



St Francis Catholic Primary School
Highcliffe Road, Morley, Leeds, LS27 9LX
Telephone:-0113 3230554
Website:- www.stfrancismorley.org.uk

Communication policy

Version Control:

Version number	Date	Amendments made	By who?	Approval date
1	October 2025		G.Gibbons	February 2026

'Together in truth and faith we learn and grow as God's family'

Mission Statement

Together in truth and faith we learn and grow as God's family

At St Francis, we show the joy of being the children of God:

TRUTH

Truth and love are at the heart of our school

FAITH

By following in Jesus' footsteps, our faith is strengthened

LEARN

We promote and nurture the uniqueness of every child while striving for excellence in God's presence

GROW

As part of the family of St Francis we grow closer to God through our daily words and actions



Communication Policy

Introduction

At St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley, we foster strong, respectful relationships with parents, carers and visitors to create a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment that extends from school to home and the wider community.

We welcome feedback, questions and concerns raised in a respectful and constructive way, and we are committed to listening carefully and explaining the reasons for our decisions. It is never our intention to disappoint.

However, as a school of more than 250 pupils, it is not possible to achieve consensus on every issue, nor are schools legally required to do so. Our duty is to make timely and effective decisions in good faith, in the best interests of all pupils. By choosing to send your child to St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley, parents and carers accept that policies and decisions will be applied consistently across the school community and cannot be negotiated on an individual basis.

This position is supported by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 89), the Education Act 2011 and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley may also disregard stakeholder advice if it conflicts with statutory duties, DfE guidance or the professional judgement of the leadership team.

Operational and strategic decisions are set out in the Operational and Strategic Decisions Protocol (Appendix 1).

1. Key Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Excessive contact** means unreasonable demands on staff time through volume or frequency of emails, calls, or meeting requests.
- **Vexatious contact** means repeated communication where the intention appears to be to harass, cause disruption, or pursue an outcome that is impossible or already decided.
- **Harassing behaviour** means repeated unwanted contact, aggressive or intimidating language, or conduct that causes distress or alarm (Protection from Harassment Act 1997).
- **Defamatory communication** means false or misleading statements, written or spoken, that damage the reputation of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley or its staff (Defamation Act 2013).
- **Malicious communication** means contact (including emails or online posts) that is threatening, grossly offensive, indecent, or knowingly false with intent to cause distress (Malicious Communications Act 1988).

2. Expectations for Parents, Carers and Visitors

- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect.
- Model positive behaviour, including online.
- Work constructively with staff to resolve concerns.

- Communicate respectfully; avoid threatening, demanding or excessive language.
- Support the Behaviour Policy (non-negotiable and applies to all pupils).
- Schedule meetings in advance and respect staff time.
- Accept that St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley will designate the most suitable member of staff for issues.
- Promote the school positively and avoid defamatory or hostile posts on social media.
- Respect the school's capacity and avoid excessive, repetitive or multi-staff contact.
- Allow two School working days for staff to acknowledge communications.
- Actively support the authority of staff and reinforce school expectations at home.

3. Communication Boundaries and Staff Involvement

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley reserves the right to decide which member of staff is best placed to deal with a particular issue, concern, or pupil matter. This decision will be made according to the nature of the issue, staff expertise, and the school's organisational structure - not by parental preference.

Parents and carers cannot direct which member of staff should or should not be involved in communications or meetings, nor can they restrict the school from speaking directly with a pupil where this is appropriate to safeguarding, behaviour, wellbeing, or learning.

While the school will always seek to work collaboratively with families, it must retain professional discretion to:

- allocate staff according to role and responsibility,
- involve additional colleagues where necessary, and
- speak directly with pupils in a supportive and appropriate manner.

Requests to exclude or avoid particular staff members will not normally be accommodated, except where there is a substantiated safeguarding or conflict-of-interest concern. This approach ensures that communication remains respectful, consistent, and aligned with the school's duty to safeguard pupils and manage its staff effectively.

4. Staff Wellbeing, Workload and Resources

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley is committed to protecting the wellbeing and workload of its staff so that they can focus their time and energy on pupils.

- Staff cannot fulfil their responsibilities for teaching and safeguarding if subjected to excessive, repetitive or unreasonable demands on their time.
- Unnecessary duplication of communication, such as contacting multiple staff about the same matter, will be treated as inappropriate contact and may result in restriction.
- School resources, including staff time, are allocated in the best interests of pupils collectively, not in response to individual demands.
- St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley reserves the right to close down communication that does not advance the welfare, safeguarding or learning of pupils.

Protecting staff from abuse, harassment or unreasonable demands is part of the school's legal duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and part of its safeguarding duty under Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE).

