



# **Conisbrough Ivanhoe Primary Academy**

## **Policy on Receiving and Sending Messages at School**

2013

## Policy on receiving and sending messages at school

Conisbrough Ivanhoe Primary Academy is privileged to have parents who are willing to work closely with the school to ensure the best possible outcomes for their children. Staff at school know that parents are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school aims to achieve for the young people in its care. We are very successful in our outcomes, and we appreciate that a large part of that success is due to the manner in which parents contribute to the life of the academy. The process of education is helped enormously by the respect that school and parents have for each other. Part of what we aim to do at school is continuously to improve our practice to make the school an even better place for children.

As part of the school's commitment to keeping children safe at all times, we have decided to review our practice regarding communication and set out in a written policy the way in which we expect to receive messages that parents wish to be passed on to staff or to children and to detail the ways in which we communicate with parents.

There are always going to be times when parents feel they have information which needs to be shared with staff – such as when a child may be upset about an incident that has occurred, if a child is feeling under the weather, if they wish their child not to do PE, if a child has forgotten to bring in something for school and so on. It is useful for school to know this information and it can help parents to feel more comfortable, knowing that the information has been shared.

There are also times when parents need to change an arrangement with their children and they need to let their children know during the school day and they need school to pass that information on.

We have noticed that problems can arise when messages are passed on verbally at the beginning of the day when teachers are either collecting their children from the playground or getting children settled into their morning routine. This is a time when teachers and LSAs are already focussed on getting the day started smoothly which demands all the attention of teachers and LSAs, which in turn means that this is actually the worst time to be given a message. Occasionally, messages can be passed to one teacher who is asked to pass it on to someone else which can be even more problematic.

Staff at Ivanhoe Academy wish to have the strongest procedures in place, which means addressing each aspect of the way in which messages are received. Having discussed this issue at length in staff meetings, we have agreed upon this procedure:

- Some messages parents wish to pass on to staff might be considered by a parent to be not very important, whereas some are considered to be of **high importance** – it is up to each parent to decide what they consider to be of **high importance**.
  - If a parent has a message which they consider of **high importance**, they should put it in writing and hand it in to the office staff.
  - If the message is of **high importance** and is being sent to school with the child to hand in, a follow up telephone call should be made to ensure that it has been delivered.
  - If the need for the message arises on the way to school and they have not got it in writing, parents can borrow some paper from the office to put it in writing, or they can tell a member of the office staff who will write it into the message book which can be signed by the parent.
  - We understand that this is time consuming, but if the message is of **high importance**, we consider it worthwhile to have the best procedures in place for passing it on.
  - This should not stop parents chatting to teachers and letting them know what their children have been up to, which is an important part of the parent/teacher relationship at Ivanhoe, it is to discriminate between what is considered of **high importance** and what is not.
  - Office staff will ensure that the message is glued or written into the message book and the message will be taken to teachers who will sign that they have seen the message. Teachers will be given a photocopy of the message to keep.
  - Once a message has been relayed to the relevant member of staff, a red line will be drawn across the message to indicate that it has been passed on.
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- If a parent has a message to be passed to their child during the school day, it is important to ensure that it is relayed to the school in good time. To be most sure of a child receiving a message, it should be relayed to the school before 2.50 pm.
  - Telephone messages will be written onto a pad with carbon copies. The top copy will be taken to the child's teacher and will be shared with both teacher and child.
  - Any change of the usual routine for picking up children or any delay in picking up children should be passed on to the school so that we are aware in good time of the change.
  - Occasionally, parents simply have questions or queries about school policy or school issues and they can always be put to me directly on my email address which is [head@ivanhoe.doncaster.sch.uk](mailto:head@ivanhoe.doncaster.sch.uk)

It is important to be aware of the fact that ***no system is foolproof***. Teachers are faced with a huge number of demands every day and things will be forgotten occasionally. Bearing that in mind, it would be very helpful if children were also aware of any messages that were being passed on to the school so that they could be part of the process, which would make the system even more effective.

The school communicates with parents in many different ways. When we need to speak to parents individually and immediately, we telephone. One of the most frustrating aspects of trying to communicate by telephone is when numbers change and the school is not informed of the change. Another is when someone from school telephones a mobile number and the call is not answered or the telephone is not switched on. When someone from school telephones a parent, it is ***always*** an important issue so it is really important that if parents give the school a telephone number for a contact then that telephone number is current and that telephone is switched on.

For more general communications, we have a variety of different methods:

- Most weeks of the year we have a homework front page that goes out to all parents from Reception to Y6. This is also posted on the homepage of the school website ([www.ivanhoeschool.co.uk](http://www.ivanhoeschool.co.uk)) The front page is a general newsletter which carries information about events at school and it includes a reply box that many parents have used to comment on homework or other school issues.
- We use the information box on the homepage of the school website for snippets of information.
- We use a text messaging system for urgent messages or for reminders about information that has probably already gone home on a letter from the school. This system is only as good as the information that we have – it becomes less efficient if parents do not inform us about changes in mobile telephone numbers.
- We send letters home regularly to inform parents of events coming up at school as well as for trips, after-school clubs and so on. These are carried home by children in their school bags or by hand.
- We post some letters home despite the expense if we consider the content of the letter so important that a more secure method of delivery is required than expecting a child to carry it. We also post communications home (such as reports) if parents are separated and two copies are required.
- The blog on the school website has also been used as a forum for discussion on occasion when it has been important for parents to be able to see what other parents have been thinking about issues.
- We report to parents in writing three times a year – a social report in autumn, a progress report in spring (English and Maths) and a full

report in summer. We meet with parents three times a year to discuss issues at Parents' Evening, but we also make sure that we are all available on a daily basis if parents need to meet with us.

- Parents know that at Ivanhoe, we always strive to make ourselves available for parents, whether at a prearranged time before or after-school or in a more ad hoc manner. We all appreciate how hard parents work for us and value the issues that parents might need to raise.

As part of our commitment to ensuring excellent communication between school and parents, the school will ensure that when children make an enrichment choice (sometimes called a PPA choice) at school, parents will be informed of that choice so that they will be able to ensure that their children are dressed appropriately (if it is PE, Dance or Gardening etc) and they will know if they are likely to be using glue or paint, depending on the activity they have chosen.

The school will also inform parents that when after-school clubs are run, a register will be taken to ensure that the member of staff knows who is attending on any given day but that the member of staff will not be checking this against a school register. This information will be included in any letter sent home regarding after-school clubs.

Our school is an inclusive school. We actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude pupils, or groups of pupils. This means that equality of opportunity must be a reality for our children. We make this a reality through the attention we pay to the different individuals and groups of children within our school to ensure minimal risk of underachievement. Please refer to the Inclusion Policy for full details.