



A PARENTS' GUIDE TO COMMUNICATING WITH PLYMSTOCK SCHOOL

September 2021

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Contacting Plymstock School

Parents and carers may wish to contact school for a variety of reasons. The important thing is that if you have any questions, need information, want to express a concern, or pass on thanks, then please do get in touch.

Who should you contact?

- If you have general queries or concern about your child or information you want to pass to us, please contact the tutor or the Head of Year/Assistant Head of Year in the first instance.
- If you have specific queries or concerns relating to a particular subject, please contact the relevant subject teacher or the Head of Department in the first instance.

Behavioural or safeguarding concerns

- If you wish to report an incident (e.g. bullying, aggression, safeguarding etc..) then this should be reported immediately to the Head of Year and Assistant Head of Year.
- If it is a highly sensitive safeguarding or welfare issue, then this should be reported straight away to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Visiting the school

- Parents **MUST** make an appointment in advance if they wish to see a member of staff. If a visitor arrives unannounced, it may not be possible to immediately see the member of staff requested.
- If visiting the school site, please park (if driving) in the main car park, then report to Reception on the right-hand side of the drive.
- Reception is open from 8.00am to 4.00pm on Monday to Thursday and until 3.30pm on a Friday.
- The school telephone number is: **01752 402679**
- The school email address is: **support@plymstockschool.org.uk**
- The school address is: **Plymstock School, Church Road, Plymstock, Plymouth, PL9 9AZ**

The rise of email communication

In recent years communications between home and school have shifted significantly from letter to email, with email becoming the preferred mode of communication for most people.

The ease of communication via email has many advantages but increasingly the expectation in society is for almost instantaneous reply, with complaints following when this has not been the case.

As a school our first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning in a safe environment. On any one day a teacher will have a plethora of demands on their time including up to five lessons teaching (and tutor time, break duties and activities as well as after school support sessions and clubs). Teachers cannot, and are not, expected to monitor and manage their email inbox during lessons or at other times in the day when they should be planning and preparing for lessons, assessing student work or carrying out school duties.

The school (and you as parents/carers) expect teachers to be fully prepared, focused and engaged with students and supporting their learning. Whilst support staff and senior leaders may be able to access emails more routinely, their primary function is to support teachers and students. Constantly monitoring and responding to email leads to what is commonly referred to in the aviation industry as 'task fixating'. In school it can lead to staff focusing on the immediate task of responding to an email, instead of concentrating on the delivering and supporting teaching and learning.

As parents we may feel that it is perfectly reasonable to ask for updates about our child's progress or behaviour. The occasional request might be manageable but if the parent of every child a teacher teaches asks for bespoke feedback just once a year that would, on average, generate 260-300 required responses. The school works hard to provide parents with timely and informative information concerning their child's progress throughout the year. Currently these are: three progress reports and at least one parent's evening each year (and in the case of Year 7, 10, 11 and Post-16, twice a year). In addition to this, there are various Learning Evenings for most year groups. Staff may also telephone, write or email a parent to inform them of a serious incident or serious on-going concern about a child's behaviour or attitude to learning.

We provide parents with online communication systems such as MyED and Show my Homework that enables them to view their child's attendance, behaviour, homework etc. by simply login in. All parents are strongly encouraged to use this facility.

When communicating with the school, please bear in mind that a great many staff are putting their heart and soul, and many hours, into trying to help our students be successful. We would never wish to discourage parents from communicating with staff. Establishing a relationship and working together – parental communication is essential.

On occasions staff face criticism over an activity which they may be doing entirely out of goodwill, be it running a trip, or a team, or a concert, or a play and an emotive email from an upset or angry person, even when the point is justified, can result in hurt being caused and a reluctance from staff to continue to go the extra mile, that we so much appreciate of them.

