

# 5 Tips to Supercharge Your Home-School Communications



# Building and maintaining good relationships with parents has an undeniably positive impact on all members of the school community.

Outcomes improve for pupils, staff experience a less stressful working environment and parents feel happier and more confident about their child's future.

This report outlines some tried and tested methods of improving and maintaining relationships with parents which can be quickly and easily implemented in your school.

I hope that you find the advice contained within this report helpful, if you would like to discuss any of the topics covered, to explore how you could tailor your home-learning planners to better fulfil the needs of your school community, or to investigate the feasibility of introducing a professionally produced termly newsletter to your school, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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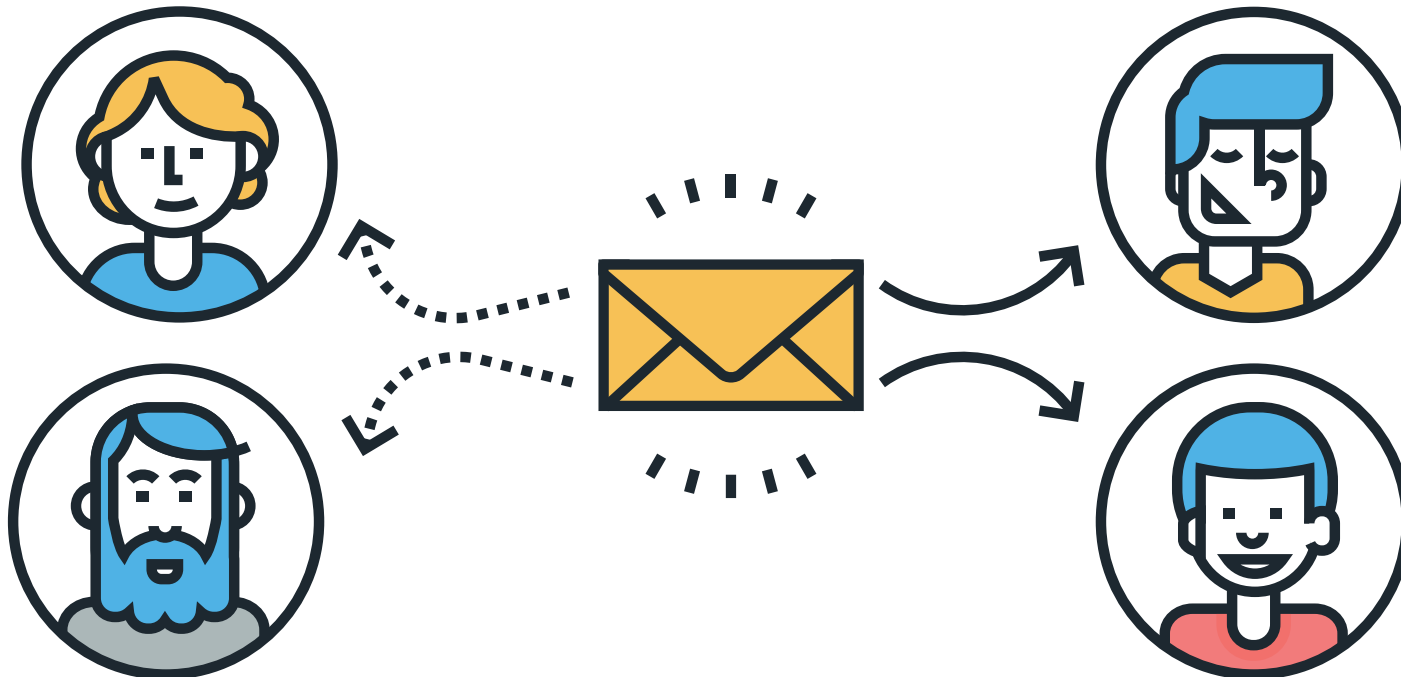
# 1. Manage Expectations

We have all experienced the frustration of leaving a message or sending an email and waiting what we consider to be an unreasonable time for a response. If parents know when to expect a response they are less likely to feel this; create a set of guidelines which outline the timeframe and methods by which staff should respond to enquiries, make parents aware of the policy and, where possible, remind them of your commitment when they get in touch. For example:

| Communication              | Response Method                        | Response Time   | Notes  |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Phone call/voicemail       | Return telephone call                  | Within 24 hours | Include your policy within your voicemail greeting. Example: 'We will respond to your message within 24 hours.'  |
| Email/website enquiry form | Email reply                            | Within 24 hours | Issue an automatic reply to all messages, both during term time and school holidays, advising of your response time. Consider adding a link to an FAQ area of your website to address common queries.  |
| Letter                     | Dependent on the nature of the enquiry | Within 48 hours | Generally speaking letters tend to relate to more serious issues, the nature of the response should reflect the nature of the enquiry. Where a response is likely to take more than 48 hours to formulate, a telephone call from the office to confirm receipt is a positive step. |

## 2. Make Staff Available

By providing parents with direct contact details (email addresses) of relevant staff you can reduce the bottleneck of information passing through the school office and speed up response times. Email also provides a non-confrontational way for parents to highlight concerns, and often means that minor problems come to light sooner, preventing them from escalating.



