Communication Policy

Title of Policy:

Sacred Heart Secondary School Communications Policy

1.   Introductory Statement

This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school effectively communicates with all of its partners.

2.   Scope:

The policy applies to all members of the school community taking into consideration the school's GDPR Policy, Dignity in the Workplace Policy, and the school's Social Media Policy (Acceptable Use Policy)

3.   Rationale

The policy outlines the manner in which the school, and where applicable the Board of Management of SHSS, aspires to communicate information with all its partners, the wider community, and other organisations (such as its trust body CEIST), the Department of Education (DE), and other agencies.

4.   Mission

Mission Statement

Communication Policy

LEARNING TO WORK TOGETHER IN A CREATIVE AND CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT, AS WE PREPARE FOR OUR FUTURE.

Motto:

Sacred Heart Secondary School; Where Learning Continues to be an adventure.

Inspiring ..... Engaging .... Flourishing

5.   Goals / Objectives

At SHSS we strive to maintain clear and effective communication with all partners, the wider community, our trust CEIST, the Department of Education, and other agencies.

Effective communication enables us to share our aims, mission and vision, our values and numerous policies. It is also integral to addressing all of the operational nuances of a modern secondary school.

All communication at SHSS aspires to inform all of our stakeholders in a manner that is open, honest, ethical and professional. We aim to use a variety of communication methods, most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience. (See section 6)

6.   Scope of Communications used (Not an exhaustive list)
- Person to person conversations / meetings
- Staff Meetings / Briefings
- Pastoral care / Special Educational Needs (SEN) / Committee meetings etc.
- Online meetings such as Google Meet / Zoom
- Google applications (Drive, forms etc.)
- Text Message
- Telephone
- Email
- Letters
- Website / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram / SHSS School app / SHSS TV
- Newspapers
- School Signs

Communication Policy

- Staff Handbook
- School Administration System VSware
- Staff Notice Board
- Weekly Events Sheet
- School Website
- TÚSLA Portal
- Telephone
- Post Box / Pigeon Hole
- Records of Minutes of Meetings
- BOM Minutes
- School Plan
- Annual Report
- Accident Book
- Various recording forms (e.g. Incident report form / referral form / child protection)
- Student Diary
- Sign In and Sign Out Book.

7.   Communications

7.1.   Staff Communications.

Staff communication is facilitated in the following ways:

7.1.1.   Regular Staff Meetings / Briefings.

A schedule of agreed staff meetings is outlined during the previous academic year. This provides a platform for feedback, updates, discussion, review and staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD). An agenda is posted in advance of each meeting via email. The minutes of all staff meetings are recorded and communicated at the beginning of the following staff meeting.

7.1.2.   Staff Notice Board.

Each week the main events of the week are posted on the staff noticeboard. Every day the staff whiteboard is updated with all relevant information for that specific day. The board is also a useful point of reference for the school's substitution and supervision arrangements. Daily substitution arrangements are posted before 8.50am each morning.

7.1.3.   Open Door Policy.

The Principal and Deputy Principal have an open-door policy, whereby, in general, appointments are not required.

7.1.4.   Pastoral Care Team Meetings.

Weekly pastoral care team meetings for Junior and Senior Cycle take place; these provide an opportunity to discuss the progress of students, and interventions that

may be required. These meetings are attended by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads and School Guidance Counsellor.

7.1.5.   SEN Meetings.

Two weekly SEN meetings take place. The Core SEN team of the SEN coordinator, the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal and Deputy Principal meet to discuss and communicate key SEN arrangements. The second meeting involves the SEN Team with specific responsibility for SEN students in the various year groups. This meeting is also attended by SEN coordinator, the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal and Deputy Principal. Student progress, learning support plans, and interventions are agreed and discussed.

7.1.6.   Working Groups / Committee Meetings.

Numerous working school groups and committees meet throughout the school year. Staff are informed of the progress of these groups via email and staff meetings.

7.1.7.   Board of Management

Agreed reports are communicated by one of the staff nominees at the following staff meeting.

7.1.8.   eMail.

This is a key mode of communication, allowing for the sharing of circulars / bulletins / upcoming CPD / staff meetings etc. It is advised that staff communication should be limited to between the hours of 8am and 5pm during the working week, unless in the case of an emergency or unexpected event. (Please see Appendix 1)

7.1.9.   Google.

The agreed digital learning platform is Google; this is used throughout the year as a means of sharing and accessing information. Where there is a need to communicate remotely (school closures etc.), "Google" and its associated applications, will be utilised to hold meetings, and to gather and communicate information.

