



**HILLVIEW**  
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY**

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# 1.Rationale

At Hillview we believe in an effective, productive relationship between all members of the Hillview Community. To achieve this we recognise that a strong, reliable communication network is required. We seek honest, open and transparent dialogue to ensure that we can support the children and employees within our care and safeguard their well-being. We recognise that supporting a child through their Secondary education can be a challenging time and can raise questions and concerns from parents, who need the school's support and dedication to them as well as their child.

## Aims

- To maintain effective, proactive communication systems, using the most appropriate and effective communication techniques.
- To develop positive working relationships across all members of the Hillview community
- To support the development and safeguarding of the child.
- To support the Hillview staff members in their roles, whilst supporting a positive work life balance
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## Objectives

All communications at Hillview School for Girls should:

- Keep staff, students, parents and other stakeholders well informed
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional
- Use jargon-free English and be easily understood by all
- Be conducted in a timely manner
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience

## Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Complaints Policy

## **1. Communication with members of the Hillview Community**

At Hillview School for Girls we aim to have clear, effective communication with parents and the Hillview and wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, school successes and information about the school.

## **2. Communication from the school**

### **2.1 The school website**

The website is a resource for all the members of the Hillview Community. Parents have their own dedicated area which includes the vital, practical, day to day information alongside the core educational information such as the curriculum overview etc.

The school website is also in place to inform and promote the school to the wider community and is a resource to prospective parents, students and employees. Therefore, the website contains a significant amount of information that could be useful to a range of audiences.

The website is maintained by a member of the office team and the ICT Support team. It is quality assured and updated on a regular basis.

### **2.2 Social Media**

Hillview recognises the role that social media plays in contemporary society. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are used to communicate news and successes to the Hillview and wider community.

LinkedIn is also used as a means of creating links with companies, societies and also staffing recruitment

These are maintained professionally and monitored regularly.

Some programmes of study/ teams / clubs use 'invited' group chats as a quick way to share information, promote learning and travel amendments (trips). These are declared to the ICT Support team.

### **2.3 Weekly newsletter**

The whole Hillview community receive the weekly newsletter via email at the end of the school week. The newsletter outlines the key foci, events and successes from the week. This is also a valuable planning resource with short-term dates outlined for information. Consistent messages are communicated through this route and summaries of communications are shared to reduce the chance of parents missing communications.

## **3 Communication with parents**

Staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, it is appropriate that relationships are professional and parents are addressed in a formal manner.

Communication can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone); written (through letters, notes in planners or email). Our aim is to utilise all means of communication effectively and use the most appropriate means of communicating to support the development of a positive productive relationship.

### **3.1 The Arbor app**

The first port of call for parents is the Arbor app that enables parents to access live information about their child, their education and the school. The app was developed specifically to allow parents access to live data and also be able to track their child's data over time.

### **3.2 Paperless communication**

We aim to have 100% of parents signed up to email to achieve paperless communication wherever possible. Where this is not appropriate, the parent must contact the school and a hard copy of communication is provided.

### **3.3 Parent area on website**

To assist with regular queries parents may have there is a dedicated Parents area on our school website which can be accessed via the link on the top, right hand side of the front page. Located within this section parents will find guides to Using Arbor, Online Parent Evenings, E-Safety, Using Parentpay, Your Child's Curriculum and Behaviour Sanctions. There are also links to our weekly newsletter, Ofsted Parent View, school policies and documents, term dates and your parent information booklet. The parent information booklet details whole school structures as well as day to day housekeeping information.

### **3.4 Estranged/separated parents**

Unless there is a court order to the contrary, the school will provide the same information to both parents, provided that contact details have been furnished.

### **3.6 Prospectus/Courseguides**

All prospective parents and students can access a copy of the prospectus and course guides via the school website. Parents and students receive a school prospectus upon request or in person at open events. Hillview Year 11 students receive a copy of the Sixth form course guide within PDL. .

### **3.7 Open events (main school)**

Prospective parents are invited to one of two Open Sessions and/or Open Mornings throughout the year. New parents are invited, along with their child, to an Induction Evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined, essential information given and the school's expectations explained.

Prospective sixth form parents can attend any of the main school open events and the sixth form open evening in November. Prospective 'external' sixth form students are also able to visit on the open mornings.

### **3.8 Teacher/Parent consultations**

Parents evenings are conducted virtually. All parents are invited to attend one full virtual parent consultation or evening each year to review the academic, personal and social progress of their child.

Each year group have a planned information evening on the school site to allow parents the opportunity to engage with the school in a face to face setting.

Year 7: "Meet the Mentor Evening"

Year 8: E-safety

Year 9: Options Evening

Year 10: Meet the mentor evening

Year 11: Support your child through GCSEs

Year 12: Meet the mentor evening

Year 13: Support your child through A Levels

Additional support sessions occur in school and face to face which occur throughout the year responding to need eg Ucas future pathways

### **3.9 Translation**

Key school documents will be translated into community languages on request and a translator made available, if required, to ensure effective communication.

