

Willow School Policy



Communication Policy

Date: October 2026

Review Date: October 2028

Our Commitment to Families

At Willow School, we pride ourselves on the strong relationships we build with our families. We know that our pupils thrive when home and school work together, share information openly and trust one another. We want every parent and carer to feel welcome, listened to and well informed about their child's time with us.

We believe that clear, open and honest communication between school and home:

- Gives parents and carers the information they need to understand and support their child's learning, wellbeing and progress
- Helps us to understand each child as a whole person, including what is happening at home that may affect them in school
- Builds trust, so that families feel confident raising questions or worries early, before they become bigger concerns
- Helps the school to improve, through listening to the views and feedback of families
- Means that pupils, many of whom find change and uncertainty difficult, receive consistent messages from the adults around them

This policy aims to:

- Explain the different ways we communicate with families and what each one is used for
- Set out what families can expect from us, including how quickly we will respond
- Explain when and how we will contact families about something that has happened in school
- Help families reach the member of staff best placed to help, as quickly as possible
- Make sure communication is accessible to every family, whatever their needs or circumstances

We are always transparent and approachable. If something has happened, we will tell you. If you have a question or a worry, however small, we would always rather you asked us. Throughout this policy, 'parents' refers to parents, carers and anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Proprietors

- Approving this policy and making sure the school has the systems and resources to communicate effectively with families across both sites
- Making sure the information the Independent School Standards (Part 6) require the school to provide to parents is published and kept up to date
- Responding to concerns or complaints about the Headteacher, in line with the Complaints Policy

The Headteacher

- Making sure communication with families is open, timely, accurate and appropriate
- Making sure staff are trained in, and follow, this policy and the professional boundaries set out in it
- Monitoring how well communication is working, including seeking the views of families

- Reviewing this policy and updating it when our systems or structure change

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Leading communication with families about more significant matters, such as serious incidents, safeguarding, attendance concerns and changes to a pupil's provision
- Supporting class teachers with difficult or sensitive conversations
- Making sure key messages to families are consistent across both sites

Class Teachers

- Sharing pupils' learning, achievements and progress regularly through Tapestry
- Responding to messages from families in line with the timescales in this policy
- Leading SEN support plan reviews with families three times a year
- Letting families know promptly about anything that has happened in school that they need to know about
- Passing information to the right colleague when a query is outside their role, and letting the family know they have done so

All Staff

- Communicating with families in a warm, respectful and professional way
- Using only the school's approved communication systems, as set out in the Professional Boundaries section of this policy
- Working with colleagues to make sure families receive information in good time
- Recording significant conversations with families on BromCom

The School Office

- Answering the school phone throughout the school day and checking the answer phone and enquiries inbox regularly, including first thing each morning
- Directing calls, emails and messages to the right member of staff
- Following up absences in line with the Attendance Policy
- Approving accident records on Tapestry and following up any that parents have not acknowledged, in line with the First Aid Policy
- Supporting families who cannot access Tapestry or email to receive information in another way
- Keeping parents' contact details and emergency contacts up to date on BromCom

Parents and Carers

We ask parents and carers to:

- Download Tapestry, turn on notifications and check it regularly
- Read and respond to communication from school, including requests for consent or meetings, in good time
- Tell us as soon as possible about any changes at home, to their child's health or needs, or to their contact details
- Phone the school office (not Tapestry or email) to report an absence or anything urgent
- Communicate with staff respectfully and raise any concerns directly with the school

Our Working Hours and Response Times

Our staff work hard to respond to families quickly. To protect staff wellbeing and make sure they can focus on teaching and caring for pupils during the day, staff **aim** to respond to messages during core school hours (9:00am to 3:00pm) or their own working hours if they work part-time. Some staff may choose to send messages outside these hours to fit around their other commitments, but they are **not expected** to, and families should not expect a reply in the evening, at weekends or during school holidays.

The timescales below are what families can expect from us during term time.