5. Inappropriate Behaviour

Abusive, threatening, harassing or aggressive behaviour towards staff, pupils or others will not be tolerated.

Consequences may include:

- Restricted communication.
- Blocking from direct staff email addresses.
- Warnings or staged sanctions.
- Ban from St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley premises under the Education Act 1996 (section 547).
- Police involvement or legal action under harassment, malicious communications or defamation law.

Explanation of offences:

- Harassment (Protection from Harassment Act 1997): a course of conduct that causes distress or alarm, including repeated unwanted contact, threats, intimidation or attempts to coerce St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley into changing decisions.
- Malicious communications (Malicious Communications Act 1988): sending messages, emails or posts that are threatening, grossly offensive, indecent or knowingly false with the intent to cause distress.
- Defamation (Defamation Act 2013): false statements that damage the reputation of St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley or staff.

6. Excessive, Vexatious or Harassing Contact

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley cannot sustain excessive contact or prolonged meetings once concerns have been reasonably addressed. Repetitive communication beyond what is necessary for a child's welfare will be restricted.

Examples include:

- Repeatedly raising the same issue after it has been addressed.
- Contacting multiple staff members in parallel to challenge non-negotiable policies.
- Excessive demands on staff time disproportionate to the issue raised.
- Harassing, hostile or aggressive tone or content.

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley reserves the right not to respond to communications where:

- the tone is abusive,
- the content is repetitive,
- the matter has already been addressed,
- it appears the intention is to cause harm or nuisance, or
- there is no possible outcome within the school's remit.

7. Restriction of Contact

In line with DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2023), where communication becomes complex, repetitive or unmanageable, St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley may implement a communications plan.

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley reserves the right to direct, limit or block contact. This may include:

- Requiring all communication to go through a single named staff member.
- Requiring all communication to be made only by telephone at agreed times.
- Requiring all communication to be made only by email to a central monitored account.
- Blocking access to staff personal school email addresses so parents cannot email multiple staff directly.
- Refusing face-to-face meetings unless specifically authorised by the Headteacher.
- Requiring all communication to be in writing only.
- Suspending all non-essential communication, with exceptions only for statutory safeguarding, attendance or legal matters.

Restrictions will remain in place until St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley is satisfied that communication has returned to an appropriate, respectful and proportionate level. Parents and carers must not seek to bypass restrictions by copying in multiple staff, governors or external agencies. Such behaviour will be treated as inappropriate communication.

8. Use of Social Media

- Staff must not be contacted via social media.
- Defamatory, abusive, hostile or misleading posts about St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley or staff will be taken seriously and may lead to legal action.
- Parents who engage in such behaviour will have all non-essential communication immediately restricted to statutory written channels only.

9. Closure of Complaints and Management of Unreasonable

Behaviour

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley is committed to handling all complaints fairly, transparently and respectfully. However, it will not allow the actions of a small number of individuals to undermine the wellbeing of staff, pupils and governors, or to obstruct the school's ability to discharge its statutory duties.

9.1 Authority to Restrict or Terminate Contact

- The Headteacher has authority to restrict or terminate contact with a complainant where behaviour is unreasonable, persistent, harassing or vexatious.
- If the complaint concerns the Headteacher personally, the authority rests with the Chair of Governors.

9.2 Duty of Care and Safeguarding

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley has a legal duty of care to protect staff, pupils, governors and the community from harassment, intimidation, defamation, trespass and undue stress. Abusive parental behaviour is also a safeguarding concern because it prevents staff from carrying out their duties to pupils effectively.

9.3 False or Fabricated Complaints

Complaints based on knowingly false, misleading or fabricated information will be dismissed immediately. Further contact may be refused.

9.4 Escalation to External Authorities

Where conduct involves harassment, threats, defamation, misuse of data or malicious use of social media, St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley will refer the matter to the Local Authority, Department for Education, police, Information Commissioner's Office or legal advisors.

9.5 Final Closure of Complaints

- Once the school's complaints procedure is exhausted, the complaint is deemed concluded and closed.
- The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns the Executive Head) will confirm closure in writing.
- Attempts to reopen the same or a substantially similar issue will not be considered.
- The complainant may receive a standard auto-response for any further attempts, reaffirming that the matter is closed.
- Further correspondence will be logged but not answered.
- The only recourse for the complainant is referral to the Department for Education.

9.6 Unreasonable Complaints

In line with DfE guidance, complaints are unreasonable if they involve refusal to co-operate, repeated or excessive demands on staff time, shifting positions, pursuit of issues already addressed, aggressive or defamatory language, or knowingly false allegations.

9.7 Complaint Campaigns

Where multiple complaints are received on the same subject, St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley may issue a single standard response to all complainants or publish a statement on the school website in place of individual replies.