### **3.10 Parents' feedback**

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. The relevant member of staff will respond as soon as possible – see appendix 2 - using the most suitable form of communication

The school will seek feedback from parents via questionnaire on the service provided by the school as required. Replies are confidential and will be collated and analysed by a senior member of staff. Issues arising will be shared and discussed by trustees and the leadership team and this will be fed in to the school development plan

### **3.11 PTA**

The Hillview PTA's primary purpose is to raise money for the school through a range of events or fundraising methods but it is also a good way for parents to get involved in the life of the school.

PTA contact details: [PTA@hillview.kent.sch.uk](mailto:PTA@hillview.kent.sch.uk)

## **4. Communication from parents**

The main communication from parents is via email or telephone and parents are asked to contact the school via the school office. This enables the school to act in a timely manner and also ensures that the response is addressed within an appropriate time scale. The length of time supports the staffing body to balance their roles and responsibilities and to give sufficient time for the query to be investigated and responded to. Where possible the Hillview team aim to respond well within the timeframes.

Acknowledgement: 1 working day

Response: 5 working days

In exceptional cases where further information or a thorough investigation is required a 10 working day limit is applicable.

Teachers and support personnel set aside time to check communications. However, commitments, illness and part-time working may restrict an immediate response. We therefore ask for patience and understanding from our parents when awaiting a response.

### **4.1 E-mail (as the recommended communication method)**

Parents may wish to contact the school via email as an alternative to telephone and are asked to do so via [admin@hillview.kent.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hillview.kent.sch.uk) This is to ensure that the communication is received (considering illness/typos) and directed to the most appropriate person to respond to the query. It also ensures that communications are not received outside school hours and that personally hurtful emails can be filtered to support staff well-being.

The school is proactive in encouraging the use of email, with office email contacts being publicised regularly in newsletters and reminders home.

Where smaller functional queries are received, the office may respond to these directly to support the efficient and effective working of the school and to ensure that that parents receive a quick response.

### **4.2 Telephone calls**

All telephone enquires will pass through the main school office, who will direct the call to the relevant member of staff. In the likely event that the member of staff is not available to answer the call, a message should be left and a return call will be placed at the earliest appropriate time which would fall within the 5 working days timescale.

### **4.3 Meetings**

At times, at the request of the school or parent, a meeting may take place if either party feel that this would be the most appropriate communication method. Formal meetings are conducted to discuss points or concerns pertaining to a student's welfare or well-being. All meetings must be agreed in advance.

All visitors to school must report to Reception, sign in and wait to be collected by the staff member they are seeing.

Notes from telephone calls /meetings/ email content will be saved electronically into the student's file.

There may also be times when a parent has a concern which they would like to address with the Headteacher directly. Unfortunately, this not feasible and would significantly delay the resolution to the concern. The vast majority of concerns and queries can be resolved and answered quicker by dealing directly with the relevant member(s) of staff. The Headteacher monitors all communications marked for their attention, and reviews the outcomes and resolutions with the staff members involved. All concerns are taken seriously.

Communication from parents should be polite and civil at all times. Rudeness, inappropriate language, verbal abuse or threatening behaviour will result in the communication being ended immediately. Should the Headteacher deem it necessary for safeguarding and security reasons, action will be taken and restrictions may be put in place for future communication. (See Appendix 5)



## **5. Communication with other schools and outside agencies**

Prior to students joining Year 7, students are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to Hillview School for Girls. Where required, additional meetings/communication may be sought if there are higher individual needs (i.e SEN, behavioural, anxiety)

We recognise that children 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 that children may participate more fully. Information will only be shared once parental agreement has been sought.

We also work closely with welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Child Protection Units. We recognise that children 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. Communication between professionals is always confidential.

### **5.1 Accessibility of information**

We hold information on all students in our school and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details will be sent to any new parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data and who we may pass it to.

## **6. Communication with Staff**

Communication with staff occurs through the following forums: Sharepoint (staff bulletin), email, memo and the weekly briefing. The decision regarding which forum should be used is dependent on the nature of the matter to be communicated.

### **6.1 Staff Bulletin**

The staff bulletin holds the day to day communication that supports the smooth running of the school and is the primary source of information

### **6.2 Email**

Urgent and personalised communications are managed via email. This includes communications regarding information regarding specific students taught by the member of staff and where it would not be appropriate to be shared across the whole school body. Emails do not replace the need for face to face meetings

The school has a separate ICT Policy dealing with e-mail/internet usage. Staff must make themselves conversant with this.