Type of Contact	What You Can Expect
Phone Call to the School Office	Answered throughout the school day. If the member of staff you need is teaching, we will take a message and they will call you back the same day wherever possible and always within 1 working day.
Answer Phone Message	Absence messages are checked before the register closes at 9:30am. Other messages are returned the same day wherever possible, and always within 1 working day.
Tapestry Message	Acknowledged within 1 working day and responded to in full (or a phone call or meeting arranged) within 2 working days.
Email	Acknowledged within 1 working day and responded to in full (or a phone call or meeting arranged) within 2 working days.
Request for a Meeting	Arranged within 10 working days and sooner wherever possible. Urgent matters will be seen or called much sooner.
Urgent Matters	Please phone the school office. Urgent matters include absence, family emergencies, safeguarding or welfare worries and anything that affects your child's safety that day.

How We Communicate With Families

The table below gives an overview of the ways we keep families informed.

Method	What We Use It For	How Often
Tapestry	Our main way of communicating: photos and updates on learning and progress, memos and key messages, accident records and two-way messaging with staff	Ongoing, throughout every week
Phone Calls	Anything that is better talked through, including good news, concerns, accidents, incidents and wellbeing	Whenever needed
SEN Support Plan Reviews	Reviewing your child's support plan, progress and next steps with their class teacher	Three times a year (unless one of these meetings coincides with the EHCP review)
EHCP Annual Review	Reviewing your child's Education, Health and Care Plan with you, your child and the professionals involved	Once a year
School Report	A full written report on your child's progress, achievement and attendance	Once a year
Termly Family Events	Spending time in school with your child, such as craft and reading afternoons	Once a term
Paper Letters	Key events and information that families need to keep or sign	For key events
Email	Contacting the school office and staff and sending documents or forms	Whenever needed
Facebook	Celebrating school life, events and achievements	Regularly
School Website	An overview of the school, our policies, term dates and contact details	Reference information

Tapestry

Tapestry is our main form of communication with families and is where most information will reach you. Through Tapestry we:

- Share photos, observations and updates about your child's learning, achievements and progress
- Send memos and key messages, such as reminders, upcoming events and changes to arrangements
- Share accident and first aid records, which parents tick to confirm they have seen (see the First Aid Policy)
- Follow up in writing after a phone call about physical intervention, as set out in the Physical Intervention Policy
- Offer a messaging function, so parents and staff can message each other individually about anything that is not urgent

Tapestry access is set up only for those with parental responsibility, in line with any court orders or restrictions we have been made aware of. Families who need help getting started, or who are unable to use Tapestry, should speak to the school office, and we will make sure they receive the same information by phone, email or on paper.

Tapestry messages are not monitored outside school hours. Absences, and anything urgent or related to your child's safety, must always be phoned through to the school office.

Phone Calls

Staff will always pick up the phone to parents when it is needed. We believe a conversation is often the best way to share information, especially when something has happened or when a message could be misunderstood in writing. We will phone you:

- To share good news and celebrate your child's successes
- On the same day if your child has had a more serious accident or injury, including any head, face, eye or dental injury, as set out in the First Aid Policy
- On the same day if physical intervention, seclusion or other restrictive intervention has been used, as set out in the Physical Intervention Policy
- If your child is unwell and needs to be collected
- If your child is absent and we have not heard from you (our first day calling procedure)
- If there is a concern about your child's wellbeing, behaviour or progress that would be better discussed than written down
- If your child's medication is running low, or there has been any concern, error or change relating to their medication

If we cannot reach you, we will leave a message where appropriate and try your emergency contacts if the matter is urgent.

SEN Support Plan Reviews

Every pupil has a support plan, which breaks their EHCP outcomes down into smaller steps. Parents are invited to review their child's support plan with their class teacher three times a year (unless one of these meetings coincides with the EHCP review). Other staff, such as the SENCo or Intervention Lead, may also join where this is appropriate. These meetings are a chance to:

- Talk about your child's progress, strengths and achievements
- Share what you are seeing at home, which helps us plan the right support
- Agree new targets and next steps together
- Talk about your child's wellbeing, future aspirations and anything else that is on your mind

Reviews can take place face to face in school or on Microsoft Teams, whichever works best for your family. Following the meeting, parents/carers will receive a copy of the reviewed support plan via email or a paper copy depending on their preference.

EHCP Annual Reviews

Every pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan is reviewed at least once a year. The SENCo coordinates the annual review and will contact you around 4 to 6 weeks beforehand to agree a date. You will receive an invitation through the local authority's EHCP Hub so that you can share your views before the meeting. Your child's caseworker and other professionals involved with your child are also invited, and your child's views are gathered and included. You are welcome to bring someone with you for support.