# 3. Daily Communications

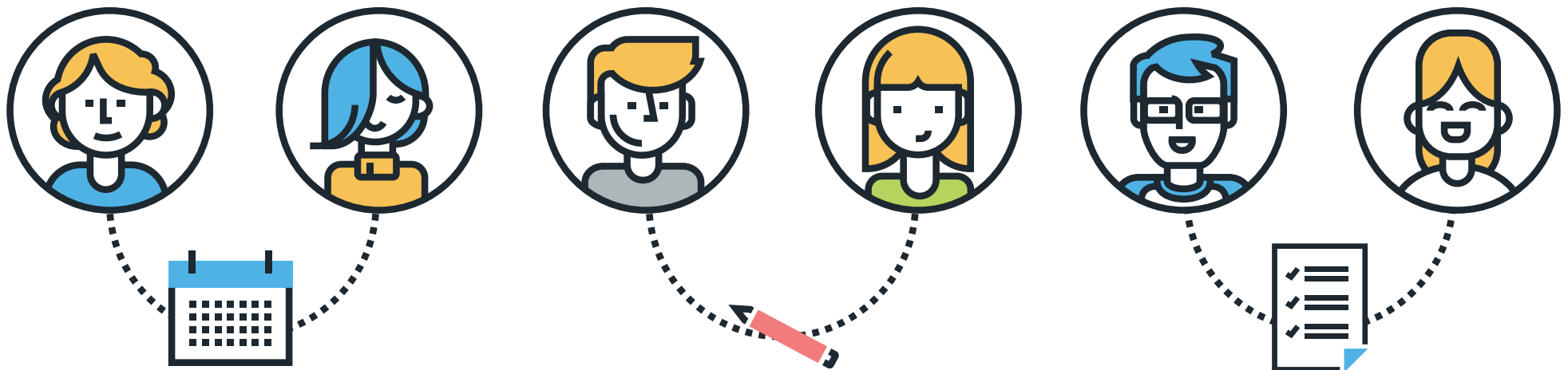
A home-learning planner or reading log, which is checked daily, provides the perfect mechanism for basic day-to-day communications between home and school. Tailor the weekly recording pages to accommodate the information that is most relevant to the children and their families, for example KS1 may benefit from a reading diary and home-school communications log, KS2 might need to incorporate spellings and homework assignments. Secondary school students generally benefit from more space for homework recording, with home-school communications as a secondary function, but incorporating useful information such as inset days, week A/B labelling and other important events printed onto the diary pages.

Consider other ways in which you can embed your planners into the daily routine, for example through the incorporation of a pocket to transport letters, forms and worksheets or adding learning resources for key subject areas which can be referred to when completing home-learning tasks.

*For more information request your free copy of WavePrint's primary home-learning planner or secondary homework planner information packs at [www.homeworkplanners.co.uk](http://www.homeworkplanners.co.uk)*

# 4. Homework Expectations

Home-learning is something which often comes under scrutiny from parents, opinions vary over what is appropriate for different ages and key stages, but that is a topic for another day! What is important is that parents need to be aware and reminded of what your homework policy is and that staff adhere to it consistently. Publish the policy on your website, include it at the front of your home-learning planners and put checks in place to ensure that staff are setting homework of appropriate quality at the appropriate time.



# 5. Positive News

Ensure that you regularly communicate exciting and positive news stories to maintain a feel good factor about the school. Including this content encourages parents to engage with your communications, taking in the other important messages at the same time. A weekly summary is a great way to draw attention to key topics and events for the following week, but avoid repeating articles every week - key culprits being uniform, litter and parking arrangements - they are often included with the best intentions but cause readers to immediately switch off as they've 'seen it all before...'

Introducing a more comprehensive termly newsletter is a wonderful way to celebrate events, activities and achievements in greater depth, using relevant photographs and a more editorial style layout will engage parents and the wider school community.

Ensure that whatever you distribute looks professional, reinforces your school brand and is laid out in a way that is easy and enjoyable to read.



# Bonus Tip:

## FAQs & Canned Responses

In the first tip I mentioned referring parents to an FAQ section on your website. It is likely that the information that a lot of parents require (term dates, holiday policy, direct contact details etc) are already on the school website, but directing parents to that content via a frequently asked questions page makes it easier for them to discover it and therefore less likely to ask. This should reduce the number of incoming enquiries about common issues and give staff more time to deal with and respond to those that require more attention.

Canned responses can have a similar effect; by saving standard responses to common queries within your email system staff are able to reply to parents at the click of a button. If your email system doesn't support canned responses you can create multiple email signatures which contain the answers and links and simply select the relevant one when responding.



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