

16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear High School Families,

**Subject: Positive communication**

We hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to address a matter of increasing concern within our school community. In recent months and weeks, we have observed a saddening increase in the number of aggressive, over-demanding, unkind, and negative interactions and communications from parents and carers. These instances, while limited in number, have nevertheless left a significant impact on the wellbeing of our staff, and cannot continue. It is with heavy hearts that we feel the need to bring this matter to your attention.

**We want to emphasize that the vast majority of our families have always maintained a level of politeness and appropriateness in their communications, for which we are sincerely grateful.** However, even a small number of instances of unkindness or negativity can create ripples of distress that affect us all. Unkind words or negative sentiments not only hurt the health and wellbeing of individuals directly involved but also detract from our collective mission of providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all. Moreover, such incidents often divert valuable time and energy away from our core purpose of educating young people. Every moment spent on the examples listed below takes time that could have been dedicated to fostering academic growth and personal development.

To add some further detail, in less than a three-week period these things happened more than once,

- Parents shouting or displaying visible anger when meeting school staff in person - making impolite comments about them, other staff, or the school (*often before they have a clear understanding of a situation*).
- Parents haranguing office staff on the phone.
- Parents being critical about not receiving emails (*and then it transpires they were in 'junk' or they are using a new email address that has not been shared with school*)
- Parents writing and sending disparaging emails at all hours (*unpleasant tone or comments and threats of Ofsted, lawyers, etc etc*).
- Parents demanding urgent meetings and phone calls with no consideration of the demands of the teaching/school day or the multiple demands on staff in a school with nearly 1700 students.
- Parents showing a lack of respect for professional knowledge or experience of staff (e.g. *their child is right; the school is wrong to do x*).
- Parents leaving very negative comments anonymously on feedback forms, so school staff are unable to respond and try to resolve.
- Parents sharing the same criticism of the school repeatedly and long after colleagues have addressed the matter.

- Parents demanding policy or practice change (*based on something they want or believe*) and expecting detailed responses from school staff (*and then often not acknowledging a careful and often time-consuming response from school staff*).
- Parents being rude and/or disbelieving when school staff contact home to report an incident where their child has seriously disrupted lessons (or other activities).
- Parents coming into school reception and demanding to see a member of school staff without a pre-arranged appointment.

We understand that disagreements may arise from time to time, but we urge all families to approach these situations with patience, understanding, and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue. We can all disagree respectfully and work towards solutions that benefit everyone involved. Equally, we may have got things wrong in school and families have every right to ask questions and advocate for their child but please know that staff in school are working hard and doing their best every day.

We have a clear set of communications principles as a school. They set out our expectations of staff and families. And they confirm the timescales for response – *2 working days to acknowledge and up to 5 working days for a full response*.

<https://highstorrs.co.uk/download/5/7833c32f6df3b56f4f690393b0011369>

We also have a clear Trust Complaints policy and a Vexatious Communications Policy, where we set out our approach to dealing with *'harassing, repetitious, aggressive, or intimidating complaints or communications'*.

<https://highstorrs.co.uk/download/5/45f58393cc1f64f5279059ef8a2790e3>

**All these policies have clear timeframes for a response in working days and working hours** which the school diligently follows. If you do have a complaint to raise or a matter to discuss, we ask that you do this in line with the above policies and in a respectful and constructive manner.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued partnership in creating a positive and nurturing environment for our students.

With all best wishes,



Sarah Evans  
Chair of Governors

Claire Tasker  
Headteacher