School Reports

Parents receive a full written report once a year, at the end of the summer term. This covers your child's progress and achievement across the curriculum, their personal development and wellbeing, and their attendance. Together with the support plan reviews, this means families receive regular, detailed updates on their child's progress throughout the year.

Termly Family Events

Each term, we invite families into school to spend time with their child, for example at craft afternoons and reading afternoons. These are a lovely chance to see your child in their school environment, meet staff and other families informally and see the learning we share on Tapestry. Dates are shared on Tapestry in advance.

Paper Letters

For key events and important information, we may also send home a paper copy of a letter. This might include:

- Trips and visits beyond our local area and consent forms
- Information about RSHE, including parents' right to request withdrawal from sex education, sent before the relevant unit is taught (see the RSHE Policy)
- Responses to requests for leave of absence
- Significant changes to the school, such as changes to staffing or the school day

Paper copies of any letter or policy are available from the school office on request.

Email

Families can email the school office at enquiries@willow-school.co.uk or the School Office Administrator, Olivia Pearson, at olivia.pearson@willow-school.co.uk. The office will pass your email to the right member of staff. We may also use email to send documents and forms or to follow up a conversation in writing.

Facebook

Our Facebook page is used to celebrate school life, share events and achievements and give our wider community a window into Willow School. Please note that:

- Photos of pupils are only shared where parents have given consent, in line with the Photograph and Video Policy, and pupils' names are not used
- Facebook is not used to discuss individual pupils, and we do not respond to individual queries through comments or private messages, so please contact the school office directly
- We ask families not to share photos or videos that include other pupils and to raise any worries with us directly rather than on social media

School Website

Our website provides an overview of the school, our policies, term dates and contact details. It also holds the information the Independent School Standards require us to make available to parents, which we keep up to date whenever a policy or key information changes. The website is not used for day-to-day news, so Tapestry remains the best place for up-to-date information.

When We Will Contact You

Being open with families is at the centre of how we work. The table below sets out how and when we will let you know about things that happen in school.

Situation	How We Will Let You Know	When
Minor Accident or First Aid	Tapestry accident record, which you tick to confirm you have seen. If not acknowledged, the office will follow up by phone or email (First Aid Policy).	Same day
More Serious Accident or Injury	Phone call, as well as the Tapestry accident record. This includes head, face, eye or dental injuries, medical attention, emergency medication, and injuries during physical intervention or caused by another pupil (First Aid Policy).	Same day, as soon as possible
Emergency or Hospital Visit	Phone call from the most senior member of staff on site. A member of staff who knows your child will go with them if you are not able (First Aid Policy).	Immediately
Physical Intervention	Phone call, followed up in writing on Tapestry (Physical Intervention Policy).	Same day
Behaviour Incidents and Dysregulation	Phone call or Tapestry message, depending on what has happened and what is planned to support your child.	Same day
Bullying or Unkind Behaviour	Phone call or meeting with the families of the pupils involved, and what is being done to support everyone (Anti-bullying Policy).	As soon as possible
Your Child Leaves the Site or Supervision	Phone call. Parents are contacted immediately if their child is identified as very vulnerable (Behaviour Policy).	Immediately, or within 10 minutes
Your Child is Unwell	Phone call from a member of SLT to arrange collection. Pupils are not sent home on transport when unwell without your agreement.	As soon as possible
Medication	Phone call or message from the office when supplies are low. Any concern, error, refusal or change is shared promptly (Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy).	Same day

Situation	How We Will Let You Know	When
Near Miss Involving Allergy or Medication	Phone call and your child's Individual Healthcare Plan is reviewed (First Aid Policy).	Same day
Urgent Intimate Care	Where care has to be given urgently and we could not reach you first, we will let you know afterwards (Intimate Care Policy).	Same day
Unexplained Absence	Phone call, then emergency contacts. If we still cannot reach anyone, a home visit may be made (Attendance Policy).	After the register closes at 9:30am
Emergency School Closure	Tapestry memo and phone calls where needed, also shared on Facebook.	As early as possible
Safeguarding or Welfare Concern	Usually a phone call or meeting with the DSL or a senior leader (see the Safeguarding section below).	As soon as appropriate

How Families Can Contact Us

We want it to be easy for families to get in touch. Please use whichever of the following suits you and the situation best. Appendix 1 sets out who to contact about particular topics.