7.1.10.   Website / School App / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram.

The school website and various social media platforms are an excellent way for staff to stay connected with all key school events and weekly events, along with school news.

7.1.11.   Text messages

SMS messaging will also be used to communicate updates and events with staff, when required.

7.1.12.   Telephone

Communication Policy

7.1.13. Annual School Plan.

Every year the annual school plan is published. A copy is made available on the school's website. Hard copies are available in the Principal's office, Deputy Principal's office, Secretary's office, the staff room, and in the Staff Handbook.

7.1.14. Annual Development Priorities,

Each year a set of development priorities is ratified by the Board of Management,. These are communicated to all staff at the beginning of the school year at a staff meeting.

7.1.15. School Policies.

School policies are available from the office on request Many of the significant school policies are available in pdf format from the school website.

7.1.16. Staff Handbook.

The staff handbook is a valuable resource that communicates information and guidance on school procedures and policies. All staff receive an annually reviewed and edited version of the staff handbook.

Communication Policy

7.1.17.   Signage.

Various relevant signage throughout the school communicates information such as entry / exit, health & safety, CCTV etc.

7.1.18.   VSWare.

The school's admin system can be used to communicate some information under the Notifications section eg dates when the system is open for the entry of results also communicated to staff via VSware.

7.2.   Student Communication.
7.2.1.   Year and Class Assemblies.

Year and class assemblies are used periodically to communicate school news & events, affirm students, acknowledge achievement, and to provide advice and guidance. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise matters while providing a forum for discussion.

7.2.2.   One to One Meetings.

Informal and formal meetings with students take place with teachers, tutors, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), Year Heads, members of the SEN team, Guidance Counsellor, Principal and Deputy Principal in the school every day. This open approach to student – staff and staff – student communications is key to developing and maintaining relationships and respect, and fostering a sense of community.

7.2.3.   Google Platforms.

The agreed digital learning platform is Google. The various applications will be used to share, gather, and create content for educational purposes. This involves teacher – student, student – student, and student – teacher communications. Students are encouraged to make face to face contact and meet with their teachers for any matter requiring clarification and or discussion.

7.2.4.   eMail.

As part of the google suite of applications, all students have their own personal school email address. eMail should only be used when it is not possible, and is unlikely to become possible, to make contact with a member of the school staff. Unless directed otherwise, as general good practice, emails should only be sent between 8am and 5pm on school days.

Communication Policy

7.2.5.   Website / School App / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram.

The school website and various social media platforms are an excellent way for students to stay connected with all key school events and weekly events, along with school news.

7.2.6.   Intercom Announcements.

Whole school announcements are made regularly on the school's PA system. Students are also allowed to make announcements about upcoming school events over the intercom at 10.45am and 3.15pm only.

7.2.7.   Student Voice Meetings.

Various student leadership groups such as Student Council, Peer mentors, and YSI advocates meet regularly. School matters are discussed and highlighted.

7.2.8.   Student Focus Groups.

Throughout the school year, various student focus groups are used to collaborate and communicate on various matters, policies and priorities.

7.2.9.   Student Diary.

Every student receives a school diary at the beginning of the school year. It is edited annually and is an excellent resource for students; packed with information including key calendar events, study skills, anti-bullying information and much more.

7.2.10.   Reports (Physical or on VSWare).

All key school reports are communicated to students and their families via VSWare and / or through physical reports that are posted home.

7.2.11.   Consent Forms.

Consent forms, such as those required for participation in RSE, GDPR, Science Lab experiments, school tours, etc. are shared with students' families in advance of enrolment and / or various activities.

7.2.12.   Information Sheets.

Throughout the year various information sheets are distributed to students to inform them of key upcoming events such as tours, trips, games and events.

7.2.13.   Notice Boards.

Throughout the school there are numerous notice boards to keep students informed on various matters.

Communication Policy

7.2.14.   Signage.

Various relevant signage throughout the school communicates information such as entry / exit, health & safety, CCTV etc.

7.3.   7.3 Communication with Parents
7.3.1.   Telephone.

The use of the phone to communicate between parents / guardians and the school is advocated as the primary mode of communication. The year head is the primary contact point for matters pertaining to that year. Subject teachers are available for matters relevant to their specific subject.

