



## Communication Guidance

The College is committed to ensuring a supportive environment for students, staff and parents, modelling appropriate behaviour at all times.

We welcome feedback and collaboration so that we continue to improve and be at our best. We may not always agree but we expect to be constructively challenged as we work together.

Communication must be conducted in the most positive way so everyone feels heard and supported. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Communication, Concerns and Complaints Policy.

Communicating with a secondary school can feel different to primary and we are empathetic to the fact that staff may not be as immediately available as parents are used to at Key Stage 2.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve concerns at an early stage. We take any concern seriously, making every effort to resolve the matter as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

The contact details for each member of staff are made accessible on the basis that we all agree to work positively and supportively together. To get the swiftest resolution, always get in touch at an early stage.

- For social or emotional issues go direct to your child's form tutor or Pastoral Team in the first instance.
- For any Teaching and Learning issues, go to the Class teacher or Curriculum Leader.

Use contact details [provided here](#) (on the website) in working hours.

Always adhere to the guidance from College Governors and Leaders below to ensure you know what to expect, get the best from any communication and avoid frustration.

## Parents can expect:

### A timely and appropriate response.

Parents have contact details for all the key people and a named person for the first port of call if you are in any doubt on any issue. When contacting Reception do remember they may not be able to provide an immediate connection or response, but they will do their best to help. Please be aware mobile signal in our area is sometimes unreliable, if a phone line cuts out you may need to call again or email.

Policies state 48h hours for a reply. It is sometimes swifter but this cannot be guaranteed. It should not be assumed that if a reply is not immediate that your communication is being ignored. However, any longer would not be expected and should be followed up via [office@heathfieldcc.co.uk](mailto:office@heathfieldcc.co.uk).

A response may be by direct reply by email or phone, or it may result in an invitation to a meeting. We will always try for this to be at a mutually convenient time.

### To have your view heard respectfully.

Staff must consider all perspectives impartially and objectively; your view is equally important to any other, will be heard and considered. If inclusive approaches are required: *translations, support with longer documents or educational language*, can be provided - just let us know. The College will hear and respect your concerns, anxiety and worries.

### An expert, solutions-based approach.

Once a member of staff has received your question or concern, the College will decide who is the most suitable person to respond based on the expertise required and may not be the person to whom you addressed the original request.

You can expect a clear solution-based approach within the operational context and constraints of the College. If your preferred solution or action is not possible the reasons will be explained and alternatives put in place.

## Staff can expect:

### To be given time to research and respond to the concern:

Often various sources of information are required to respond fully, this may take time. It is not helpful to send multiple follow up communications in quick succession or the same concern to multiple people, as this will only delay or prevent accurate information being gathered.

It is not appropriate to turn up at College and expect to see a member of staff without booking. Teachers time is strictly scheduled during the day (from 8:15am) and is not possible to adjust at short notice. Equally, staff do not work at weekends or school holidays a reply should not be expected at these times.

### All communication to be respectful and courteous.

Issues relating to our children can be emotive however, any communication via phone or email must be polite and respectful.

- Shorthand often used on phones/text can seem abrupt or aggressive without meaning to. Capitals can seem like shouting.
- Keep it polite, clear and factual - do not add in gossip or rumour.
- Threatening or abusive emails, voicemails, phone calls or other forms of communication will not be tolerated. Staff are fully empowered to end any communication that does not respect this requirement.

### A solutions-based, community approach

Our community models positive and respectful dialogue to young people. This applies in all communication. We will always seek solutions but these may be limited due to the scale and statutory requirements of the College. Willingness to adjust and compromise is necessary from all parties.

These expectations apply in person and online. Any online post that denigrates or defames the College, staff or students will be reported. Abuse or inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

## Unreasonable or unsuccessful communication

Heathfield Community College is committed to dealing with all stakeholders fairly and impartially, and providing a high-quality service to all. The college is a professional working environment where everyone has the right to be treated respectfully and with professional courtesy even if parties disagree. We do not expect anyone to tolerate unacceptable behaviour.

If parents feel communication has been unacceptable the College will act to ensure they are able to be heard and represented, such as:

- Providing a preferred or alternative method of communication (e.g phone calls rather than emails or letters).
- Considering an alternative contact in College if it is perceived relationships are irreparable.
- Action if there is a perceived lack of reply after 48 hours via [office@heathfieldcc.co.uk](mailto:office@heathfieldcc.co.uk).
- Assistance when requested with language or instructions.
- Raising any concerns about the tone of communication with the line manager to ensure fair and equitable treatment.
- Considering an advocate to help parents represent their perspective. This person should always be objective and neutral.

If staff feel they have been subject to unacceptable communication the College will act (under section 47 of the Education Act 1996) to protect them from any behaviour (in person, in writing or online) that is abusive, offensive, persistent and harassing or defamatory, this may include:

- Clear advice or guidance on how communication was unacceptable.
- Putting in place a restricted communication strategy (single point of contact or reduced access: preventing email or phone contact)
- Ceasing response on a particular issue if all reasonable efforts have been made but demands are persistent.
- Barring from school site.
- Referral to the police and seeking legal remedy.