Phone the School Office

The school office is staffed throughout the school day on **01529 668400**. This is the best way to reach us about anything urgent and for general enquiries. If you would like to speak to a particular member of staff, the office will put you through or take a message and arrange for them to call you back.

Answer Phone

Our answer phone service means you can report your child's absence or leave a message at any time. When reporting an absence, please call before 9:00am on each day of absence and leave your child's full name, class and the reason for their absence, as set out in the Attendance Policy.

Tapestry Messaging

You can message your child's class teacher or other staff through Tapestry about anything that is not urgent, such as a question about learning, a change of routine or something you would like us to know about your child's day.

Email

You can email enquiries@willow-school.co.uk or olivia.pearson@willow-school.co.uk about non-urgent matters, or to send forms such as a leave of absence request. Please include your child's name and the name of the member of staff the email is for.

Meetings

If you would like to talk something through in more detail, please contact the school office or message your child's class teacher to arrange a meeting. Meetings can take place face to face or on Microsoft Teams. You are always welcome to bring someone with you for support.

At Drop-off and Collection

Staff are happy to pass on quick messages at drop-off and collection. Because staff are supervising pupils at the gate at these times, anything that needs a longer conversation, or that should not be discussed in front of your child or others, is best arranged as a phone call or meeting. For pupils who travel by taxi or local authority transport, Tapestry and phone calls take the place of this daily contact.

Visiting School

To keep pupils safe and routines settled, we ask families to arrange visits in advance unless it is an emergency. All visitors, including parents, sign in at the school office, in line with the Visitor Policy.

Communication When Your Child Joins Willow School

Good communication starts before your child's first day. In line with the Admissions Policy:

- Families and pupils are invited to visit the school and meet staff
- Once a start date is agreed, we hold a pre-admissions call or meeting to plan transition, talk about transport and gather information about your child, including medical needs, allergies and consents
- We explain how Tapestry works and help you set up access
- Around four weeks after your child starts, we hold a post-admissions meeting to share how your child has settled, their baseline assessments and their first support plan

Making Communication Accessible

Every family is different, and we will adapt how we communicate so that every parent can take a full part in their child's education. We can:

- Talk information through by phone or in person instead of, or as well as, sending it in writing
- Provide paper copies of any letter, report or policy
- Provide information in larger print or other accessible formats
- Arrange an interpreter or translated information for families who use English as an additional language, in line with the EAL Policy
- Use visual supports, where this helps
- Offer meetings on Microsoft Teams, or at times and places that are easier for families to attend
- Help families to complete forms, such as consent forms or the complaints form

Please let the school office or your child's class teacher know what would help you and we will make it part of how we communicate with your family. We make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Communication Across Our Sites

Willow School operates across multiple sites, Jermyn Street, White Hart Mews and West Banks. Families use the same school office phone number, email addresses and Tapestry account whichever site their child attends, so there is always one clear route into school. Key messages are shared consistently across both sites and staff will make sure information reaches the right colleague if your child spends time at more than one site.

Sharing Information and Confidentiality

- Information about a pupil is shared with those who have parental responsibility. Where parents live apart, both are entitled to receive information about their child unless a court order says otherwise, so please let us know of any court orders or arrangements that affect this
- We will never share information about other pupils with you and we ask families not to share information about other pupils with us or others. Accident records and messages do not name other pupils
- We work closely with professionals involved with your child, such as their local authority caseworker, therapists, health professionals and social workers. We will usually tell you when we are sharing information, except where safeguarding procedures mean we cannot
- Parents have the right to see their child's educational record and requests are dealt with in line with the Data Protection Policy
- Information is stored securely and in line with the Data Protection Policy. Tapestry and BromCom are used as data processors under the school's privacy notice
- Please keep your contact details and emergency contacts up to date by telling the school office of any change

Safeguarding and Communication

The safety and welfare of our pupils always comes first. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, we will usually talk to parents openly about any welfare or safeguarding concern we have about their child. Occasionally, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) may need to seek advice from, or make a referral to, children's social care or the police without first telling parents, where telling them could place the child at greater risk or affect an investigation. This decision is never taken lightly and is always recorded.