7.3.2.   One to One Meetings.

Upon request, parents are provided with the opportunity to meet with staff members including subject teachers, Year Heads, SEN coordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal and Principal.

7.3.3.   Information Evenings.

Year group parents' information evenings are organised at various points in the school calendar. Some of the key parent information evenings that take place during the year include 1st, Transition Year (x 2) and 6th year. These events are communicated in advance by email to the parents / guardians of relevant students.

7.3.4.   Parent – Teacher Meetings.

All year groups in the school are provided with a Parent / Teacher meeting that takes place during the year. The dates for these are available and communicated in advance of the school year.

7.3.5.   Incoming 1st Year Student / Family Meetings.

All incoming 1st year students and their parents / guardians are provided with an opportunity to meet with the Principal or Deputy Principal in advance of the commencement of the school year. Students joining other year groups from another school are also afforded this opportunity.

7.3.6.   School Policies and Procedures.

Copies of all the key school policies are available to parents / guardians in pdf format, via the school website. Key school procedures, including the enrolment process, Anti-Bullying, and the Code of Behaviour are available on the website and or by request. These key procedures and processes are outlined and communicated at enrolment interviews and at various Parent Information evenings.

Communication Policy

7.3.7.   Student Diary.

Every student receives a school diary at the beginning of the school year. It is edited annually and is an excellent resource for parents; packed with information including key calendar events, study skills, anti-bullying information etc.

7.3.8.   Website / School App / Facebook / Twitter / Instagram.

The school website and various social media platforms are an excellent way for parents to stay connected with all key events, school policies, processes, and weekly events, along with school news.

7.3.9.   Letters / eMail.

On a regular basis, parents will receive emails / letters to communicate relevant updates and reminders, and to communicate key dates, events and activities that are taking place at the school. While parents have the facility to email the school regarding student issues, it is always more effective to phone the school if they wish to discuss any concerns about their child.

7.3.10.   Reports (Physical or on VsWare).

All key school reports are communicated to students and their families via VSware and / or through physical reports that are posted home.

7.3.11.   Consent Forms.

Consent forms, such as those required for participation in RSE, GDPR, Science Lab experiments, school tours, etc. are shared with students' families in advance of enrolment and / or various activities.

7.3.12.   The Parents' Association.

The Parents' Association (PA) is a critical platform for communicating the events and activities of the school. The school has assigned a teacher as a school liaison to the PA to bolster this communication, along with supporting the coordination of PA events.

7.3.13.   Text Message.

The school texting service can be used to communicate many school matters. These include communicating absences, unforeseen school closures and reminders about key school events.

7.3.14.   Signage.

Various relevant signage throughout the school communicates information such as entry / exit, health & safety, CCTV etc.

Communication Policy

7.4.   Communication with Outside Agencies

In line with the school's GDPR policy the school communicates relevant information with outside agencies, including the Department of Education, TÚSLA, CAMHS, An Garda Síochana, West Cork Child and Development Services. etc.

7.5.   Communication with Members of the Public and Other Organisations.

Sacred Heart Secondary School will occasionally communicate with members of the public via the school's social media platforms, podcasts, newspapers and / or newsletters

8.   Roles and Responsibilities

All members of staff will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.

9.   Links with other school policies

This policy must be read in conjunction with the school's current policies and any other policies as they are developed.

10.   Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

This policy will be monitored by the review committee. This policy will be reviewed periodically in line with the policy review process of the school. An evaluation will take place in line with the periodic review.

11.   Ratification and Communication

This policy will be ratified by the Board of Management. It will be made available to all partners. The policy will be made available on the school website.

12. Implementation Date

This policy will come into effect after being signed by the Board of Management

Name (print)

Chairperson of Board of Management   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

Communication Policy

Appendix 1

Staff Email

- Emails should be composed in a respectful, courteous manner, paying attention to the tone and punctuation of the email.

- Emails should only be sent between the hours of 8am and 5pm, unless something urgent or unexpected occurs. There is a 'schedule send' facility on email to allow for this.

- At weekends and holidays, the setting on email can be changed from 'Active' to 'Out of Office'

- The 'allstaff' or 'teachingstaff' email address is only envisaged for staff communications and is not an appropriate way for students to contact staff members.

- When sending sensitive information about students to staff members, relevant individual teachers email addresses should be used and not 'allstaff' or 'teachingstaff' email addresses, as per GDPR policy.

- Effective communication is designed to communicate information in a timely manner, allowing staff / management the time to address concerns / issues and / or to give adequate preparation time.