



Girls' School

LORDSWOOD GIRLS' SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE

This policy is called:	Home/School Communication Policy
It applies to:	Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre
Person responsible for its revision:	Headteacher
Status:	Non-statutory
Website	External website and staff launch page
Approval by:	Governing Body
Review frequency:	Annually and updated as required
Date of ratification:	May 2022
Date of next review:	May 2023

1. Introduction

At Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre we believe in Parents/carers and staff working in close partnership to achieve the best outcomes for our students. Excellent communication:

- Gives Parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with Parents/carers
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the school communicates with Parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from Parents/carers
- Helping Parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

2. Methods of Official School Communication with Parents/Carers/Carers and Children

In person

We encourage our students and Parents/carers to share any concerns they may have at an early stage.

Students can speak to any adult in school, although it is expected that the first point of call should usually be the students review tutor. If they cannot speak to their review tutor, their achievement co-ordinator should be their second point of contact. As we are preparing students for adult life we urge parents/carers to encourage their children to speak directly to

teachers when they have a concern, often issues can be resolved quickly when a student brings them to our attention. This is very empowering for students.

If a student has a safeguarding concern, they should speak to the senior designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or deputy designated safeguarding leads (DDSL). If they cannot find a DSL they should contact student reception who will locate one.

At drop off and pick up, senior leaders are available at the Lordswood Road gate. Their primary aim at this time of day is the safe entrance/exit of students, however they may be able to assist with any general enquiries you have, however, they will not be able to deal with complex issues at this time. If the senior leader feels that more time is required, they will request that the parent contacts the office to make an appointment.

It is important to note that during the school day, we have very few rooms/offices available for parental meetings. Teachers and School Leaders are also engaged in learning activities with students during the school day. We are therefore unable to meet with Parents/carers who do not have a scheduled appointment.

Telephone calls

The school may contact Parents/carers via telephone, these calls may be recorded for quality assurance purposes. Parents/carers are requested to ensure that correct contact details are shared with the school office as we are expected to hold at least two emergency telephone contacts (ideally more) to use in the event of an emergency. If unable to contact Parents/carers in an emergency, the school will be required to contact Children's Services or the police (depending upon the situation).

Parents/carers can contact the school via telephone. The school number is 0121 429 2838. With the exception of reporting student absence (for which there is a separate line), we ask that this is reserved for more urgent matters - email is often more effective for less urgent matters. The phone lines are staffed from 7:30 am-4:00 pm each day. After this time, there is an opportunity to leave a message; messages are listened to once per day. Phone lines are often busy between 7:30 am-9:00 am and 3:00 pm-3:30 pm. Parents/carers might find it easier to call outside these hours.

The office staff will endeavour to resolve issues over the telephone where possible, e.g. answering questions. If they are unable to resolve the issue directly a message will be taken and passed on to the member of staff concerned. It is important that Parents/carers share appropriate details so the message is referred to the most appropriate person. Office staff will follow the procedure below when referring calls:

- Attendance - attendance officer
- Subject concerns - subject teacher
- Pastoral concerns - review tutor
- Safeguarding concerns - DSL

If the subject teacher is unable to resolve the query, then they may pass the question on to a Lead Professional (subject leader).

If the review tutor is unable to resolve the query, then they may pass the question on to an achievement co-ordinator (head of year).

Only if the issue cannot be resolved by the lead professional or achievement co-ordinator will the query be passed on to an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Emails

For less urgent matters, Parents/carers may email our school office at any time. The school email address is lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk. Emails should contain the name of the staff member/class in the subject line if known, we also require a quick summary of what the email is regarding. If you do not know who the most appropriate person is to email, the office will decide based on the information provided. In general, the office staff will follow the procedure below when referring emails:

- Attendance - attendance officer
- Subject concerns - subject teacher
- Pastoral concerns - review tutor
- Safeguarding concerns - DSL

Emails sent to this account are read once per day by office staff (term time only) and any relevant information is distributed to staff. We request that Parents/carers do not communicate directly with staff members. This email policy is designed to support teacher workload, wellbeing and to support the time each teacher spends on planning and preparing lessons for pupils.

