Pocklington School Foundation

E-Mail and Social Media Protocol

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Purpose

Pocklington School Foundation values positive and constructive relationships with parents and carers. Effective communication between home and school is essential in supporting the wellbeing, safety and education of all pupils.

This protocol aims to:

- Promote respectful and effective communication.
- Support positive partnerships between home and school.
- Protect the well-being and work-life balance of staff.
- Ensure concerns are addressed through appropriate channels.
- Safeguard children and young people.
- Promote responsible use of email, social media and digital communication platforms.

The Foundation encourages open dialogue and welcomes communication from parents; however, all communication should be conducted respectfully, professionally and in a manner consistent with the school's values.

Related Legislation and Guidance

This protocol should be read alongside relevant legislation and guidance including:

- Data Protection Act 2018.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Education Act 2002.
- Independent School Standards Regulations.
- School Complaints Procedure.
- Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.
- Acceptable Use and Online Safety Policies.

Email Communication

Email provides an efficient means of communication and enables information to be shared quickly. However, email is not always the most suitable method for discussing complex, sensitive or urgent matters.

The Foundation is committed to ensuring that staff devote the greatest possible proportion of their time to teaching, learning, pastoral care and supporting pupils.

Appropriate use of email

Email is appropriate for:

- Sharing information.
- Requesting clarification.
- Raising routine questions.
- Arranging meetings.
- Providing updates regarding a pupil.

Situations where email may not be appropriate

Email should not normally be used for:

- Emergencies.
- Urgent safeguarding concerns.
- Complex complaints.
- Sensitive disciplinary matters.
- Extended disputes or disagreements.

In such circumstances, a telephone conversation or face-to-face meeting is often more effective.

Urgent messages

Between 8.30am and 5.00pm staff are likely to be teaching, supervising pupils or undertaking other school duties and may not be able to read or respond immediately.
If a message is urgent, parents should contact Reception directly:

- Pocklington School: 01759 321200
- Pocklington Prep School: 01759 321228

Response times

Parents should not expect responses outside the hours of 8.00am to 5.30pm during term time, except where staff have specific boarding responsibilities.
Staff will endeavour to respond within two working days during term time.
Responses may take longer during weekends, public holidays and school holidays.

Courtesy and professionalism

All email correspondence should remain courteous and respectful.

Parents are asked to recognise that concerns relating to their children can be emotional and sensitive; however, communications should remain constructive and professional at all times.

Social Media

The Foundation recognises that social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, X and similar services, can be valuable tools for sharing information and maintaining connections within the school community.

Parents are encouraged to use these platforms responsibly and in ways that support positive relationships across the school community.

Expectations for parents

Parents are asked to:

- Communicate respectfully online.
- Consider the potential impact of online comments on pupils, families and staff.
- Raise concerns directly with the school through appropriate channels.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of other members of the school community.
- Follow the school's Complaints Procedure where appropriate.

Parents should not:

- Publish allegations or complaints about staff, pupils, parents or the school on social media.
- Share confidential information relating to the school community.
- Post material which may be defamatory, offensive, abusive or discriminatory.
- Share photographs or videos of pupils other than their own child without appropriate consent.
- Publish information that could identify vulnerable children.
- Create or participate in campaigns directed against individual members of staff.
- Use social media to discuss ongoing safeguarding, disciplinary or complaints matters.
- Misrepresent the views, actions or decisions of the school.

The Foundation respectfully requests that any concerns are raised directly with the school rather than being discussed on social media platforms.

Parent Messaging Groups

The Foundation recognises that many parents participate in WhatsApp groups and other messaging platforms.

These groups are independent of the school and are not monitored or managed by the Foundation.

All practical and organisational information can be obtained directly from the school, and we encourage parents to read all communications from the school, or contact the school if clarification is needed.

To best support the Foundation, parents are encouraged to use messaging groups only for practical and organisational matters, such as:

- Transport arrangements.
- Timings of events.
- Uniform queries.
- Social arrangements.

Similarly, parents should avoid using these groups to:

- Discuss individual pupils.
- Discuss members of staff.
- Share confidential information.
- Raise complaints or concerns about school matters.
- Speculate on safeguarding, behavioural or welfare issues.

Any concerns regarding education, wellbeing or safeguarding should be raised directly with the school.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

To protect all pupils and families, parents must respect confidentiality when communicating electronically.

Parents should not:

- Share information about another child or family without permission.
- Circulate screenshots of communications from staff.
- Share confidential school correspondence.
- Post information regarding safeguarding concerns online.
- Publish images, recordings or details that could compromise a child's privacy, dignity or safety.

Any safeguarding concern should be reported directly to the school through established safeguarding procedures and not via social media platforms or parent messaging groups.

Artificial Intelligence and Digitally Altered Content

Parents are expected to use emerging technologies responsibly.

Parents should not create, distribute or publish:

- AI-generated content falsely attributed to members of staff, pupils or the school.
- Manipulated images, audio recordings or videos intended to misrepresent events or individuals.
- Content that may damage the reputation, wellbeing or safety of members of the school community.

Any misuse of digital technologies that affects members of the school community may be addressed through the school's procedures and, where appropriate, referred to external agencies.

Unacceptable Communication

The Foundation is committed to maintaining respectful and professional relationships with all members of the school community.

The school reserves the right to restrict, discontinue or redirect communication where correspondence includes:

- Abusive language.
- Threatening behaviour.
- Personal insults or attacks.
- Harassment of staff.
- Discriminatory language.
- Persistent unreasonable demands.
- Excessive or repetitive communications that place an unreasonable burden on staff.

Where necessary, alternative communication arrangements may be implemented in accordance with relevant school policies.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The Foundation recognises the importance of strong partnerships with parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Open communication between home and school plays a vital role in supporting young children's learning, development and wellbeing.

In addition to the expectations outlined elsewhere in this protocol:

- Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with their child's class teacher and other relevant staff.
- Information relating to children in the EYFS should remain confidential.
- Observations, photographs and learning records shared by the school should not be used to identify or discuss other children.
- Concerns regarding a child's welfare, development, safety or wellbeing should be raised directly with the relevant member of staff or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Parents should not discuss incidents involving other children through social media or messaging groups.
- Safeguarding concerns must always be reported directly to the school and never shared through parent communication groups or social media platforms.

The Foundation is committed to meeting the safeguarding, welfare and partnership requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

Resolving Concerns

Where parents have concerns regarding their child's education, wellbeing or school experience, concerns should normally be raised through the following channels:

1. Class Teacher in the Prep School, Tutor in the Senior School.
2. Pastoral Lead in the Prep School, Housemaster in the Senior School.
3. Deputy Head in the Prep School, Head of Division in the Senior School.
4. Head of the Prep School, Deputy Head (Pastoral) in the Senior School.
5. Head of the Foundation.
6. Formal Complaints Procedure, where appropriate.

The Foundation requests that concerns are raised at the earliest opportunity so that they can be addressed constructively and effectively.

Please see our Foundation Complaints Policy for more details.

Our Commitment to Parents

The Foundation is committed to:

- Responding to emails within two working days during term time wherever possible.
- Treating all parents with courtesy, professionalism and respect.
- Communicating clearly and constructively.
- Maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- Providing opportunities for discussion through telephone calls, video meetings and face-to-face meetings.
- Working in partnership with parents to support every child.

Together we can ensure that communication remains positive, respectful and focused on the wellbeing, safety and success of all pupils.