Likewise, even when a communication is about a core school responsibility, our communications need to be respectful. Vouching a point as being 'direct', 'blunt' or 'honest' does not make it any less destructive to a relationship that should be based on trust and mutual respect. This applies to all communication and as staff we need to be just as careful in how we show we value our students and parents. We do not always get it right, but we constantly aim to do so and to improve when this is not the case.

Many of you will be facing the same challenges in your own workplace from an increasing expectation of anytime, anywhere communications. Some of you may be of the view that this is simply the way the world works now. However, the school also has a duty of care to staff, as it does to students. This includes a responsibility to ensure that the staffs' workload is manageable and does not unreasonably intrude in to their private life.

There are enough good teachers leaving the profession as a result of not feeling very valued, and there is no need for us to add to this. The letters and emails of thanks and appreciation that we do receive from so many of you are very much appreciated. We have an incredibly dedicated team of staff at Plymstock and we want to retain them and make them feel valued. It is therefore essential that we respect them and help them to maintain a sustainable workload.

Our procedure for responding to emails

- **Within 48 hours (but usually within 24 hours) receipt of an email will be acknowledged** (during the week in term time, but not over a weekend). However, serious incidents and safeguarding concerns will be dealt with ASAP.
- **Within 5 working days (we always aim for sooner) we will provide a response to the email by telephone or by email.** This may include informing the sender that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case, staff should indicate a timeframe in which a response should be expected.
- If a member of staff is not able to deal with the email directly then they will pass it on to the most appropriate person and inform the sender that they have done so.
- Staff will **NOT** be expected to monitor or respond to emails out of their normal working hours (including weekends and school holidays). Whilst parents may compose emails at a time to suit their own needs, we would request that emails are not normally sent outside of a member of staff's normal working hours
- Whilst this is rare, if a member of staff receives an email which is of an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassing, they will refer this to a senior line manager in the school. Who will decide if consideration needs to be given to dealing with further communication.

Please be aware:

- When you make contact with the school, staff may not be aware of the situation you are referring to (and therefore have not had a chance to look into it or draw any conclusions).
- Be conscious of the fact that you may only have heard one side of the story – as with many things in life, situations are sometimes not as first they seem.
- In most cases, staff will need time to investigate a concern. This is particularly true if a concern is raised after the school day has finished.

- Staff are human and will make mistakes from time to time.
- Just as parents/carers can expect, our school will not tolerate abusive communication from anyone. Should this happen, the member of staff will inform an individual that they are terminating the communication and will refer it to a senior member of staff.

What if you are unhappy with the school's response?

Plymstock School has a Compliments, Concerns and Complaints policy that is outlined in the School Policies section of the website : <https://plymstockschool.org.uk/school-policies>

In short, if you are unhappy with how your behaviour concern or incident has been dealt with by the Head of Year, you should contact the Deputy Headteacher (Behaviour) – Mr M A Taylor

If you are unhappy with how your subject concern has been dealt with by the Head of Department, you should contact the Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum) – Mrs L Duff

If you are still unhappy following escalation to the relevant Deputy Headteacher, then you can make contact with the Headteacher.

In the unlikely event, following involvement with the Headteacher, you remain unsatisfied, you can contact the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to Governors – Mrs Leonard (eleonard@plymstockschool.org.uk)

Once all of the above routes are exhausted, you can refer your complaint to the Westcounty Schools Trust Board via Ms Burden (sburden@westst.org.uk)