The Senior Leadership will (in exceptional circumstances) allow direct email communication with the class teacher, if this is deemed necessary and in the child's best interests.

If a matter requires urgent attention, e.g. medical information or student absence, Parents/carers are requested to make a telephone call rather than send an email.

Students will sometimes be given permission to communicate with staff via their school email account e.g. to submit work. This communication should remain professional and work related at all times. Students and staff should only communicate via school email accounts. Staff are unable to reply to students' personal email accounts. Staff can only be expected to respond to emails in work hours. Emails sent after school, at weekends or during school holidays will not be read/responded to until the next working day.

It should be noted that staff members will often be teaching all day. They have a limited number of non-contact lessons per week in which to respond to emails (and complete other administrative tasks). It may therefore take a number of days to receive a reply via email.

Parentmail

All letters, bulletins and reports are sent via parentmail (these will appear as emails for Parent/carers).

Regular communications sent via parentmail will include:

- Weekly bulletin - this will contain vital information on upcoming events/activities taking place at the school
- Newsletter - this is a termly publication highlighting activities that have taken place during the previous term
- Loudmouth - this is a termly publication written and published by students at Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre

- Letters - individual letters will be sent when the parent bulletin is not the most appropriate form of communication e.g. invitations to intervention sessions or trips.
- Surveys - We value the input of Parents/carers and students, as such we will regularly send parent voice surveys via parentmail. The responses are used to inform decisions about changes required in the school.

Parents/carers are asked to ensure that the parentmail address is added to their list of 'safe senders' to avoid messages being directed to 'spam' folders. Parents/carers are encouraged to ensure that the email address shared with school is checked on a regular basis.

Text message

We understand that not all Parents/carers check emails on an hourly/daily basis, text messages will therefore be used when immediate communication is required e.g. school closure, cancellation of an after school club

EduLink

All parents will have access to an online platform called EduLink. This allows parents to access information on their child. This includes:

- Timetables
- Attendance
- Behaviour alerts
- Praise Points
- Reports - Parents/carers will receive three reports per year (two in Y11/Y13), two will be interim reports (indicating progress) and one will be a full report containing information on how your child can improve in each subject.

School cloud

After a successful trial during the school closures due to COVID, all Parents/carers evenings will be virtual via School Cloud. There will be one parent consultation evening each year for each year group.

Parents/carers of students with special educational needs may also be asked to attend other meetings throughout the year.

School website

The school website can be found at the following URL: <http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/>

This shares information about our school from our updated school curriculum, to library resources and school policies.

Details of the Governing body and annual reports are shared on the school website.

Social Media

The school social media accounts are used to share some of the activities undertaken at the school. They will also occasionally be used as an additional communication tool when information needs to be shared in a timely manner e.g. snow closures. This will always be supported via additional communication tools e.g. email/parentmail. We currently use three social media platforms:

Instagram Account

@lordswoodgirlsschool
@lordswoodsixth

Facebook Account

Lordswood Girls' School
Lordswood Sixth Form Centre

Twitter Account

@lordswoodgirls
@lordswoodsixth

Occasionally fake social media accounts are generated in the school name. If this occurs, Parents/carers/students are encouraged to report this to the school so that we can take appropriate action.

Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre does not have an official WhatsApp account or any additional social media accounts apart from those listed above. The School recognises that social media can be a useful tool for Parents/carers but it can also cause difficulties if not used appropriately.

We therefore request:

1. Parents/carers/carers are advised to contact School should they have any concerns regarding their child, or the safeguarding of another child - social media is not an appropriate forum for raising concerns.
2. Out of respect for other children and their families, Parents/carers **must not** discuss other children on WhatsApp/social media groups.
3. Misinformation (or information that is inappropriate) being shared by members of the school community does cause unnecessary distress **to children** as well as Parents/carers and staff. The school requests that any comments shared on social media be kept factual and supportive, with links to the official School information where possible.
4. Parents/carers/students should never attempt to contact School staff via social media. This supports both our safeguarding policy and the professional integrity of our staff.
5. Parents/carers with concerns that this guidance (designed to support all families) is not being followed should take 'screenshots' and contact School for support.