If you are worried about the safety or welfare of any pupil, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Miss Hemming, or one of our Deputy DSLs, Mrs Miller or Miss McNeil, through the school office straight away. If a child is in immediate danger, call 999. You can also contact Lincolnshire Children's Services directly on 01522 782111.

Professional Boundaries for Staff

To protect pupils, families and staff, and in line with the Code of Conduct, Online Safety Policy and Data Protection Policy, staff will:

- Communicate with families only through school systems: Tapestry, school email accounts and school phones
- Not use personal mobile phones, personal email or personal social media to contact families and not accept friend or follow requests from families
- Keep all written messages professional, factual and kind, remembering that they form part of the pupil's record
- Not discuss other pupils, staff or confidential matters with families
- Record significant conversations, concerns and agreed actions on BromCom
- Pass any safeguarding concern raised by a family to the DSL immediately

Respectful Communication

We understand that parenting a child with special educational needs can be demanding and that families sometimes contact us when they are worried or upset. We will always listen and we will treat every family with kindness and respect. In return, we ask that families communicate respectfully with all members of staff.

If communication becomes abusive, threatening or persistently unreasonable, the Headteacher will speak with the parent to try to resolve the situation. Where needed, we may agree different arrangements for a period of time, such as a single named point of contact or communicating in writing only. These arrangements are always explained to the parent in writing and reviewed. Staff wellbeing and the welfare of pupils will always be protected.

Concerns and Complaints

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly through an informal conversation and we would always encourage families to talk to us as early as possible. Please raise a concern with your child's class teacher or the Headteacher in the first instance. If you find it difficult to talk to a particular member of staff, we will respect that and arrange for you to speak to someone else.

If a concern is not resolved, you can make a formal complaint by following our Complaints Policy, which is available on our website or on paper from the school office. Complaints about the Headteacher should be addressed to James Mackay, Proprietor, via the school office and marked Private and Confidential.

Listening to Families

We value what families tell us and use it to improve. We gather parents' views through:

- Support plan reviews and EHCP annual reviews, where parents' views shape their child's targets and provision
- Parent questionnaires during the year
- Conversations at termly family events
- Day-to-day feedback through Tapestry, phone calls and meetings

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher monitors how this policy is working, including through feedback from families and staff. This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if our systems or structure change, and is approved by the Proprietors.

Appendix 1: Who Should I Contact?

If you are not sure who to contact, please call the school office on **01529 668400** or email **enquiries@willow-school.co.uk** and we will pass your message to the right person. You can also message your child's class teacher on Tapestry about anything that is not urgent.

I Have a Question About...	Who to Contact	How
My Child's Learning, Progress or Day	Your child's class teacher	Tapestry message, phone or email the school office
Reporting an Absence	School office	Phone 01529 668400 before 9:00am. You can leave a message on the answer phone
Leave of Absence or Attendance	Mrs Pearson, School Office Administrator	Email olivia.pearson@willow-school.co.uk
My Child's Wellbeing or Family Support	Miss Clarke, Pastoral Lead and Family Support Co-ordinator or your child's class teacher	Phone or email the school office, or Tapestry message
SEND, Support Plans or EHCP Annual Reviews	Miss McNeil, Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion and SEND)	Phone or email the school office
Interventions	Miss Coleman, Intervention Lead	Phone or email the school office
Curriculum, Trips or Day-to-Day Operations	Miss Hemming, Assistant Headteacher	Phone or email the school office
Medication, Medical Needs or Allergies	School office	Phone or email the school office
Transport	School office or the local authority Transport Team	Phone or email the school office
A Safeguarding or Welfare Worry	Miss Hemming (DSL), or Mrs Miller or Miss McNeil (Deputy DSLs)	Phone the school office straight away. In an emergency, call 999
Tapestry Access or Contact Details	School office	Phone or email the school office
A Concern That Has Not Been Resolved	Mrs Miller, Headteacher	Phone or email the school office
A Formal Complaint	Mrs Miller, Headteacher (or James Mackay, Proprietor, if it is about the Headteacher)	In writing via the school office, following the Complaints Policy