Key contacts list 2021/2022

Pastoral Care Contacts

Head of Year 7	Mrs M Kirk	mkirk@plymstockschool.org.uk
Head of Year 8	Mrs S Harris	sharris@plymstockschool.org.uk
Head of Year 9	Mrs C Robb	crobb@plymstockschool.org.uk
Head of Year 10	Mr S Wookey	swookey@plymstockschool.org.uk
Head of Year 11	Mr D Wyatt	dwyatt@plymstockschool.org.uk
Assistant Head of Year 7	Mr P Chivers	pchivers@plymstockschool.org.uk
Assistant Head of Year 8	Mrs S Smith	ssmith@plymstockschool.org.uk
Assistant Head of Year 9	Mrs C Offer	coffer@plymstockschool.org.uk
Assistant Head of Year 10	Ms S Holton	sholton@plymstockschool.org.uk
Assistant Head of Year 11	Mrs S Harvey	srharvey@plymstockschool.org.uk
Attendance	Mrs F Tripp	attendance@plymstockschool.org.uk
Office Manager	Ms S Cambridge	support@plymstockschool.org.uk
Deputy Headteacher (Behaviour)	Mr M A Taylor	mataylor@plymstockschool.org.uk
Deputy Headteacher (Inclusion)	Mr A Yendell	ayendell@plymstockschool.org.uk
SENDco	Mrs T Summers	tsummers@plymstockschool.org.uk
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mr J Ellerton	jellerton@plymstockschool.org.uk

Subject/Curriculum Contacts

Art	Mr O Hurd-Thomas	Ohurd-thomas@plymstockschool.org.uk
Dance	Mr S Wookey	swookey@plymstockschool.org.uk
D & T	Ms Pring	ejpring@plymstockschool.org.uk
Drama	Mr C Swabey	cswabey@plymstockschool.org.uk
English	Miss E Victor	evictor@plymstockschool.org.uk
Geography	Miss C Richardson	crichardson@plymstockschool.org.uk
History	Mr A Withey	awithey@plymstockschool.org.uk
Computing/ICT	Mr S Rogers	srogers@plymstockschool.org.uk
Mathematics	Ms K Marshall	kmarshall@plymstockschool.org.uk
Modern Foreign Languages	Ms N Baker	nbaker@plymstockschool.org.uk
Music	Mrs S Lowe	slowe@plymstockschool.org.uk
PE	Mrs K Tyrrell	ktyrrell@plymstockschool.org.uk
Religious Studies	Miss L Partridge	lpartridge@plymstockschool.org.uk
Science	Miss B Evans	bevans@plymstockschool.org.uk
SENCO	Mrs T Summers	tsummers@plymstockschool.org.uk
Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum)	Mrs L Duff	lduff@plymstockschool.org.uk

Pastoral care and the role of the HUB

The role of the Key Stage 3 and 4 HUB is central in both caring for our students' personal, social and emotional needs and, crucially, monitoring and supporting their progress both academically and socially.

The Head of Year

- Heads of Year lead on all aspects of year group behaviour – supporting departments with behaviour, pastoral support and ensuring consistency of approach with rewards and sanctions.
- They are the safeguarding leads for the students in their year group, liaising with parents/carers and outside agencies should the need arise.
- They monitor year group attendance and punctuality closely to ensure that outstanding absences are cleared quickly, and appropriate intervention is put in place for persistent absentees.
- They also liaise with Heads of Departments in academic monitoring, establishing targeted and focused academic support to ensure that students achieve their potential.

The Assistant Heads of Year

- The Assistant Heads of Year support and lead on pastoral and behavioural factors affecting students during their time at Plymstock School.
- They lead on attendance and welfare matters.
- They guide and advise students and teachers of on-going pastoral issues relating to individual students and work closely with outside agencies to ensure that students' progress and receive the help and targeted support they require.
- They support the Heads of Year and departments with uniform, attendance and punctuality concerns and work closely with parents to ensure all parties work and support each other.

The Tutor

- Tutors encourage high standards of work, behaviour, attitudes and expectations in students, and liaise with the Heads of Year over referred behavioural problems; they look to reward achievements positively and implement, where necessary, appropriate sanctions.
- They promote, maintain and monitor the attendance and punctuality of their tutees, ensuring notes are received concerning any absence and any absence of more than three days are checked with the Head of Year. Tutors alert Heads of Year to any patterns of, or concerns about absences.
- They monitor and review their students' progress across the curriculum using all the data provided, suggesting areas for improvement and ways for students to help themselves to improve their progress.
- They follow through concerns and issues about learning and effort when necessary, with subject areas and parents, in consultation with the Heads of Year.