If Parents/carers who have general concerns about social media or other e-safety concerns, they should refer to the guidance on our website:

<http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/information-for-Parents/carers> or alternatively access additional guidance at: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Parents/carers/>

Unfortunately the school does not have the power to get social media content removed from individual student/parent pages. If you have concerns about social media content not related to the school social media accounts, it should be reported to the local police.

Google Classroom

Each child will have access to Google Classroom. Teachers will communicate to pupils through this account to share pre-teaching and other home learning. Google Classroom will also be used to support transition for pupils e.g. to share a video of the school. As with all online activity,

Parents/carers should monitor their children and support their safe and appropriate use of the technology.

Student planners

Teachers will encourage students to write all homework in their planners. In addition, planners can be used to write quick notes between home and school e.g. uniform issues, homework issues, detentions. We encourage Parents/carers to check planners on a weekly basis to ensure no messages are missed.

Review tutor appointments

Students can expect to have a one-to-one appointment with their review tutor once per term. This is primarily to review academic progress and explore reasons for under-achievement. This provides an opportunity for students to inform the school of any issues that may be hampering progress. The teachers undertaking the appointments will listen and signpost to appropriate support, they are not trained to provide advice. For example, if a child identifies mental health issues, the teacher will refer to the achievement co-ordinator who will decide upon the best course of action. If a child identifies an issue in a specific subject, the teacher will pass this information on to their subject teacher for that subject.

School council

Each review group nominates a representative to represent them on the school council. If students have opinions on changes required at the school, they should discuss these with their school council representative. Their school council rep can then put forward their ideas to be discussed at school council meetings.

Headteacher Question Time

Every term each year group is given the opportunity to pose questions to the Headteacher and other senior teachers within the school. This gives students the opportunity to ask questions that they have about the day-to-day running of the school.

Parent Forum

Three times per year, parent forum occurs to provide an opportunity for questions and ideas to be discussed. The date of parent forum is advertised via the weekly parent bulletin. Parents/carers are required to submit questions in advance. A selection of the most common questions will be included on the agenda for discussion. Not all ideas/suggestions will be discussed due to time constraints. Parent forum is an opportunity to discuss ideas for the general improvement of the school, it is not an opportunity to discuss individual concerns.

3. Reasonable expectations

Lordswood Girls' School and Sixth Form Centre firmly believes that communication is key to a happy and successful school. We actively encourage open communication between home and school. In order to balance the demands of effective communication with the challenges of running a successful school, an effective work life balance for the staff employed in the school, boundaries on both sides must be established.

Face-to-face meetings

All Parents/carers have the opportunity to attend one virtual parent/carers evening per year via school cloud. Any additional meetings must be arranged in advance. It is important to understand that during the school day, the school has very few rooms/offices available for parental meetings. Teachers and School Leaders are also engaged in learning activities with students during the school day. We are therefore unable to accommodate meetings with Parents/carers without a pre-arranged appointment. Parents/carers who arrive at school without an appointment will be asked to leave their contact details and a reason for requesting a meeting. They will then be contacted at a later time to arrange a convenient time to return to discuss their concerns.

Phone calls/Emails

During the school day, most staff members will be involved in learning activities with students, they will therefore be unable to take calls or reply to emails during the school day. The office will take a message and will pass this on to the member of staff concerned. Depending upon the teacher's timetable (and part-time working arrangements) and the nature of the concern, it may take a few days to return your call/email. It is reasonable to expect a reply within 5 working days - even if the contact is to request more time to investigate a matter further.

Due to the age of the children in the school, it will be common for a teacher to contact a student directly to discuss the content of any call/email prior to responding to the contacting Parents/carers. If Parents/carers do not want the matter discussed with their child, it is important that this is made clear during the initial contact.

