



Serlby Park Academy

Communication with Parents/Carers Policy

Setting standards for success

Date of Last Review/update: Apr 15

Reviewed by: JHE

Date of next Review: Apr 16

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1.0 Roles and responsibilities

The responsibility for the implementation of this policy and provision rests with the Principal. On an operational basis, the management, responsibility and evaluation of this policy is undertaken by the **Vice Principal (Primary) and the Vice Principal (Secondary)**

2.0 Suggested Audience

All teaching and support staff. As part of their academy induction or professional development, all teaching and support staff will use the principles and procedures detailed with this document.

3.0 Related policies

This policy is part of a suite of policies which should also be referred to:

- Guidance to access on pupil records
- Assessment and reporting arrangements
- Data Handling Policy
- Complaints policy
- Behaviour policy

4.0 Academy Mission Statement

Setting standards for success

5.0 Introduction

This academy is a member of the School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA) and it will work closely with other SPTA academies and with SPTA's Core Team to promote and encourage excellent relationships with its parents, carers and families.

Good communication is central for the academy to work effectively with pupils, their families and carers. Communication can be defined into 3 channels:

Transmission		Reception
Speaking	←→	Listening
Writing	←→	Reading
Doing	←→	Watching

Each channel is a vehicle for a two-way process. It is important to be able to communicate both on a one-on-one basis and in a group context. Communication is not just about words, but the manner of speaking, body language and, above all, the effectiveness of listening. The academy will take account of parents' / carers' culture and context, for example where English is an additional language. The effectiveness of any communication must be judged on how and how much information is received and what the receiver does with it not how well it was transmitted.

Effective engagement requires the involvement of pupils and those caring for them in the design and delivery of services and decisions that affect them. The academy with the support of the SPTA will consult with pupils on a regular basis and consider their opinions and perspectives from the outset. A key part of effective communication and engagement is trust, both between the workforce, pupils and their carers, and between and within different sectors of the workforce itself.

The academy will build a rapport with pupils and those caring for them, by demonstrating understanding, respect and honesty. Continuity in relationships promotes engagement and the improvement of lives.

The skills and knowledge highlighted here and throughout this policy are intended to provide a basic description of those areas the academy will develop through training, learning or experience in order to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

(DfE 2005, Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce)

6.0 Accessibility for Communications

6.1 Key factors when considering accessibility

The home language used and the ability to speak and understand English.

Often people consider accessibility according to the nature of an individual's disability or impairment. But this can produce long lists of impairments without recognising that within each there can be a very broad spectrum of need and that often, different disabilities/impairments can result in similar needs. For example, a person may be one of the over 2 million people who need others to have more patience in listening to their speech which is less fluent due to speech impairment, a stroke, Alzheimer's disease, head injuries, hearing impairment and other causes. So it is far simpler to focus on the need rather than the underlying conditions which may mean little to many.

Accessibility need not add significant cost, especially when it is considered at the outset and built in to the design. For example, being able to provide a Word document can enable production of the material in any type of print, can be used with screen reader software and, for example the production of Braille documents.

Communications and involvement is a two-way exchange. Hence we need to be able to receive and use material that is provided to us in a range of ways. Some people will need accessibility to be considered from two perspectives. For example, someone from an ethnic background may need large print documents in their first language. For people who are born deaf, or lose their hearing before learning to speak, their first language may be British Sign Language (BSL) which has its own grammar, tenses and word order. Written English is no more useful than a second language.

Deaf-blindness is defined by the Department of Health as a combined seeing and hearing impairment causing difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility.

6.2 Range of communications

The academy will use the full range of existing communications methods e.g. letters, e-mail, text messages, intranet and internet, publications, press releases, other media outlets (TV and radio), advertising, meetings, one-to-one exchanges, workshops and seminars, briefings, conferences and presentations, surveys/questionnaires etc, to ensure maximum levels of engagement

6.3 What the academy will do

The academy has a legal duty to anticipate the needs of our users: Pupils and their families, staff, Education Advisory Board and the wider community and the academy will make adjustments when we know the needs of these groups. The academy will build adjustments to communications into all routine communications practices. The academy will prominently promote adjustments, alternative formats and other types of support.

