

Communication Policy – LVS Oxford

This document is a policy statement for the development of communication at LVS Oxford. It identifies our rationale and the approaches used to promote and support the development of communication with pupils, parents and staff.

This policy encompasses:

1. How we communicate with students and support the development of students' communication skills
2. How we communicate information to parents/carers regarding the young person's progress
3. How staff communicate with each other.

1. How we communicate with students and support the development of students' communication skills

How we communicate with students

It is important to note that the way in which staff communicate with students will need to be adapted according to a variety of factors (e.g. if a student is displaying signs of stress, verbal communication may need to be reduced/ceased in order to support them as too much language may increase their anxiety and stress levels). Individual strategies to facilitate communication needs are detailed in students' individual Positive Support Plans which staff should regularly refer to and update.

In line with our GDPR and safeguarding policies, staff must not use personal devices to communicate with students, take photographs of students or record/store any personal information related to students. Staff may email students regarding school based matters but this must only be via the school email system to students' school email accounts. Staff must not share personal information with students (e.g. phone numbers, personal email addresses, social media accounts) and should not communicate with students through any of these means.

Supporting development of communication skills

Communication is central to life and learning. It is a fundamental human right. Through communication we build social relationships and knowledge, make our needs and feelings known, and share ideas with others. Communication involves listening, understanding and responding, and also links to literacy skills. Communication is at the core of our work with pupils at LVS Oxford. The importance of communication in empowering pupils and ensuring their access to the curriculum is recognised. All those involved in a child's education should possess the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to ensure that effective communication is achievable for all.

Our goals are:

- To help students develop spontaneous and functional communication skills
- To help students develop good relationships with others

- To help students maintain a well-regulated emotional state for learning and interacting
- To help students maximise their opportunities to take part in daily life and access the wider community

Supporting communication in the classroom

All staff at LVS Oxford are responsible for promoting a 'communication friendly' environment for learners.

Staff should ensure the following:

- Language is adapted to enable learners to access the school environment.
- Learners are provided with good models of social communication throughout the school day. Staff should support learners' social communication difficulties by providing alternative responses and reflecting on social scenarios as they occur.
- Visual support is utilised to support access to the curriculum (vocabulary maps, task sheets, symbols etc.).
- Staff allow students time to process verbal information. When asking a question, staff should allow 15 seconds before using any further verbal information such as repeating the question and checking understanding.
- Progress regarding communication skills is shared with the Speech and Language Therapist to monitor achievements.
- Advice is sought regarding speech, language or social communication needs in a timely manner.

2. How we communicate information to parents/carers

In our school we aim to have clear and effective communication with all parents/carers. Effective communication enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents well informed. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school and their child's learning. Parents are always welcome to see their child's tutor to discuss their child's progress by pre-arranged appointment. Parents who come to the school must sign-in at reception on arrival. If required, an appointment can be made to see a member of the Senior Management Team if there are any unresolved issues. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together. The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity.

Telephone

Parents are welcome to telephone the school with urgent messages that need to be delivered immediately to staff. Urgent calls may be put through to the most appropriate or available person. The admin team will ensure that a message is taken and delivered for contact to be made within a reasonable time. Non-urgent calls/messages to academic staff should be kept to a minimum at times of the day where teaching and learning may be disrupted.

E-mail

If a parent wishes to raise a query, they are encouraged to contact their child's class tutor in the first instance. If you require information about staff email addresses, please contact the admin team (admin@lvs-oxford.org.uk). We endeavour to acknowledge emails within 48 hours wherever possible, please note that during weekends staff are not expected to return emails and any query will be dealt with on Monday morning.

Staff Team

As a team, LVS Oxford work closely to ensure that students' needs are dealt with holistically, drawing upon relevant experience from our staff. Concerns or requests for information may be referred to the most appropriate individual or team within the school such as the School Nurse, pastoral team, mental health team and therapy team.

Contact can also be made through the school Parent Liaison Officer who is experienced in providing support and guidance to the students and their families. The Parent Liaison Officer can bridge the communication between staff members and parents/caregivers and sign post where necessary. The Parent Liaison Officer may also link to external professionals and support services where appropriate.

School Website, Gateway & Moodle

The school website (www.lvs-oxford.org.uk) has information for parents regarding relevant policies and key documents. Parents also have access to LVS Oxford Gateway which is a tailored parent portal that has a secure login. Gateway allows parents to access information such as the school calendar, school group emails, student timetables, key vocabulary lists etc.

For more information regarding accessing Gateway and setting up an account please refer to the parent Gateway guide or visit the LVS Oxford Gateway page on the school website.