Times of contact

The school is open between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm during term time only. Outside these hours telephone lines and email addresses will not be monitored.

If anything urgent occurs out of school hours, there is a range of helplines on the school website:

<http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/parental-mental-health-2>

<http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/parental-safeguarding>

Alternatively Parents/carers can self-refer to CASS:

<https://www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk/safeguarding-concerns/cass>

Or contact your local police team.

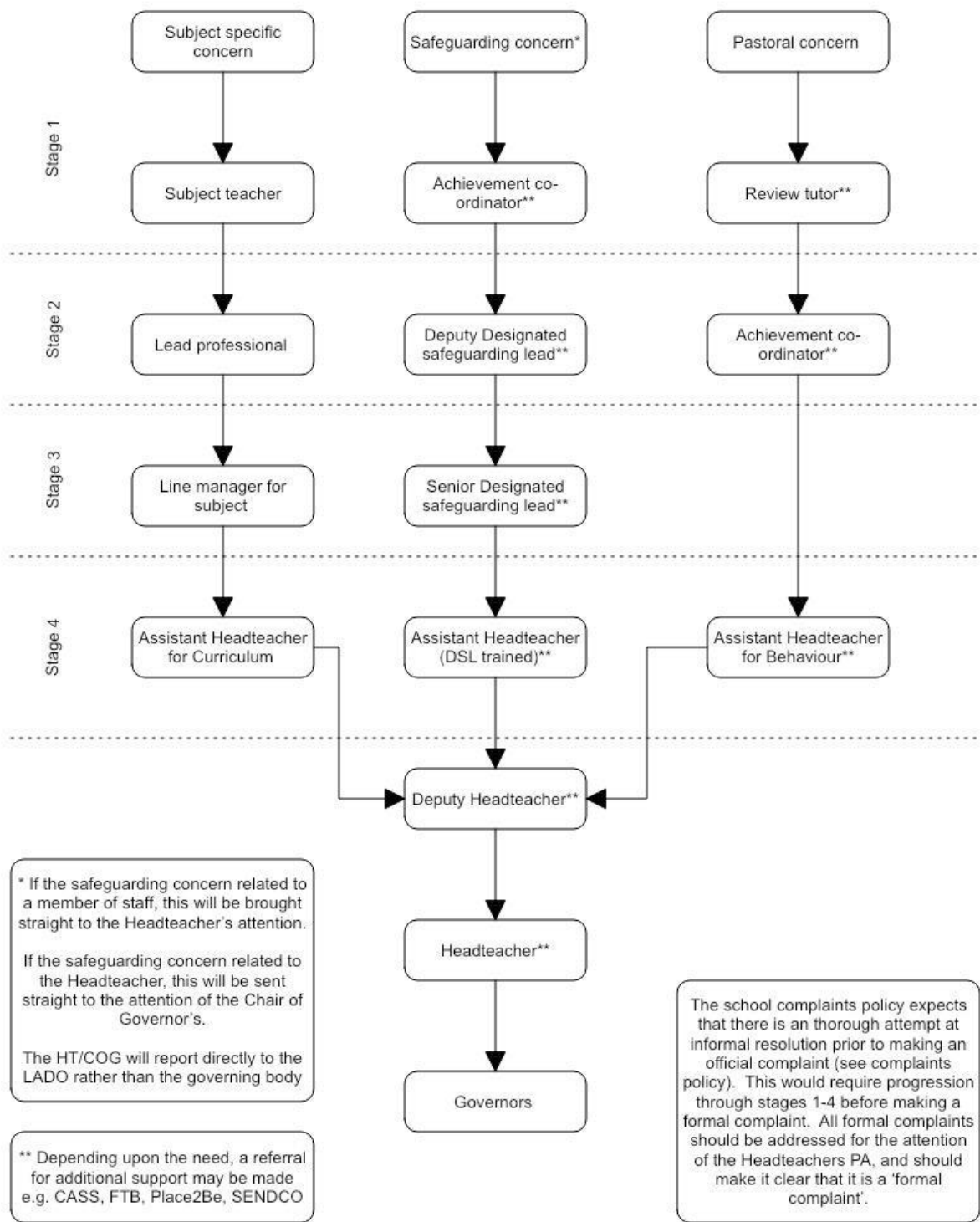
Who we can communicate with

Your child's data is very important to us. We cannot discuss your child with anyone who is not named as an emergency contact in SIMS. If for any reason you require us to communicate with someone not named in SIMS e.g. due to language barriers, we will need to gain permission from someone with parental responsibility.

Who to communicate with

Each member of staff in the school has a specific role to play in the functioning of the school. Whilst you may want to discuss an issue with a specific member of staff, it cannot be assumed that this member of staff will be available or the most appropriate person to contact.

Except in exceptional circumstances the following flowchart will be used to decide who to refer a call/email to:



Language Barriers

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school.

Please let the school know in advance of any meeting if you require help in communicating and we will endeavour to make adjustments to ensure an effective meeting can be undertaken.

Communication strategy for persistent correspondents

Rarely, Parents/carers engage in excessive or inappropriate communication. Support will be offered to Parents/carers should the school consider this is the case. The School reserves the right to protect the work/life balance and wellbeing of staff in such circumstances.

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, School can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, actions may include the following:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times contact can be made, such as a fixed number of contacts per term (to be reviewed every six months)
- refuse to respond to abusive or inappropriate communications

Respect

Parents/carers and students have the right to be heard. As such a range of different communication tools are available (as detailed in section 2) to enable communication to occur. Our staff will aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to individual needs and circumstances. Staff understand that people do not always act in a reasonable manner when under pressure and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint, however we cannot tolerate rude or aggressive behaviour towards members of staff. This includes the use of swear words, shouting, personal insults or threatening language/behaviour. If this is experienced, the meeting/telephone call will be terminated and further action may be taken.

