





Communications Policy for Parents and Carers

Signed	
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Equality Statement

Centre Academy London is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability or religious belief. We provide a safe, supportive and welcoming environment.

Centre Academy London is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

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1. General Principles

Centre Academy London (CAL) believes that communication between the school and the parent (also to include the carer) is essential if the child is to succeed academically, socially and in all other ways. In fact, in the school's literature we note that this success is largely dependent on "a partnership between school, child and parent."

We believe that such a partnership should be necessary in all schools. At CAL, a school that is focused exclusively on supporting children with special educational needs (SEN), it is essential. We are therefore committed to the principle of *mutual reinforcement*, wherein school and parent work together, with each complementing and reinforcing the other. The parent looks to the school to provide academic, therapeutic and socially-based progress; CAL in turn looks to the parent to reinforce the learning that occurs within the school itself.

In essence, we need one another. And, in fact, so does the child.

Accordingly, a strong bond of trust between school and parent is essential. And fundamental to that bond is the understanding that because all CAL children have special needs and situational challenges, privacy must always be fundamental to the communication between school and parent, parent and school.

It is also important to understand that CAL remains very small by choice. This means that most of our classes usually number between 4-8 children, that our teachers have significant SEN experience, that our therapeutic efforts are delivered on a one-to-one basis, and that our total cohort of approximately 50 boys and girls, ages 9-19, provides the optimum chance for children to make significant progress in all areas.

Our small size gives CAL a kind of intimacy and a sense of family, making even more essential that all aspects of communication are fully understood by our parent community. In this, we strive to be truthful, respectful and sensitive to the challenges that the parent and child may face. We endeavour to ensure that we listen to the parent and believe that understanding should be the hallmark of parent-teacher-administrator discussion.

2. Our Aims

CAL believes that clear, open communication between the school and the parent has a positive impact on a child's learning because it accomplishes the following:

- Gives parents the information they need to support the child's education;
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents;
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support a child's educational and all other SEN-related needs;
- Ensures that the principle of clear and open communication is at all times followed;
- That parents understand how CAL communicates with them;
- The school has clear standards for responding to communication from parents;

- The school ensures that parents can reach the member of staff who is best placed to address parents' questions or concerns.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of School

- Responds to all questions and concerns regarding fees and funding
- Ensures that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Regularly reviews this policy

Senior Leadership Team

- Oversees and advises on matters of curriculum and assessment

SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator)

- Responds to questions about individual therapies and therapeutic programme

Teaching Staff/Mentors

- Responds—during school hours—to parent questions about their child in line with this policy

Office Manager/Administration Assistant

- Helps parents to address questions to the appropriate member of staff

4. Parent Responsibilities

- Ensures that communication with the school is always respectful
- Responds to communications (requests for meetings etc.) in a timely manner
- Reads with care all communications from CAL.

5. CAL Communications Resources for Parents

Parents have access to policies and other school-based literature; these are reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy and timeliness, and include the following:

- **Key information** about the school is posted regularly on our website; this includes school times and term dates, curriculum information, important policies and procedures, and contact information; the website is updated weekly.
- **Written policies** reflect virtually every aspect of the school, from Child Protection and Safeguarding to Data Protection, On-line Safety, Health and Safety, Anti-Bullying, Complaints and many others are listed on the CAL Website and may be requested from the school Secretary.
- **The Student Handbook** is forwarded to parents for their child at the beginning of each academic year.
- **Parent Evenings:** Are held one a term during the Autumn, Spring and the Summer Terms; these give all parents the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with individual teachers, tutors and therapists, to ask questions about the curriculum or therapies, and to convey any concerns that the parent has. In addition, parents have the opportunity to meet individually with the Head of School.
- **Reports:** we provide extensive reports to parents at the end of each term, Autumn, Spring, and Summer. These provide detailed assessments of the child's academic and other SEN-related progress, with each academic subject assessed by the individual teacher responsible for that subject, followed by an assessment by the child's tutor and finally, a note from the Head of School. Parents are advised to discuss any questions or concerns they have with any of the teachers or with the Head of School.
- **Home school diaries:** we provide all students with a home school diary to encourage the exchange of information between class tutors and home.
- **Meetings:** we believe it essential to contact parents if a problem has arisen regarding the child involving any aspect of his/her education. Contact may be by telephone, letter or email, and may also involve our request for a meeting with the parent.

6. Communication from CAL to Parents

CAL recognises that we live at a time when methods of communication are broad, from various platforms to the internet to video calling and the like. However, the need for privacy and security, in addition to the intimate nature of the school, governs our policy of using only the more traditional methods. Thus, to communicate with individual parents, we employ the following methods:

- **Email**, which we generally use to keep parents informed about school events, scheduled school closures, insets and the like
- **Text messages**, used rarely for short-notice changes to the school day, emergency school closures, and urgent communication when we cannot get through to a parent by telephone to report, for example, a child becoming ill
- **Telephone** is the most frequently used and our preferred way to communicate with parents, as they offer immediacy and privacy, and foster discussion between school and parent. Teachers may use the telephone to respond to a parent question, to discuss a

child's performance or any other classroom-based question or issue. Administrators may respond to questions or concerns from a parent by telephoning when at all possible, and this principle extends to all staff members of the school.

- **Letters** are also a significant way of communication. Some simply inform, such as letters about trips and visits. Some are fundamentally consent forms. We also send periodically a letter to the entire parent community to announce or to seek views and/or consent. Finally, some are occasioned by a problem or a difficulty a child may be encountering, and the letter is a *confidential* way by which the parent is informed of the situation and subsequently invited to respond via telephone or in some instances, by a meeting at the school with the appropriate staff member(s).

7. Parent Communication with CAL

We believe that communication must be a two-way street, and it is essential that when parents have a question, complaint or any other issue of concern they contact the school. This contact should be as immediate as possible so that CAL may address the situation with whatever level of immediacy is appropriate. Parent means of communication include the following:

- **Email** will usually be directed to the school or the appropriate member of staff concerning non-urgent issues. CAL will attempt to respond as quickly as possible, and we are committed to acknowledging all emails within **two** working days or less. (If a query or concern is urgent, please telephone the school.)
- **Telephone** calls provide the opportunity to speak to a specific member of staff about a non-urgent matter; in such an instance, please e-mail the school office and the appropriate member of staff will be in contact as soon as possible, usually on the day or the following day. If this is not possible (due, for example, to teaching or other commitments), the Secretary will schedule a call at a convenient time.
- If your issue or concern is urgent, please call the school office. Such occasions may be prompted by family emergencies, welfare or safeguarding issues. The Secretary or other staff member will ensure that you will be able to speak to the most appropriate and available person at the time.
- **Letters** from a parent are welcome. These may be prompted by a parent suggestion, insight, problem or other concern, and if possible, the letter should be addressed to the appropriate member of staff. If the letter is of a more general nature, it should be sent to the Secretary, who will forward it appropriately. Letters that are confidential should be noted on the envelope. CAL is committed to ensuring that whenever possible all letters are responded to within **three** days of receipt. *If, however, the letter reflects an urgent situation, this should be noted on the envelope.*
- **Meetings** are essential in a school like CAL. Parents wishing to schedule a meeting with a member of staff should call the Secretary, who will subsequently book an appointment. *While it may on occasion be possible to "catch" a teacher before or after the end of the school day, it is preferable to book an appointment, especially if the issue may involve a parent's concern about a child's learning, pastoral support, general well-being or other key issue.*

8. Policy Links

This policy should be read alongside CAL's policies on the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Data Protection
- Online Safety
- Complaints
- Health and Safety
- Whistleblowing