The academy will ask disabled people what help they need so it can best target resources. When requests are made, the academy will meet those needs quickly – delays can mean that some people are effectively excluded from the communications. If material is requested in Braille, audio tape or in translation, the academy will aim to provide such within 5-10 days, otherwise other formats should be provided immediately. Disabled people are experts in their own communication methods so where possible, the academy will draw upon their knowledge. Finally, the academy will monitor the effectiveness of its

communications; to improve the quality of service, anticipate and plan for needs better and make best use of resources.

6.4 Specific steps the academy will take

The academy will adopt a common-sense approach, using the actions in the table below, allied to common courtesy and best practice to all communications. The academy will constantly seek to improve our communications for everyone, not just disabled people.

Need	Action
1. Straightforward information/presentation	Use concise sentences and paragraphs. Use everyday, plain English. Avoid complex concepts. Avoid lengthy documents. Avoid jargon, acronyms and abbreviations. Use headings. Avoid underlining. Avoid use of capital letters in headings etc. Avoid italics – use Bold instead. Left hand justify only. Divide columns of text with a vertical line or 5 character spaces. Use bullet points. Use 12 or 14 point font. Use simple sans serif font. Avoid shading or pictures behind/around text. Avoid large areas of blank space. Avoid text at different angles. Avoid using glossy paper. Be prepared to print on coloured paper. Maximise contrast between print and paper colours.
2. Non – English verbal communication	Wherever possible have a translator available to ensure clear understanding by all parties.
3. Printed material to be available in alternative formats e.g. Large print, Braille, Electronic format, Easi-Read www.mencap.org.uk/download/makeitclear Audio tape/CD.	Promote alternative formats on front page in 18 font. “This information is available in other formats e.g. large print, audio tape, on disk or in Braille” please contact..... Use free post for items for visually impaired people: www.royalmail.com Retain Word originals of documents.

	<p>Identify how alternative formats can be produced.</p> <p>Provide electronic documents (via e-mail, on a website, on CD).</p> <p>Ensure that websites meet accessibility standards e.g. www.rnib.org.uk</p> <p>Produce documents without tables, graphs or other images but their content/meaning explained.</p> <p>Large print is at least 18 point font.</p> <p>Consider summaries of long documents.</p>
<p>4. Presentation material in alternative formats.</p>	<p>Keep slides simple: large clear fonts, high contrast, not too much information on each, avoid moving images/text.</p> <p>Word document in place of PowerPoint presentation - suitably punctuated and with any images explained.</p> <p>Presenter reads out material e.g. on flip chart.</p> <p>Provide copies of presentation beforehand so interpreters can familiarise themselves with the text or can be read using screen reader.</p>
<p>5. Amplified sound.</p>	<p>Provide portable hearing loop e.g. hearing loops, mini-com phones.</p> <p>Microphones that link to loop system.</p> <p>Promote availability.</p> <p>Check that they are working.</p> <p>Minimise other sounds e.g. background music.</p> <p>Ask people to talk one at a time.</p> <p>Ensure that question and answer sessions are covered by microphone.</p>

