

# Hitchin Girls' School Communications Policy



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**Aspiration Perseverance Kindness Respect Positivity**

Community - Family - Relationships

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers and effective communication between home and school is key to this. Building strong home-school relationships is of vital importance to us and is a foundation upon which our values stand. We recognise, however, that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; we recognise that parents and carers also have very busy lives. Modern communication methods can mean more efficient sharing of information, though this needs to be structured to ensure that it is manageable for staff whose primary responsibility is to teach young people. It is also important that all communication reflects our values, in particular kindness and respect.

## 2. CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

### 2.1 Telephone

Please use the main reception number to leave a message for a teacher to contact you:

- Reception staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible.
- If a call is urgent, please inform the receptionist who will attempt to find an appropriate member of staff to speak to you.
- We will aim to respond to respond as soon as possible and at the latest within 3 working days..
- Please note lessons will never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

### 2.2 Email

Please use the general admin email [admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk) if you need to contact staff. Our admin team will be able to direct your query to the correct teacher, leader or member of non-teaching staff. Please ensure your child's name and tutor group, as well as the member of staff whom you wish to contact, feature in the subject of your email.

- Teachers and non-teaching staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work email to be checked during a member of staff's personal time.
- We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within three working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply.
- Teachers and non-teaching staff, on occasion, may find it easier to email you regarding your child using the contact details we have on file. It is acceptable to continue these conversations directly with the member of staff once they have contacted you, but any subsequent new question or issue should be raised through the [admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk) address so that it can be tracked and routed accordingly.

### 2.3 Via the school website

A contact form can be completed via the school website in the 'contact us' section. This contact form will be directed to the relevant member of staff for a response.

### 3. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Our commitment to communicating with you is documented in our **Home School Agreement**. This clearly outlines the expectations of students, parents and the school in collaborating to educate young people in the best way possible.

#### 3.1 Meetings

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them. In the first instance, please make contact with the following members of staff who are responsible for your child, **in the following order**:

- Form Tutor or Classroom Teacher (if query is relevant to a specific subject)
- Head of Department (if query is relevant to a specific subject)/ Head of Year (if a query is relevant to a number of subject areas or a broader issue)
- SENCO/Assistant SENCO for general issues related to learning
- The Pastoral Team for issues relating to student wellbeing (include Form Tutor)
- Assistant Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Headteacher

Meetings **should always be pre-arranged** with members of staff.

We recognise that sometimes you receive news that may cause upset. It is not appropriate to come to school expecting to speak to a particular member of staff without an appointment. Appointments can be made via the school receptionist and a pre-arranged meeting will allow us to have the right information to hand and to meet with you at a time that both suits you and fits with that teacher's timetable and other fixed commitments.

If you need to see someone urgently, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone ahead and the reception staff will direct your message to an appropriate member of staff.

For non-urgent meetings, we will aim to meet with you within five working days, but this may not always be possible depending upon availability. The school will determine the level of urgency, at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

#### 3.2 Contacting you

Our preferred method of contacting you is via email.

We also remind you that you have access to Go4Schools, which provides you with current information on attendance, consequences, rewards and progress reports. Homework is set via Google Classroom and you are able to sign up for Google Classroom Guardian alerts to keep you abreast of the work set.

Parents' Evenings appointments are scheduled via SchoolCloud.

All other communications are sent via email.

If you need support with accessing these systems, please contact our data team on [exams@hgs.herts.sch.uk](mailto:exams@hgs.herts.sch.uk).

## 4. SOCIAL MEDIA

### 4.1 School Social Media feeds

We use our social media channels to promote student achievements, subject information and key events at the school. This is for the benefit of parents and students. Our whole-school Twitter feed is **@HitchinGirls** and on Facebook is **Hitchin Girls' School**

Our social media feeds are not monitored for inbound messages. We are unable to respond to messages or comments. If you have a question about an event or other post on social media, please either email or call the school.

Our social media feeds operate on a 'best efforts' basis by staff whose primary commitment is to the teaching and learning of students. Expectations around frequency and timeliness of updates need to be moderated accordingly, particularly after normal school hours or during holiday periods.

We understand that parents and carers particularly enjoy updates and photographs from school trips. The primary concern of staff needs to be the safety and learning of students on the trip and there may not be time to post about trips in detail. Parents/carers should also be aware that we are often in parts of the country or abroad where there is limited signal, so it may only be possible to update at the end of the day. We will endeavour to update parents on the return time for trips, though we will always encourage students to contact home themselves directly.

### 4.2 Appropriate use of Social Media

Our social media sites contain terms and conditions relating to acceptable comments and posts. These terms and conditions are available on the main school Twitter and Facebook pages. We reserve the right to remove posts on these pages that breach the terms and conditions.

We are aware that some parents set up group chats for classes or year groups on WhatsApp, Facebook and other platforms. Whilst we recognise that these can be useful for some parents, these are not endorsed by the school and we will never post official messages on these forums. On occasion, information provided by parents on these forums can be inaccurate or not representative of the school's view. Please rely on official social media channels, the school website (<https://www.hgs.herts.sch.uk>) or emails received directly from the school.

Our teachers and staff have a right to a personal life and to be protected from harassment online. We ask that parents never address staff members directly via social media and must not post inaccurate or defamatory statements about staff or the school on social media platforms.

Contact with the school should be made using telephone, email or in person by appointment. Complaints to the school need to be addressed to the Headteacher, in writing. Our full set of policies are available at:

<https://www.hgs.herts.sch.uk/page/?title=Guidelines+and+Policies&pid=63>

## 5. IN THE EVENT YOU DO NOT RECEIVE A RESPONSE

If you have not received a response from the school within three working days, please contact the school by emailing [admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hgs.herts.sch.uk) or telephone the school and we will follow up your enquiry. Communication with parents and carers is important to us and

we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

## **6. APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION**

All members of our school community deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. It is our expectation that all communications, whether written or verbal, will be carried out in this manner. We have a shared goal, supporting the education of your child and ensuring their educational experience is an exceptional one. To achieve this we need to work together and effective, appropriate communication is essential. Examples of unacceptable standards of behaviour from parents/carers, either in person or via telephone calls or e-mail, include; shouting or aggressive behaviour, threatening or abusive language involving swearing or offensive remarks, making malicious allegations, derogatory remarks or behaviours and wilful damage to school property. If, in any instance, the communication is not meeting our expectations of kindness and respect, the member of staff may choose to end the meeting or the call.