EARLSMEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Respectful Communication and Conduct Policy

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LGB Approved	**October 2026**
BoT Ratified	**November 2026**
Date of Review	**October 2027**

MISSION STATEMENT

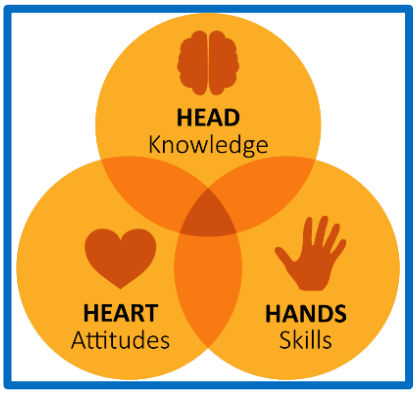
At Earlsmead Primary School, our mission is to empower every child through *Head, Heart, and Hands*. We cultivate curious minds (Head), nurture compassionate spirits (Heart), and develop the practical skills (Hands) needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

VISION

Everyone achieving their full potential.

OUR MOTTO

Head, Heart and Hands



OUR VALUES

Head:	**1.** Curiosity	**2.** Achievement
Heart:	**3.** Integrity	**4.** Care
Hands:	**5.** Collaboration	**6.** Creativity

Introduction and purpose

At Earlsmead Primary School, we strive to build strong relationships with parents, carers and visitors to create a stimulating, happy and safe learning environment which extends from school to home and the wider community. The trust, support and cooperation of families are fundamental to enabling every pupil to achieve their full potential.

Our commitment to Head, Heart and Hands, and our values of curiosity, achievement, integrity, care, collaboration and creativity, guide the way we communicate. This policy sets out shared expectations for staff, pupils, parents, carers, governors, visitors and other members of the school community, whether communicating in person, by telephone, in writing or online.

The school welcomes questions, feedback and legitimate concerns. Everyone has the right to be heard respectfully and to work or learn without fear of abuse, intimidation or violence. Communication should be courteous, constructive, proportionate and focused on positive outcomes for children.

Expectations of parents, carers and visitors

Earlsmead Primary School asks parents, carers and visitors to:

1. Treat pupils, staff, governors, other families, visitors and external professionals with dignity and respect at all times.
2. Support the school's ethos and model appropriate language and behaviour, including in online discussions and parent messaging groups.
3. Raise questions or concerns factually and constructively, allowing the school a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond.
4. Use respectful, non-threatening language in emails, calls, meetings and messages; avoid personal attacks, shouting, intimidation or demands for an immediate response.
5. Work in partnership with the school to support children's learning, attendance, wellbeing and behaviour, recognising that school policies apply fairly while reasonable adjustments and individual needs are considered.
6. Make reasonable requests for meetings through the school office and understand that staff cannot usually leave teaching or supervisory duties for unscheduled discussions (we would ask that you understand and respect this).
7. Accept that the school will identify the most appropriate member of staff to respond, according to the nature and stage of the matter. (N.B. The member of staff will be appropriate with the stage and scale of the concern and the choice of staff member is not open to negotiation.)
8. Use the school's agreed communication channels rather than contacting staff through personal email accounts, telephone numbers or social media.
9. Respect the privacy and confidentiality of children, families and staff, particularly when discussing concerns in public or on social media and make every effort to positively promote the school to the wider community.

10. Follow published school policies, including the Complaints Policy, when a concern remains unresolved.

Parents and carers may express disagreement with school decisions or make a complaint. This should be done respectfully and through the appropriate channels (Complaints Policy); this policy does not remove those rights. We ask parents to please remember that we are a school of over 300 pupils. No school in the country has the capacity to enter into lengthy or regular email or telephone conversations. **We do not have the capacity to meet persistent or immediate demands from parents / carers.**

Communication channels and response times

Email, website contact and written enquiries

For routine enquiries, parents and carers should use the school's published office email address or website contact arrangements. The office will direct messages to the appropriate colleague. As a proposed service standard, the school aims to acknowledge enquiries within two school working days and provide a substantive response within ten school working days during term time. Where further investigation is required, the school will explain the next steps and anticipated timescale. These timescales are subject to Headteacher confirmation before adoption.

School working days exclude weekends, bank holidays and school closure periods. Formal complaints, statutory requests and safeguarding matters are handled under their own applicable procedures and deadlines.

Parents should be aware of school policies and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies.

Telephone calls and meetings

Teaching and support staff may be unable to answer or return calls immediately because they are working with children. For routine matters, the school aims to arrange a return call within two school working days. Meetings should be requested in advance; the school will make reasonable efforts to offer a suitable time and may ask an appropriate colleague to attend.