Links with other policies

- **ICT Acceptable user policy**
- **Complaints Policy**

Lordswood Girls' School & Sixth Form Centre Communications Policy Quick Reference

General Heading	Includes:	Channel of communication
General Information	Term dates, uniform policy, clubs, who's who, procedures, policies, governing body minutes, historical parental letters/bulletins, helplines, curriculum information	Website: http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/
General news	Upcoming events, trip information, activities, surveys, information	Bulletin - sent via email Emails via parentmail Copies of letters can be found on the school website: http://lordswoodgirls.co.uk/
Specific queries	School meals, payments, medical issues, absence requests, change in details	School office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838 ● Email: lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk
Absence Reporting	Absence from school, medical appointments, holiday requests	School office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838
Subject specific	Difficulties in class, difficulties with homework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child to speak directly with subject teacher ● Child to speak directly with lead professional for subject (list can be found on website) ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838 ● Email via: lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk
Child specific	Friendship issues, health issues, emotional difficulties, bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child to speak directly with review tutor ● Child to speak directly with achievement co-ordinator (list can be found on website) ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838 ● Email via: lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk
SEND	Concerns relating to learning needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838 ● Email via: lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk (Indicate - for the attention of SENDCO) ● Email: l.colvin-grieve@lordswoodtrust.co.uk

Safeguarding concerns	Safeguarding, pupil welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child to speak directly with DSL ● Call school office on 0121 429 2838
Thanks, concerns or complaints (policy on website)	<p>First instance: Call school office on 0121 429 2838 OR email via: lgs-enquiry@lordswoodtrust.co.uk</p> <p>If not resolved in the first instance ask to escalate to next achievement co-ordinator/lead professional (dependent upon concern)</p> <p>Formal complaints: s.allport@lordswoodtrust.co.uk (please see school complaints procedure prior to submitting a formal complaint, all complaints should attempt to be resolved informally first)</p> <p>Concerns/complaints regarding the Headteacher: email Carole.Gallant@entrustclerk.com</p>	