

GATEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY for CONTACT with PARENTS / CARERS and COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
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August 2003

A: POLICY for CONTACT with PARENTS / CARERS

Introduction:

Good communication and contact between home and school is very important. This document is concerned with ensuring that such communication is as effective as it can be here at Gatehouse school, by outlining existing methods, and also by setting-out the procedures to be taken if something should go wrong.

Parents and carers can provide greater help for their children when they are clearer about what the school is trying to achieve, and how they see their role in sharing that responsibility.

At Gatehouse school, we communicate with parents in a variety of different ways – all intended to provide as comprehensive a picture of pupil and school life as possible.

Aims and Objectives:

We aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents, carers, guardians and the wider community. By communicating effectively, we are more able to share our aims and values about school life and so help to reinforce the importance of the role parents can play in supporting the school in educating their children.

How we have - and maintain - contact with parents / carers:

Over the course of each year, the school provides:

- Twice-yearly written reports of all children's school progress to parents in November and May. These also identify areas of strengths and aspects for future development. The second of these includes a parent response sheet, which forms the basis of the agenda for the subsequent consultation sessions. Parents are offered the opportunity to select a convenient consultation time to meet with their child's teacher.

- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. Equally, the school makes contact with parents if a problem arises in respect of their children. In order to make such contact more meaningful and comfortable, parents are invited to arrange an appointment to speak to a member of staff. Parents are very welcome in school, but it stands to reason that there are times in the day when, due to teaching or other commitments, teachers are not readily available to meet with parents / carers. However, a request for any such appointment will always be met at the earliest opportunity, preferably within 24 hours. In the interest of school security, parents should always contact the school office prior to visiting classrooms.
- Newsletters to parents issued normally on a three-weekly basis (usually Fridays). An annual calendar of issue dates of these is given at the beginning of each school session. Newsletters include details of recent events and forthcoming activities within school – the latter on both a detailed short-term basis, and on a more general longer-term one. Parents are regularly reminded to check school bags for these. In addition, those parents with access to e-mail are encouraged to allow the school to send these to them in this, supplementary, manner.
- The two-part school handbook is issued to parents / carers at the time of enrolment (a separate version is issued to parents of children entering nursery at the same time). The handbook, up-dated annually, includes comprehensive detail of the school's curriculum, the policy for improving and maintaining good behaviour, a wealth of information in respect of day-to-day procedures and policies, and statutory information in respect of attainment and attendance figures.
- The head teacher offers a weekly 'surgery' opportunity every Tuesday afternoon, 3.00 – 4.00pm, (subject to other commitments) at which parents can call in to school at the end of the school day - without an appointment - to discuss any aspect or concern.
- A coffee morning is held in June each year for the parents of those children due to move into P1 stage the following August. This is an opportunity for the school to discuss a variety of day-to-day aspects that their child will experience after they enter this stage at that time.
- There are separate meetings with parents of both nursery and P1 pupils when these pupils commence these respective stages, by way of introduction to the school in terms of both the curriculum and day-to-day operation. (Previous comments from parents confirm these meetings are very valuable, and not only provide a helpful insight into how the school operates, but also help to generally reassure parents at these important times).
- An annual 'curriculum evening' has been revived with the start of session 2003 / 2004, and it is planned to be held annually in October.

School Board and Parent & Teacher Association:

The school benefits from a supportive School Board and Parent & Teacher Association. The school uses the regular newsletters to keep parents notified of dates of forthcoming meetings of these and includes reminders that they are welcome to attend.

Telephone contact:

There are many circumstances when members of staff need to make contact with parents. These may be to advise a parent of an unwell pupil, to notify of forgotten PE kit or other equipment, to arrange a meeting to discuss an issue with pupil behaviour or an aspect of school-work. Wherever practical, the head teacher needs to be notified of such contacts as soon as possible.

B: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We believe that our school provides a good education for all our children and that staff work very hard to build positive relationships, not only with pupils, but also with parents and carers. However, there will be occasions when, for one reason or another, a complaint is made. The school has a set of procedures for such instances, and hopes that, by following these, problems can be resolved speedily and effectively.

Aims and Objectives:

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with each as carefully, thoroughly and swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve complaints through dialogue – verbal, written or both – and mutual understanding. In all cases we put the interests of the pupil(s) above everything else. We aim to provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and resolved.

The Complaints Process:

The procedures to be followed in the event of a parent wishing to make a complaint are:

1: A parent should, in the first instance, seek a meeting with, or write to, the class teacher and / or head teacher to discuss the matter (in the latter case, the relevant class teacher would be kept up-to-date with proceedings at all times).

Most matters can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work hard to ensure each pupil is happy at school and is making good progress. They want to know of any problem – *of whatever nature* - so that they can take appropriate action before the problem has a detrimental effect on the child's progress.

The head teacher aims to always be present at such meetings with class teachers, as this indicates the sincerity with which all complaints are handled, and it also enables as comprehensive a picture as possible of the situation to be obtained. At the same time, it is hoped such meetings can always be held as informally as possible, so that discussion concentrates upon 'fact-finding' rather than 'apportioning blame'.

The complaint will be systematically investigated and the class or head teacher will respond to the parent at the earliest opportunity, either verbally or in writing.

That response will include:

- a detail of investigative measures undertaken, and
- a summary of findings.

2: Where a parent / carer feels a concern has not been adequately addressed, he / she should seek a further meeting with the head teacher to express the continuing concerns. If required, the opportunity may be taken to include an 'independent' party – such as a co-opted School Board member – at this meeting. Formal record of such a meeting will be maintained by the head teacher using the attached (Appendix 1) form. Hopefully, any complaint can be resolved at this stage. The appropriate members of staff will be kept fully informed of the process, including copies of the attached documentation.

3: If the concern remains unresolved, the parent / carer may make contact with Mrs Nancy Ellis, parent / school unit, Woodbank, 30 Edinburgh Road, Dumfries. DG1 1NW. If the complaint is about the head teacher, the parent should, after notifying him of this course of action being taken, make contact with Mrs Ellis in the first instance.

Appendix 1: Complaints form

GATEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINT DOCUMENTATION RECORD	
Date of initial complaint:	Date(s) of formal meeting(s): 1: 2: 3:
Nature of complaint:	
Action taken:	
Outcome:	
Any necessary subsequent review (with date(s)):	