevant, external professionals communicating with or on behalf of the school.

3. Linked policies and guidance

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Complaints Policy and Procedure, Attendance Policy, Behaviour Policy, Parent Code of Conduct, Data Protection / Privacy Notice, Online Safety arrangements, ICT Acceptable Use arrangements and Records Management procedures.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Proprietor

The Proprietor is responsible for ensuring that the school meets the Independent School Standards, including the requirement to make specified information available to parents and to operate a suitable complaints procedure.

4.2 Head of Education

The Head of Education has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy, ensuring that communication systems are effective, professional, timely and aligned with safeguarding and operational requirements.

4.3 Head of Student Welfare and Communication

The Head of Student Welfare and Communication oversees day-to-day communication systems, supports families to access information, helps resolve communication issues and promotes consistent practice across the school.

4.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputy DSLs

The DSL and deputy DSLs are responsible for the management of safeguarding concerns. Concerns about a child's safety or welfare must not be treated as routine communication matters and must be acted on immediately in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4.5 Staff

All staff are responsible for communicating professionally, courteously and in line with this policy, safeguarding requirements, confidentiality expectations and the school's approved systems.

4.6 Parents and carers

Parents/carers are expected to communicate respectfully, use the most appropriate communication route, keep contact details up to date, check school communications regularly and engage in a timely way with requests from the school.

5. Principles of good communication

- Communication should be child-centred, respectful, factual and solution-focused.
- Communication should be accessible and take account of additional needs, literacy, language and digital access barriers.
- Urgent matters should be dealt with promptly using the correct route, especially where safeguarding, attendance, health or transport are concerned.
- Confidential and sensitive matters should only be shared on a need-to-know basis and through authorised systems.
- Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, it should be escalated through the school's complaints procedure.

6. How the school communicates with parents and carers

6.1 Arbor

Arbor is the school's main platform for routine communication with parents/carers. The school uses Arbor, where appropriate, for messages, notices, permissions, attendance-related communication, behaviour and pastoral updates, and other key operational information. Parents/carers are expected to activate and check their Arbor account regularly.

6.2 Email

The school may use email for routine non-urgent communication, including letters, meeting arrangements, consultations, policy updates and individual follow-up. Email should not be relied upon for emergencies or immediate safeguarding concerns.

6.3 Telephone

Telephone communication is used for urgent matters and where a discussion is more appropriate than written communication. The main school telephone number is 01246 810456.

6.4 Text message or app notification

The school may use text messages or app notifications for short-notice operational updates, reminders, transport changes, attendance matters or emergency closure information.

6.5 Written reports and meetings

Parents/carers will receive reports and be invited to meetings such as annual reviews, progress meetings, reintegration meetings and other pastoral or planning meetings as appropriate to the pupil's needs.

6.6 Website

The school website will be used to publish key statutory and operational information, including contact details, term dates and required school policies and procedures.

7. How parents and carers should communicate with the school

7.1 Routine communication

Routine non-urgent communication should normally be made through Arbor, the school office or school email. This includes day-to-day queries, requests for information, updates from home and general pastoral or administrative matters.

7.2 Contacting the school office

The school office is the first point of contact for general queries, messages, reporting absence, transport updates, appointment requests and directing communication to the most appropriate member of staff.

7.3 Contacting a member of staff

Where a parent/carer needs to speak to a specific member of staff, communication should usually be made through the school office or an agreed school email route. Staff may not be immediately available during teaching time, therapy sessions, visits, transport transitions or meetings.

7.4 Meetings

Parents/carers wishing to arrange a meeting should contact the school office or another agreed central communication route. Staff should not normally be expected to hold unplanned extended meetings at arrival or collection times.

7.5 Reporting absence

Parents/carers must report pupil absence as early as possible on the day of absence using the school's agreed reporting route. The school may telephone to establish the reason for absence where necessary.

8. Response times

The school aims to respond to routine communication during term time within three working school days. In many cases the school will respond sooner. A response may take the form of an acknowledgement, an answer, or an arrangement for a phone call or meeting.

Some matters will require consultation with other staff, review of records, or liaison with external professionals or local authorities. In these cases, the school will aim to acknowledge the communication and provide an update on next steps and timescales.

Staff are not expected to respond outside their normal working hours, at weekends or during school holidays unless this forms part of their role or an emergency procedure.

9. Urgent concerns, safeguarding and welfare

Any urgent concern about a child's safety, welfare or wellbeing must be communicated to the school immediately by telephone. Safeguarding concerns will be managed under the school's safeguarding procedures and may be escalated directly to the DSL or a deputy DSL without waiting for normal response times.

- If a child is in immediate danger, contact emergency services on 999.
- If a parent/carer believes a child may be at risk, they should contact the school immediately and make clear that the concern is urgent and safeguarding-related.
- The school may share information with relevant agencies where this is lawful, necessary and proportionate to protect a child.

10. Complaints and unresolved concerns

Most concerns can be resolved through timely and respectful communication. Where a parent/carer remains dissatisfied after informal discussion, the matter should be dealt with under the school's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

This policy does not replace the formal complaints procedure. Parents/carers should be directed to the Complaints Policy where a matter becomes a formal complaint or where informal resolution has not been achieved.

11. Conduct and respectful communication

All communication with the school should be respectful. The school will not accept behaviour that is abusive, threatening, discriminatory, intimidating, defamatory or persistently unreasonable.

Where communication falls below expected standards, the school may take proportionate action in line with the Parent Code of Conduct and other relevant procedures. This may include limiting the route of communication, requiring contact through a nominated member of staff, ending a meeting or call, or taking further action where necessary.

12. Confidentiality, information sharing and data protection

The school handles personal data in accordance with data protection law and the school's Data Protection / Privacy Notice.

- Staff must use school-approved systems and accounts for school communication.
- Personal phone numbers, personal messaging accounts and personal social media accounts must not normally be used for communication with parents/carers unless expressly authorised as part of a managed school process.
- Sensitive or confidential information must only be shared where necessary, proportionate and lawful.
- Bulk communications must be sent using approved methods that protect recipients' personal information.

13. Inclusion and accessibility

The school is committed to making communication accessible. Reasonable adjustments and additional support will be made where needed.

- support with Arbor access or other digital systems;
- telephone communication where digital access is limited;
- paper copies on request;
- translated information or interpreting support where reasonably practicable; and
- alternative formats such as larger print where required.

14. Record keeping

The school will keep appropriate records of significant communication, meetings, decisions and actions in line with safeguarding, complaints, attendance and data protection requirements. Safeguarding concerns will be recorded on the school's safeguarding recording system.

15. Monitoring and review

The Proprietor and Head of Education will monitor the implementation of this policy, including communication systems, patterns of concern, accessibility issues and complaints themes. The policy will be reviewed at least annually or sooner if legal requirements, national guidance, technology or school practice changes.

16. School contact details

Main telephone number	01246 810456
Head of Education / DSL	Luke Collins – luke@new-direction.org.uk
Deputy DSLs	Hannah Oliver; Emily Smith; Nikki Morris
Head of Student Welfare and Communication	Nikki Morris – nikki@new-direction.org.uk
School office / reception	Laura Donaldson
Proprietor	Yvonne Evans – yvonne@new-direction.org.uk