<p>6. Visual/other cues to replace/assist hearing e.g. lip reading, use of British Sign Language, Deaf/blind communicator translating speech using Deaf/blind manual (finger-spell words onto receiver's palm), hands-on version of BSL or a speech-to-Braille translator machine (similar to a speech-to-text or palantype machine).</p>	<p>Avoid covering mouth and speak clearly.</p> <p>Ask people to talk one at a time. Allow time for others to both see interpretation and absorb any written/visual information.</p> <p>Use a Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRS LI).</p> <p>Ensure BSL interpreter is well lit and visible. BSL interpreters need a break after 20 minutes so 2 may be required.</p> <p>Remote interpreters can be used via video link.</p> <p>May require professional lip speaker: repeats words silently and uses finger spelling (Council of Advancement of Communication with Deaf People lip speaking level 2 or 3).</p> <p>Have pen and paper available.</p>
<p>7. Alternative to standard phones e.g. typetalk, minicom, video phones.</p>	<p>Promote a minicom number and willingness to use typetalk.</p> <p>Know how to use typetalk operator – before dialing the number, dial 118000 then the person's phone number, 18001 for hearing users and 18002 for Text phone users.</p> <p>Allow for the extra time for your verbal communications to be typed by the operator and the other party.</p> <p>Use videophone and interpreter service via Royal National Institute for the Deaf.</p>
<p>8. Support when speaking.</p>	<p>Don't pretend to understand when you do not.</p> <p>Be patient.</p> <p>Don't interrupt or finish sentences.</p> <p>Offer alternative means of communication e.g. written input.</p>

<p>9. Support of another person e.g. guide, carer, British Sign Language interpreter, other language interpreter, Deaf/blind communicator.</p>	<p>Be prepared to provide/fund the costs of support person's time and expenses.</p> <p>Talk to the disabled person, not the support person.</p> <p>Adjust catering, seating etc numbers accordingly.</p>
<p>10. Other forms of support e.g. Guide/Hearing and other types of working dogs.</p>	<p>Provide access for working animals.</p> <p>Warn other attendees of their presence.</p> <p>Focus on the person not the animal.</p>

Further information can be found at:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicWebsite/public_site_right.hcsp

(Learning and Skills Council, 2006)

7.0 Partnership with Parents/Carers

7.1 Parents/carers as partners in their child's education

It is widely acknowledged in Government guidance, legislation and research that parents/carers have a key role to play in their child's education. The academy and SPTA as sponsor will make arrangements for parents/carers to contribute to the shared view of their child's needs.

The parent/carer of every pupil of compulsory school age must make sure that they receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- to their age, ability and aptitude; and
- to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. (Section 7. Education Act 1996)

7.2 Parents/carers have a vital role in their child's education. In working with the academy they will be strongly supported to:

- Communicate regularly with academy staff and alert them to any concerns they have about their child's learning or provision; and
- Fulfil their obligations under home-academy agreements, which set out the expectations of both sides.

7.3 What the academy will do to work positively with parents/carers

By involving parents/carers, the academy recognises that they can become valuable co-educators. In order to support parents/carers, the academy will:

- Actively seek to work with parents/carers.
- Value parents'/carers' strengths, knowledge and experience.
- Empower parents/carers to contribute to their child's education and support.

The academy will ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to allow all those with parental responsibility to be informed about, and be involved in their child's education.

The academy will audit existing practice to ensure that parents/carers:

- Feel welcomed;
- Receive and understand communications;
- Are supported as educators of their children or as learners themselves ;
- Are involved in academy life; and as part of SPTA's community engagement;
- Have a voice in academy policies and organisation.

7.4 Supporting parents/carers of children with SEN

The SEN Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents/carers and user-friendly information and procedures. The academy will make no presumption about what parents/carers can or cannot do to support their children's learning. Stereotypical views of parents/carers are unhelpful and will be challenged. All academy staff should bear in mind the pressures a parent/carer may be under because of the child's needs. Professionals in the academy will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents.

Staff within the academy will help parents/carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents/carers understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way that parents/carers can understand.

7.5 The responsibilities of parents/carers

As soon as parents/carers feel that their child may have a special educational need and may need different arrangements made for them:

- The academy will listen to, and take parents'/carers' views and concerns into account when considering any intervention.
- When a pupil is provided with any additional or different intervention through SEN provision, parents/carers will be supported by the academy play a part in the processes of planning and reviewing their child's Provision Plan.

Parents/carers will be encouraged to help the academy in implementing any intervention/support programme, for instance by helping their child with any programmes to be followed at home.

