

Communicating with Parents

Our Code

Improving life
through learning



Introduction

Stirling Council Schools, Learning and Education is committed to working with parents and carers.

(For the remainder of this document, the term 'parent' refers to both parents and carers).

We recognise:

The vital role that parents play in the lives of their children and young people, and that by sharing knowledge and expertise, parents and professionals can work together to enable children and young people to fulfil their potential.

That parents have a responsibility to promote their child's development and welfare, including ensuring that the child receives a suitable education.

The Service has a responsibility to provide a suitable education, and actively involve users of services in shaping and evaluating services.

The Service and parents are responsible for sharing information about children and young people that might impact on their learning.

For our partnership to succeed, we must ensure easy, effective and meaningful communication between Schools, Learning and Education and parents. As a result, we have created this Code for Communicating with Parents. The Code is intended to provide a broad framework for professionals when communicating with parents.

What are the Aims of our Code?

We aim to foster high quality communication by:

- Being honest and courteous and expecting similar behaviours in return.
- Being clear about the balance of rights and responsibilities between Schools, Learning and Education and parents in all of our communications.
- Promoting a culture of openness and honesty.
- Seeking parents' views and taking them into consideration when making decisions.
- Valuing parents' expertise and knowledge.
- Providing timely, appropriate, and accessible information.
- Avoiding information overload.
- Seeking to overcome any barriers to communications.

Respecting Each Other

Parents and Council employees have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy. By respecting one another, Education professionals and parents will be in a strong position to work together for the benefit of the children whose interests we serve. We hope that by putting our Communication Code in place, we shall build on our current good relationships with parents, and continue to improve them.

What can parents expect of us?

Stirling Council expect their employees to behave in a respectful and polite manner towards members of the public. Stirling Council also operates complaints procedures. Through these procedures, parents living in Stirling Council area may make complaints, have them investigated and any learning points for the Service are taken on board as part of efforts to improve.

What we expect of parents

Staff have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. They should not have to endure abusive, disrespectful or threatening behaviour whilst at work.

Most parents are courteous and respectful. In a minority of cases, where this is not the case and a member of staff considers that a parent is being abusive, disrespectful or threatening, the parent will be asked to stop. If the behaviour does not stop, the discussion will be terminated. The Service may continue to communicate with the parent but will use another form, such as a letter.

Similarly, staff will not engage with correspondence that is abusive or threatening. In this case we will write to the parent explaining that it is not our policy to reply to such communications. We shall suggest that they communicate in an acceptable manner so that we are able to respond to their concerns. Stirling Council has a specific policy for addressing unacceptable customer conduct, which will be applied where appropriate to situations if required.

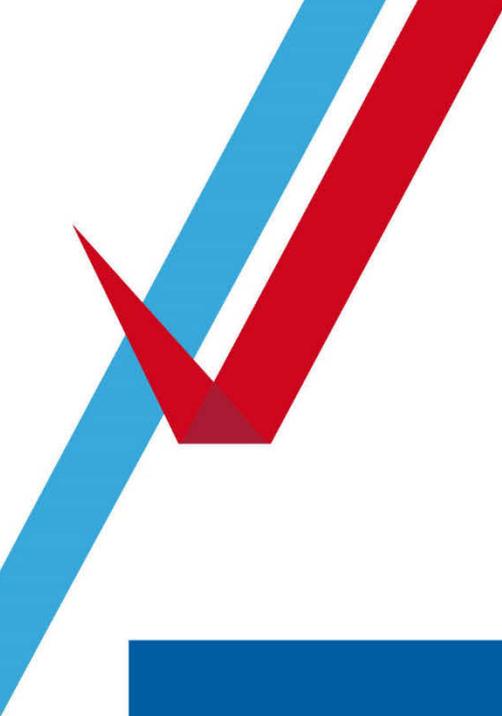
By working together with mutual respect, we shall be best placed to support children and young people to fulfil their potential.

The Code into Practice

Areas for Communication	Suggested Actions
Involving Parents in Shaping Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Parent Councils. • Parental Surveys. • Parental focus groups. • Improving services by taking action where complaints have been upheld.
Personal Contact with Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that parents have a personal contact in the school if they wish to get in touch. • Getting in touch with parents if any substantive issue arises – for example, if their child exhibits distress, complains about another child, or is complained about. This will depend on the circumstances and there must be a balance between unnecessarily arousing anxiety and keeping parents informed. There would, however, be a presumption in favour of getting in touch with parents if the issue were not resolved in the first instance.
Information about Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating and distributing schools and nursery handbooks – clarifying that they are for parents as well as children and young people. • Providing information through regular newsletters and other reports, such as the annual Standards and Quality Report.
Opportunities for Discussing Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure that the parents have enough time to discuss their children’s progress – e.g. if a child’s progress requires more time than has been allocated at Parents’ Evenings, offering further opportunities for discussion.
Complaints/Compliments/Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing procedures for parents to raise complaints, give compliments or make comments.

Putting the Code into Practice

Areas for Communication	Suggested Actions
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity. • Avoiding an impersonal approach but also avoiding being patronising. • Offering interpreting services where necessary. • Recognising the power of body language.
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging parents to feel comfortable and confident about representing their own views, but also encouraging them to have supporters or advocates if this is wanted. <p>Considering what support you or your team might need.</p>
Accessibility/Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being available, as far as reasonable and safe, to meet parents at times and in settings that meet their needs. For example, a family room might be used rather than the head of setting's office. • Giving thought to the set-up of the room to aid good communication, e.g. parents and staff sitting around a low table is preferable to staff sitting behind a desk. • Checking and addressing any disability requirements.
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to parents and taking their concerns seriously. • Being able to put your own view across confidently and respectfully. • Being able to draw a discussion to an end in a way that leaves all parties feeling respected and clear about next steps. • Believing that parents are partners and fostering a relationship of trust.



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