In a meeting or call, participants should listen, avoid interruptions and remain respectful. The school may take an accurate written record of significant discussions. Any proposed audio or video recording should be discussed in advance, including accessibility needs and data protection implications; covert or disputed recording will be escalated to a senior leader for appropriate handling.

Urgent concerns

Urgent safeguarding concerns or immediate risks to a child must be reported promptly to the school office or designated safeguarding lead using the school's safeguarding arrangements. Do not rely on

routine email response times for emergencies. Where there is immediate danger, contact the emergency services.

Professional responsibilities of staff

- Maintain high standards of professional courtesy, fairness, accuracy and consistency in all communications.
- Listen carefully to concerns, avoid making assumptions and explain decisions clearly, with appropriate sensitivity.
- Protect confidential and personal information and follow safeguarding, data protection and records-management procedures.
- Use approved school systems and accounts for contact with parents and pupils; do not use personal email or private social media messaging.
- Escalate safeguarding disclosures immediately in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Record significant incidents, safeguarding information and relevant parental contact on the appropriate school system, including CPOMS where applicable and appropriate.
- Use inclusive, accessible communication, making reasonable adjustments for disability, language or other identified needs.

Unacceptable communication and conduct

Abusive, insulting, discriminatory, aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour is unacceptable whether it occurs on school premises, during a telephone or video call, by email or through online platforms. This includes harassment, repeated personal attacks, threatening gestures, abusive language, and publishing private or identifying information about pupils or staff. This also extends to posting or publishing comments online that risk bringing an individual or the school's reputation into disrepute.

If a call or meeting becomes abusive, the member of staff may warn the person and end the conversation if the behaviour continues, or immediately where safety requires. Staff should report the incident to a senior leader and the school may provide a written reminder of this policy. Serious threats or violence may be referred to the police or other relevant authorities.

Any further measures, including contact restrictions or site-access arrangements, will be considered case by case, proportionately, with regard to safeguarding, equality duties, reasonable adjustments and the family's ability to communicate about their child. The school will explain arrangements in writing and provide a route for review.

Anyone exhibiting these behaviours will be formally warned by the school that this will not be tolerated, and any future violation of this policy could then result in all future communications with the school being restricted to writing. The school will consider taking legal action as appropriate.

All members of Earlsmead Primary School community have the right to work without fear of abuse or violence at all times.

This Policy outlines the manner in which everyone is expected to act whilst on school premises or virtually, as well as further detailing the type of behaviour which will not be tolerated.

Excessive or persistent contact

Earlsmead Primary School is a very busy and successful school, and our priority will always be to teach, supervise and support our pupils. We are committed to working positively alongside home to effectively deal with any issues or concerns. However, we would ask parents / carers to understand that we will simply do not have the capacity to engage in excessive communications or lengthy meetings.

We recognise that parents may need additional contact where their child has complex needs or an unresolved issue. Frequency alone does not make communication unreasonable. However, repeated correspondence about an issue already considered and answered, disproportionate demands for immediate meetings, or persistent contact that prevents staff from fulfilling their duties may require a managed approach.

Where appropriate, the school may:

- Summarise the issue, actions taken and outcome in writing.
- Agree a named point of contact and a reasonable frequency or method of updates.
- Combine repeated messages into one response or refer to an earlier substantive response when no new information is raised.
- Offer a meeting, mediation or the formal complaints route where suitable.
- Set proportionate contact arrangements for a defined period, with a review date and exceptions for safeguarding and genuinely new concerns.

Any decision to limit contact will be authorised by an appropriate senior leader and will not prevent safeguarding reports, statutory requests or access to the school's published complaints process.

Once the school has given a reasonable amount of time to address an individual issue or concern, we will not engage in further communication regarding those issues to which we have already responded.

Please note that it is not possible to interrupt members of staff during the school day as they need to remain with their classes and often have commitments before, during and after school. If you need to speak to a staff member, please contact the school office who will acknowledge receipt of your query within 2 working days. This inability to respond instantaneously is consistent with arrangements in the NHS and other organisations.

Any emergency situations will be dealt with separately.

Please remember that any time dealing with complaints, excessive communications or questioning of school procedures is time away from our primary aim of supporting our pupils.

Please note the following:

- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone over the telephone, our staff will end the call.
- If any email is rude or inappropriate in tone, we reserve the right not to reply, or we may choose to take the action outlined within this policy.
- If parents / carers are rude, abusive or speak in an inappropriate tone during a face-to-face meeting or a virtual meeting, our staff will terminate the meeting immediately.
- In either case, the school will forward a copy of this policy to reiterate our expectations and rights with regard to appropriate communication.
- In circumstances where school has listened to the request of a stakeholder (i.e. parent or pupil), considered the request and shared the outcome of this with the stakeholder, should the stakeholder continue to repeat or labour the same request, school reserves the right to cease communication or to limit the reply with a repeat of key messages already shared.
- In such situations where staff feel that they have been misquoted or misrepresented, the School reserves the right to limit contact with written communications. This is entirely at the discretion of the school.
- When the school judges email correspondence to be excessive, the school reserves the right to:
  - cease communication.
  - limit replies to a repeat of key messages already shared.
  - arrange an alternative method of communication.
  - set out a plan for a reasonable, manageable schedule of contact.
- Following reasonable attempts by the school to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time, or if a meeting is refused, then communication on this issue will cease.