If, despite the additional support provided by the academy, parents/carers feel their child needs more help than the intervention available they have the right to ask the Local Authority to consider whether it is necessary to carry out a statutory assessment, which the academy will support them with.

7.6 The responsibilities of the academy

Within a culture of partnership with parents/carers, academy staff will ensure that any concerns they have about a pupil's learning will be discussed with parents/carers at an early stage. Academy staff will:

- Discuss concerns in private;
- Listen carefully to information provided by the parent/carer;
- Acknowledge the parents'/carers' expert knowledge of their child;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Actively listen;
- Show empathy;
- Be honest;
- Be positive - focus on the pupil's strengths as well as areas of need;
- Be aware that parents/carers may have needs themselves that may act as a barrier to communication;
- Be flexible about arrangements for meetings and appointments;
- Provide opportunities for parents/carers to support their child's learning (e.g. through their contribution to the child's Individual Support Plan);
- Invite views from parents/carers about progress, e.g. at review meetings;
- Provide access to all information and records on their child;

- Be clear about what additional support the academy will provide to meet the child's needs, and what arrangements will be put into place to monitor and review progress; and
- Share with parents/carers records kept of meetings.

Where the academy feels that inadequate progress is being made and there is a need to involve external agencies, staff should carefully explain their reasons and give information about the external agency to be involved to parents/carers so that they can give informed consent to their involvement. Where outside agencies provide leaflets to explain what their service can provide, the academy will ensure that such leaflets are readily available.

Where the academy decides to forward documentation to the Statutory Assessment and Moderating Panel, academy staff should always go through the documentation carefully with parents/carers, inviting them to contribute their own views. Parents/carers must sign the permission form for the documents to be shared with members of the Panel in order for papers to be considered.

Parents/carers, are accorded specific rights within the formal process of the statutory assessment and Annual Reviews of Statements, which will be explained to them by academy staff.

As part of a statutory assessment of a pupil's SEN, parents/carers will be asked for their advice. Assistance can be given to parents/carers from academy staff. Parental/carer advice is considered alongside advice from the academy and other professionals when considering the pupil's SEN. Additional information can be attached to parental/carer advice (e.g. a private report from a Psychologist or Speech and Language Therapist).

Prior to an Annual Review (to which of course parents/carers must be invited), the academy will write to parents/carers and professionals seeking written views. Any reports received will be sent out to parents/carers two weeks before the review. Where necessary, the Vice Principal or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) will arrange for an interpreter or signer to be present at the meeting.

The academy should discuss the pupil's needs in positive and constructive ways, seeking information from the parents/carers only to inform the academy regarding the steps they will need to take in order to fully meet the pupil's needs. At meetings with the parents/carers regarding progress, academy staff must focus on the pupil's needs, i.e. how the pupil learns most effectively and what strategies and interventions help to improve the child's learning and development.

Parents/carers are entitled to express a preference for special provision and their preference has to be given careful consideration by the Local Authority. If expressed in a meeting, such views will be carefully recorded by academy staff and included in documentation sent to the SEN Assessment Team.

7.7 Positive meetings with parents/carers

Some parents/carers may find meetings and case conferences daunting and stressful. The academy will adopt the following suggestions to help to create a non-threatening positive meeting situation:

- Arrange for parents/carers to be greeted on arrival.
- Organise a circular seating arrangement for large groups so that parents/carers and professionals are close, but not too close (do not have parents/carers on one side of the room and professionals on the other).
- Do not use a table or a desk as a protective barrier.
- If only two or three of you, sit facing each other but at a slight angle.
- Greet the parents/carers warmly when they enter the room.
- Allow parents/carers to settle into their seats and take stock of the room and who is in it before launching into the discussion.
- Introduce everybody at the meeting – some parents/carers like to take notes and will need time to write down the names of those at the meeting. Alternatively, create a seating plan for the parents/carers upon which each professional can write their name and role before the start of the meeting and give this to the parents/carers when they come in.
- Adopt a comfortable, relaxed seating position – parents/carers will note your posture and read meanings into it.
- Orientate the whole body towards the parents/carers.
- Lean forward slightly.
- Do not fidget and avoid mannerisms such as placing fingertips together.
- Smile and nod frequently – to encourage their involvement.
- Avoid looking at or shuffling papers.
- If taking notes, ask permission first.
- If you need to look at your watch, do it when you are speaking.
- Listen to the parents/carers – give them time to say what they have come to say.
- Use paralanguage, e.g. “mm”, “uhuh”, to convey continuing interest and invite further discussion.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Give parents/carers the time that was allocated.
- Sum up what has been discussed and the action agreed.
- Offer parents/carers refreshments after the meeting so that they can talk over what has been agreed and get back to you before they leave if they need to.

