



Communications Strategy

Which methods do we use to communicate with families?

Communication Type	Usual Method Used	Why?
Attendance Alerts	Email via Arbor	To comply with policy and government guidance we send out around 50,000 notifications per year and this is the most efficient way
Detention Notifications	Email via Arbor	As above
Communications re trips/events	Email via Arbor	As above
Attendance letters/suspension letters/exclusion letters	PDF emailed via Arbor MIS and/ or post	These contain more information. We use PDF so that they are more difficult to re-edit. We send around 700 letters a year: they are standardised to comply with legal and policy requirements. We are unable to adapt them in each case.
Weekly Bulletin	PDF emailed via Arbor/ socials	Ensures wide circulation
Confidential Safeguarding/Urgent Information	Phone call/ email	This is confidential information and will usually be dealt with by phone call
Advising that your child is unwell or injured	Phone call	This is the fastest method and allows for discussion about next steps
Announcements such as school closure	Email via Arbor Highfields social media and website pop ups	This is the fastest way to spread the word

What response should families expect?

Highfields values open and constructive communication with families. To ensure we respond fairly, safely and effectively, we ask that parents and carers are mindful of the following:

- Highfields works in partnership with **over 2,600 parents and carers**, supporting **approximately 1,300 students**. We aim to respond to all communications as promptly as possible, but response times will vary depending on volume and urgency.
- During the school day, staff are primarily engaged in **teaching, supervising and safeguarding students**. As a result, they may not be able to respond to emails or phone calls immediately.

- All family communications are **triaged by staff according to the level of urgency and potential risk to the student**. Where a matter is assessed as serious or time-critical, we will prioritise it and, as a minimum, confirm the timeframe within which a fuller response can be expected.
- Messages sent **outside school hours**, or during particularly busy periods such as the start and end of the school day, may take longer to receive a response. For **urgent concerns relating to student safety or wellbeing**, families should contact the **school reception** rather than individual staff members.
- Highfields is not an emergency or 24-hour service. However, we are committed to responding to concerns **within a reasonable and appropriate timeframe**, proportionate to the nature of the issue raised.
- Clear, respectful and focused communication helps us address concerns **carefully, consistently and in the best interests of students**.

We appreciate the cooperation of our families in helping us manage communications effectively so that staff time is used where it matters most — supporting students' learning, wellbeing and safety.

Key contacts

Year7team@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
Year8team@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
Year9team@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
Year10team@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
Year11team@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
sixthformyearteam@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

For general enquiries info@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

For enquiries regarding SEND senco@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

For enquiries regarding work experience or careers fair careers@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

To advise that your child is unable to take part fully in PE lessons or enquire about fixtures etc

PEinfo@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is Arbor?

Arbor is the school's **Management Information System (MIS)**. In line with Department for Education (DfE) requirements, it securely holds statutory information about students and staff and supports key school functions including **registration, attendance monitoring, safeguarding records, assessment and progress tracking**. Arbor also provides a **parent/carer app**, which we use as one of our primary channels for routine communication with families.

Why don't you send text messages?

The school does not routinely use SMS text messaging as a communication method. At our scale, text messaging is **costly, inefficient and slow to process**, particularly when communicating with over

2,000 recipients. In accordance with Trust expectations around **value for money and responsible use of public funds**, we use email and the Arbor app, which provide more reliable delivery, clearer records and better oversight.

Why might I receive school emails from different email addresses?

Some communications are sent via **DfE-approved or Trust-approved third-party platforms**, such as SchoolCloud for parents' evenings. These systems generate automated messages from their own email domains. While the sender address may vary, all such communications are authorised by the school and form part of our agreed communication systems.

How do I raise an issue or concern?

The DfE's *School Complaints Guidance* is clear that concerns should be addressed **informally and at the earliest possible stage** wherever possible. Parents and carers are therefore encouraged to contact the **member of staff who works most closely with their child**, as they are usually best placed to resolve issues quickly.

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, it will be **escalated through the school's line management structure**. Where necessary, families may then follow the school's **formal complaints procedure**, which is published on the website and complies with DfE and Trust requirements.

Please note that **Ofsted will normally only consider a complaint once a school's published complaints procedure has been fully exhausted**.

How can I help ensure effective action for my child?

DfE guidance emphasises the importance of **clear, proportionate and constructive communication** between schools and families. We encourage parents and carers to focus on the **specific outcome or change they are seeking**, rather than raising multiple issues at once.

Staff work in education because they want to support children and young people. While we recognise that schools are not perfect, we ask families to **assume positive intent** and work in partnership with us to achieve the best possible outcomes for students.

How does the school respond to inappropriate or unreasonable communication?

The school has a **duty of care to its staff** and is required under Trust policy and DfE guidance to manage behaviour that may be considered **unreasonable, abusive or harassing**.

Staff are trained to **pause or end communication** where interactions involve discourteous language, threats, intimidation or shouting. In rare cases, and in line with Trust policy, the Headteacher may take further action, including:

- restricting communication to a single point of contact
- limiting contact to written communication only
- restricting access to the school site
- issuing a formal letter regarding **unreasonable or vexatious communications**

These measures are taken to ensure that staff can focus on their core responsibility: **the education, wellbeing and safeguarding of students**.