Attendance

If a student is not in school, then they must have a justifiable reason and a parent or carer must telephone the school first thing in the morning on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter.

The telephone number is **01752 402679**, select option number 1 to leave your message. You can also report any absence via the **MyEd app**.

Plymstock School operates the 'truancy call' system. If a student is absent from school and a parent has not contacted us, any parent with parental responsibility will receive an automated call to inform them that their child is not in school.

If no reason is provided for the absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. All students have an attendance target of 96%. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent from school e.g. for a hospital appointment, you should bring in a note from your parents in advance of the date and pass this to the Attendance Officer Located in the HUB or send a message via MyEd before the appointment.

Parents are requested not to arrange family holidays during term time. If this is unavoidable, requests for leave of absence should be made to the school. Only in exceptional circumstances will the school authorise a holiday during term time. Parents taking children out of school without authorisation risk a fine. Full details and an absence request form can be found on the school website.

Punctuality

Punctuality is an important part of self-discipline and is essential to good time management. Students should make sure that they are in school no later than 8.40am each morning. Compulsory tutor lesson begins at 8.45am.

If students arrive late (without a justifiable reason), they will receive a 'Community Detention'. This means they must serve a 20 minute lunchtime detention the following day.

Should a student arrive at school after 8.45am but before 9.00am, they should report to their tutor. The register will then be updated with their mark.

If they arrive to school after 9.00am, they **MUST** sign in at the HUB. They will be marked late in the register and will need a note explaining the reason for late arrival.

Safeguarding & Welfare

All students at Plymstock School have the right to feel safe both in and out of school. If any student feels unsafe or they are concerned about the safety of another student, it is important they know where to go and who to talk to. At Plymstock School there are a number of staff they can talk to:

- Their tutor
- Their Head of Year or Assistant Head of Year
- Any member of staff they trust
- A safeguarding officer

Every year group has an Assistant Head of Year who deals with student concerns. They are available throughout the day for students and are based in the HUB.

There are also a team of Safeguarding Officers at Plymstock School who are specially trained in how to deal with serious problems.

The Safeguarding Officers are:

- Mr Ellerton – Designated Safeguarding Lead (based on the Humanities Corridor)
- Mr Yendell – Deputy Headteacher (based on the Science Corridor)
- Mr Taylor – Deputy Headteacher (based in the ECO Block)
- Mrs Littler – Assistant Head of Post 16 (based in the Sixth Form building)
- Miss Holton – Assistant Head of Year 10 (based in the KS4 HUB)
- Mrs Smith – Assistant Head of Year 8 (based in the KS3 HUB)
- Mrs Harris – Head of Year 8 (based in the KS3 HUB)
- Mr Chivers – Assistant Head of Year 7 (based in KS3 HUB)
- Mrs Robb – Head of year 9 (based in the KS3 HUB)
- Ms Offer – Assistant Head of Year 9 (based in the KS3 HUB)
- Mrs Tripp – Attendance Officer (based in the KS3 HUB)
- Mrs Summers – SENCO (based in the Den)
- Mrs Fenwick - Deputy SENCO (based in the Den)
- Ms Cambridge – Office Manager (based in Reception)

Please be assured that any safeguarding concerns raised will be taken seriously by staff at the school and will always try their best to help.

Full details of our **Safeguarding Policy** can be found in the 'School Policies' section of the school website.

Please click the following link to access all the school policies:

<http://plymstockschool.org.uk/school-policies/>

Please be aware:

Sometimes we may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies, when there are concerns about a child's welfare.

Whenever possible we will ensure that our concerns are discussed with parents/carers first.

However, where we have reason to believe that such a move would be contrary to a child's welfare, we would not inform parents/carers first.