- Send parents/carers a copy of the agreed action and any formal record of the meeting.

8.0 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Vice Principal (Primary) or the Assistant Principal: Inclusion / Transition to ensure its effectiveness through the Academy's self review process.

Evidence will be sought to confirm that the policy is promoted effectively to all stakeholders, ensuring that staff, pupils and parents understand and meet their responsibilities.

This policy statement will continue to be discussed with pupils, parents/carers staff and Education Advisory Board.

The revision of this policy will be ongoing, ensuring the involvement and commitment of the whole academy community. The statement will be reviewed annually and a written report presented for Education Advisory Board's information.

9.0 Approval by the Education Advisory Board and Review Date

This policy has been formally approved and adopted by the Education Advisory Board at a formally convened meeting

Policy approved:

(Chair of Education Advisory Board)

Date:

End of statement

Appendix A: Home-academy agreement, template_ June 2011

Serlby Park Academy

We aim to raise aspirations and achievement of all pupils in a safe, stimulating learning environment. We invite you to work with us in partnership, to help pupils to realise their full potential.

Name of Pupil _____

The Pupil

As a pupil I will:

- Attend school on every possible occasion and be punctual to registration and all lessons
- Be polite, courteous and helpful, and avoid causing distress to others by bullying of any kind, including for example; verbal, cyber or physical,
- Act in a normal, responsible way, respecting the rights of other pupils and follow the school rules
- Ensure information and letters from school is delivered home
- Bring all the equipment I need every day
- Wear the school uniform, without question, and be tidy in appearance
- Do all my classwork and homework as well as I can
- Keep the school free from litter and graffiti

Signature _____

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

As a parent I/We will:

- See that my son/daughter attends school regularly, on time, and with appropriate notes to cover genuine absence, and seek to avoid holidays during school time
- Ensure my son/daughter is dressed appropriately in school uniform and is clean and tidy without extreme hairstyles, dress or body piercings
- Make the school aware of any concerns or problems that might affect my son/daughters work or behaviour
- Support the school's policies, codes and values, and encourage my son/daughter to behave in accordance with the school's behaviour code of conduct.
- Support my son/daughter in homework and encourage him/her to participate in extra curricular learning and other worthwhile activities in the community

- Attend Parents Days / Evenings and discussions about my son's/daughter's progress.
- Encourage my son/daughter to work hard in order to achieve their full potential
- Get to know about my son's/daughter's life at school, and encourage a caring, cooperative spirit.
- Provide appropriate equipment and sports kit.

Signature _____

The academy will:

- Care for your son's/daughter's safety and happiness
- Be suitably ambitious for your child
- Ensure that he/she achieves their full potential as a valued member of the academy community
- Provide a balanced curriculum and meet the individual needs of your son/daughter
- Achieve high standards of work and behaviour through building good relationships and developing a sense of responsibility
- Keep you informed about general academy matters and report to you once a term on your son's/daughter's progress, either by a written report or in a Parents Evening
- Be open and welcoming at all times and offer opportunities for you to become involved in the daily life of the school
- Guarantee to address any problems which arise in your child's learning or happiness in school
- Follow up any unexplained absences and monitor your son's /daughter's attendance and punctuality

Signature _____

Class Teacher / Tutor