### **6.3 Memo**

The memo communicates the calendar arrangements for the school week and the upcoming term. This aides planning in the mid and short term, adds additional detail to the school calendar and confirms specific schedules for events. This is a paper document and is made available to all staff and discussed during the weekly briefing

### **6.4 The Weekly briefing**

The weekly briefing is a face to face meeting that occurs on a Monday morning (or the first day in school of any term week). The briefing offers clarity to the events in the coming week. It is also opportunity for staff across the school body to outline information and support all staff being fully briefed on the school activities.

### **6.5 Meetings between Staff**

There is an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff, both formal and informal. The school calendar stipulates the minimum frequency of these. All formal meetings should be structured and members are invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to department/faculty reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

Availability of minutes/Notes of meetings

Meeting resources are made available on Sharepoint

There are occasions where, to support the smooth running of the school or to discuss a specific child's needs or share good practice, additional meetings are required. These occur only when necessary and are limited to essential staff.

## **6.6 Written communications (Post)**

These are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room, which staff should check on a daily basis. Phone messages taken by office staff are emailed to those staff concerned.

## **6.7 Staff Handbook**

A copy of the Staff Handbook is saved electronically available via Sharepoint. It is updated as required through the academic year.

## **6.8 Notice boards**

Staff notice boards cover the core needs for the staffing body. Corridors are planned to provide areas for celebrating students' work, promoting departments/careers/communities and sharing safeguarding guidance.

## **6.9 Written Communication**

All written communication external to the school MUST be sent via the school office for formatting and checking.

## **6.10 Social networking sites/blogs, etc.**

Staff are not permitted to communicate with parents or students via private social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as "friends". The exception is networks or blogs set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning or trip/team management, together with official School sites. This is part of our safeguarding procedure to protect students and staff. (See ICT Policy and Safeguarding Policy). Staff are expected to be professional on these groups and must declare them to the ICT support team.

## **7. Communication with students**

The main method of communication with students occurs face to face within lesson times. Within all communication with students, Hillview staff are expected to communicate professionally and model appropriate types of communication.

### **7.1 Communication in lessons**

Teachers and teaching assistants should ensure that their communication is clear and understandable by the child – adapting for the needs of the group and the specific child. They should ensure that when deploying the behaviour management system, they are clear with the warning system and the reason why the warning is being issued.

### **7.2 Communication by email/Teams/social media groups**

Communication should only ever be through school email addresses or Hillview agreed groups and for Hillview related purposes. Anything operating outside the Hillview domain should be declared to the ICT Support Team. The staff member should adhere to the professional standards at all times.

### **7.3 Communication via the student receptionists**

Messages and notifications of lunchtime detentions are sent via the student receptionists

### **7.4 Arbor portal**

Students are able to monitor their attainment, attendance stats and homework via the Arbor portal. Students are also able to see live updates of their calendar (timetable) which shows all room changes.

### **7.5 Cover and exams boards**

Students are able to see the daily coversheet in designated areas throughout the school site – this includes room displacements.

When in an examinable year, students are able to access the exams schedule which is presented in multiple locations around the school site. This is in addition to this being emailed directly to the student.

### **7.6 Television screens**

Television screens around the school site display current day to day information, thought provoking articles and student successes and are updated daily.

## **8. Inappropriate Communication/Behaviour**

It is rare that inappropriate communications from any member of the community occurs.

Following an incidence of inappropriate/unacceptable communication from any member of the Hillview community, it may be necessary to put into place actions that enable all parties to return to a positive standing.

**Students:** Any inappropriate communications verbal/written will fall under the Behaviour Management Policy

**Staff member:** Any complaints against a member of staff due to communication falls under the complaints policy (complaint from student/parent) or the grievance policy (staff)

**Parent:** Where inappropriate/aggressive/verbally abusive communications are received from parents, and the staff member feels uncomfortable, the relevant member of staff is able to excuse themselves from the communication. In the event that this is a 'live' conversation ie. telephone call / meeting (formal, informal, virtual) then the member of staff should explain that they are going to end the communication and the reasons why. In the event of this being a written communication, they should pass this onto their line manager.

Depending upon the severity of the situation, the following actions may be put into place:

- A verbal/written warning to the parent about their behaviour / language
- Any future meetings/discussions may be conducted with more than one member of the school staff so as not to compromise a lone member of staff

In more severe cases the school will put stricter restrictions in place whereby:

- A single point of contact within school through whom all communications should be directed will be put in place
- Access into school will be pre-arranged and agreed in advance by both parties
- A letter sent to the parent banning the parent from the school site unless pre-arranged by the school.

The school does have the right to refuse access from the school site to anyone if they are deemed to be a threat to the safeguarding of any members of the school community, including students and staff. (DfE Guidance 2018, "Controlling access to school premises: Barring individuals from school premises"). In this case a formal letter will be issued giving full details of the ban. The decision to refuse access would be agreed and reviewed by a representative of the Trustee Body.

**HILLVIEW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
TRUSTEES' COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Main Compiler: Hilary Burkett, Headteacher

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