School decisions, feedback and complaints

The school welcomes constructive feedback and consultation, while recognising that operational decisions about teaching, curriculum, behaviour, routines and school organisation are made by those with delegated responsibility, subject to law, statutory guidance and school policies. Agreement from every stakeholder will not always be possible.

Parents should normally raise a classroom concern first with the class teacher, then the relevant senior leader where necessary, unless the nature of the concern requires a different route. Formal complaints must follow Earlsmead's published Complaints Policy, including its stages and timescales. Concerns about safeguarding should follow safeguarding procedures rather than waiting for a complaints response.

Online communication, social media and political impartiality

Members of the school community should not use social media or messaging groups to threaten, harass, discriminate against or identify children, families or staff. Families are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the school rather than circulating allegations or confidential information online. Respectful criticism and lawful expression are not, by themselves, a breach of this policy.

Staff must follow the school's E-safety, acceptable use and social media requirements. The school will maintain political impartiality in line with applicable education duties and ensure that political issues addressed with pupils are handled appropriately and where required, with a balanced presentation of opposing views. This is distinct from parents' rights to hold or express political opinions.

Staff communication, workload and wellbeing

Earlsmead seeks to protect colleagues' time outside their contracted working hours and to encourage clear, purposeful communication. The following arrangements are proposed for local agreement and should not be represented as an existing staff rule until approved.

- Use clear subject lines, identify actions and deadlines, and avoid unnecessary copying of colleagues.
- Where possible, schedule routine emails to arrive during normal working hours. Staff are not expected to monitor or respond to routine messages in evenings, at weekends, school holidays or during authorised absence.
- Avoid non-urgent work-related texts, personal calls and WhatsApp messages outside working hours; use approved school channels instead.
- Draft or schedule non-urgent weekend messages for the next working day.
- Respect the different contracted patterns of teachers, term-time support staff, part-time colleagues and year-round staff.
- Do not allocate unexpected holiday tasks to colleagues without appropriate advance discussion and authorisation.
- Urgent safeguarding, unexpected absence, school closure or other significant operational incidents may require timely contact through agreed escalation routes.
- Use out-of-office messages and notification settings to manage absence and work-life boundaries.

Trust-level leaders, governors and external agencies may have different working arrangements; everyone should nevertheless consider whether a message genuinely needs immediate attention. This section should be reviewed with staff and relevant trust representatives before implementation.

Legal framework and related policies

This policy should be read alongside applicable duties under the Education Act 1996 (including political impartiality provisions), the Equality Act 2010, UK data protection law, safeguarding legislation and

statutory safeguarding guidance, and relevant law concerning harassment, threats and harmful communications. Whether conduct amounts to a legal offence depends on the facts and should not be assumed from an allegation alone.

Related school documents include:

- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy,
- Complaints Policy,
- Behaviour Policy,
- Staff Code of Conduct,
- Equality Policy,
- E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy,
- Data Protection Policy,
- and any trust-wide communications or staff wellbeing guidance.

Expected Behaviour

Simply put, we expect that all parents, visitors and members of the public will treat each other, staff members, pupils and external agencies with dignity and respect.

Parents should be aware of school policies and know that copies are available via the school's website or from the school directly. When raising a concern, we would ask parents to ensure that they act in accordance with school policies and maintain a positive approach at all times whilst on the school premises and in their communications with school.

Telephone calls

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with pupils at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

In a non-emergency a return call will be aimed to be made in term time and within 2 working days, with any follow-up action from the request /query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a log of a telephone conversation with a parent/carer via CPOMs.

Monitoring, review and approval

The Headteacher and relevant governing or trust body will monitor implementation and review this policy annually, or sooner where legislation, trust requirements or school circumstances change. Feedback from staff and families may inform future revisions.

If any parent / carer behaves in a manner that this policy outlines as unacceptable (such as abusive, aggressive, inappropriate or excessive contact) the school may choose to take appropriate action in line with our legal position or forward a copy of this policy to appropriate individuals to ensure that parents / carers are aware of expectations for future behaviour; the position of the school; our legal rights and protection and any action that we might choose to take.

If parents or carers are unhappy with a decision to implement this policy, they have the right to pursue the issue in line with Earlsmead Primary School's published Complaints Policy and Procedures.