Students can access 'Moodle' which is an online learning platform. Moodle allows students to access lesson material on and off site using their school log-in details.

Newsletters

The school newsletter is sent to parents termly via Gateway. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Review Meetings

All pupils have an annual review of their EHCP to evaluate progress against outcomes and develop an action plan regarding all aspects of the child's life and update the EHCP as appropriate. EHCP meetings are arranged by Michelle Norgrove (EHCP co-ordinator) who will contact parents/carers directly and liaise with local authority and any relevant professionals that are working with the family to invite them to attend and participate in this review of progress.

Relevant school staff working with your child such as school therapists and academic staff will contribute to providing reports and written feedback in order to measure progress against outcomes stated in the EHCP.

Parents Evenings

In addition to annual EHCP review meetings, parents/carers are invited to meet subject specialist staff and tutors 3 times per year (December, April and July). These are evening meetings to explain areas of our curriculum and discuss progress. Reports will be provided prior to parent evening appointments.

Absences

If a child is going to be absent from school, parents/carers should telephone the school office before 9.30am to advise that the child will not be attending school that day and the reason for this absence. If the school does not receive notification and therefore have no indication of the reason for a child being absent from school, the school receptionist will contact a parent/carers (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence. Please see the Attendance Policy for further information regarding pupil absence procedures.

Complaints Procedure

The School endeavours to provide the best education possible for all of its learners in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from learners, parents and other stakeholders, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns or complaints are raised the School intends for these to be dealt with: fairly, openly, promptly, without prejudice. The school differentiates between complaints and concerns.

More information regarding our complaints procedure can be accessed via the school website www.lvs-oxford.org.uk under policies.

3. How staff communicate with each other

Effective communication is critical to a well-functioning organisation. The school utilises many different methods of communicating information to staff either digitally or face to face. Engagement with staff is important to the organisation of the school and to the welfare of staff and pupils.

It is vital that staff use open channels of two-way communication to keep line managers and colleagues informed.

Face-to-face communication

Communicating in person with colleagues is considered to be the most beneficial method of ensuring information and knowledge are shared. The conversational nature allows for greater understanding of the context of the message and encourages reflection, questioning and feedback.

Staff are encouraged as often as possible to meet with colleagues to discuss issues verbally, rather than relying on email. Whilst it is important to manage the

amount of time spent in meetings, well-managed meetings or discussions are an effective and efficient way of sharing knowledge, solving problems and ensuring common understanding and appreciation of issues.

Research suggests that face-to-face communication engenders greater trust and understanding than any other communication method. It is important therefore, that staff have opportunities for one-to-one and group meetings with colleagues and their line managers on a regular basis and that dialogue in those meetings is two-way and respectful.

Email

The appropriate use of the email system, the internet and network within the charity is essential, as it facilitates effective communication and improves efficiency. All staff are required to sign an acceptable use policy regarding appropriate use of the email system, the internet and network.

All staff are issued with an email account to use for school business. Staff should check their email account regularly as this will be how the majority of general school information is communicated.

Staff Meetings

Meetings should be held in a confidential environment and any action points raised should be followed up in writing.

The school holds daily morning meetings, which all permanent teaching staff (and agency staff where appropriate) are expected to attend. The purpose of this meeting is to share key, urgent information regarding students that all staff need to be aware of in order to support students effectively throughout the school day.

All permanent teaching staff are also required to attend a weekly 'case conferencing' meeting. The purpose of this meeting is for staff to focus on particular students and review current interventions and support in place. Staff will then establish whether any additional support is required for that student to make progress in school (this may include additional therapeutic support, input from the mental health team or behaviour strategies).

Additionally, subject leaders attend regular meetings in order to discuss academic progress and plans for the term as well as regularly leading their own departmental meetings.

The Senior Management Team have a weekly meeting to discuss the management and running of the school.

Induction & Staff Handbook

An induction process is carried out for all new staff covering health and safety and safeguarding training delivered by the Deputy Head Teacher. All staff can access a copy of the staff handbook giving information to staff on many aspects of their role as well as rules and procedures that operate within the school and wider organisation.

Senior Management Support

Senior Management are available to provide support and advice to all staff. Unless the need is of an urgent nature, an appointment should be made via the office manager. The school's behaviour lead is available to discuss any behaviour concerns and the appropriate referral route for support is detailed in the school Behaviour Policy.

This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team.

Written by: Abigail Robins (Speech and Language Therapist). To be reviewed by:
February 2020 (SMT to review)