9.8 Serial or Persistent Complaints

If a complainant attempts to reopen a closed matter, St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley will confirm in writing that the complaints process is exhausted. No further correspondence will be entered into under any circumstances.

9.9 External Investigations

If an external investigation is being undertaken by a third-party body such as Ofsted, the Local Authority, the Department for Education, the police or another statutory agency, St Francis Catholic Primary School,

Morley may cease communication with the complainant on the matter concerned in order to focus fully on cooperating with the investigation.

9.10. Right to Escalate Immediately

St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley reserves the right to escalate directly to police or legal involvement without issuing a prior warning if behaviour is sufficiently serious.

10. Additional Provisions

- Governors will not engage with complaints outside the formal procedure. Their role is strategic oversight, not operational decision-making.
- Trivial or out-of-scope complaints, or those seeking remedies the school cannot provide, will not be considered.
- Parents may bring a support person to meetings (emotional support only).
- Staff do not consent to being recorded during calls or meetings.
- Staff communications are confidential. The unauthorised publication or circulation of staff emails or recordings may breach data protection law and will be treated as misconduct.
- Safeguarding, attendance and statutory communications are compulsory and cannot be refused.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and Governing Body. Parents who breach expectations may face staged sanctions, including restricted contact, email blocking, site (including event) bans or legal escalation.

The Governing Body fully supports St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley in taking such action. Protecting staff from abuse, harassment or unreasonable demands is part of the school's safeguarding duty, since staff cannot fulfil their responsibilities to pupils if subjected to such treatment.

Appendix 1

Operational & Strategic Decisions Protocol

At St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley, we are committed to building strong, respectful relationships with parents, carers, and visitors. This partnership helps to create a safe, stimulating, and supportive learning environment, extending from school to home and the wider community. We believe every child deserves the opportunity to achieve their personal best. The trust and cooperation of parents and carers are essential to the continued success of our school.

We always aim to work in a positive, open, and transparent manner with families. We value the home–school relationship and will, where appropriate, explain the rationale behind decisions. However, due to the complexity of school life, it is neither possible nor appropriate to seek consensus or consultation on all matters. Many decisions made by the school are professional, operational, or strategic in nature and are not subject to negotiation, approval, or parental consent.

By choosing to send your child to St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley, parents and carers acknowledge that the school’s leaders and governing body have the legal authority and professional responsibility to make such decisions in the best interests of pupils and the effective operation of the school. This position is supported by education law and Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

Examples of Non-Negotiable Operational and Strategic Decisions

The following list is illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Class grouping, setting, and teacher or staff allocation.
- Behaviour management decisions, including sanctions and enforcement of uniform policy (for example, missed break/lunch or internal exclusions).
- Design and implementation of the rewards system.
- Curriculum structure, subject combinations, teaching methods, and learning resources.
- Assessment, homework, marking, feedback, and quality assurance procedures.
- Extra-curricular provision, including clubs, trips, and enrichment opportunities.
- Timing of INSET or staff training days, and the scheduling of school events.
- Timetable and curriculum structures.
- Internal policies and protocols, including their interpretation and implementation.
- Allocation and deployment of staff and resources to meet the needs of pupils.
- Educational visits, including decisions about venues, supervision, scheduling, and cost.
- Health and safety protocols and safeguarding procedures that protect pupils and staff.

Uniform

The school’s uniform policy is set and enforced as an operational decision. Parental disagreement does not provide grounds to alter the policy or its enforcement.

Reasonable Adjustments

The school complies with the Equality Act 2010 and will consider reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities or protected characteristics. The school retains discretion to decide what adjustments are reasonable, based on individual circumstances and the overall needs of the school community.

Boundaries and Expectations

The school will always listen respectfully to concerns raised through the appropriate channels, in line with our published Communications Policy. However, listening does not imply that decisions will be changed, nor that the school is obliged to enter into prolonged dialogue once a matter has been resolved.

Decisions will not be revisited simply because a parent or group disagrees, or because concerns are raised via petitions, social media, or coordinated communications. No stakeholder has the right to veto, overturn, or direct professional decisions made by the school.

Disagreement with a lawful and policy-compliant decision or action, without evidence of maladministration, illegality, or failure to follow published procedures, does not constitute reasonable grounds for a complaint. The school has no legal, moral, or professional obligation to alter a decision that has been made in good faith within the boundaries of professional judgement. The complaints procedure may not be used as a vehicle to challenge decisions that fall properly within the school's operational discretion.

The Complaints Procedure exists to address concerns where there is credible evidence that the school has acted unlawfully, unfairly, or outside the scope of agreed policy. It will not result in the reversal of a decision purely on the basis of parental disagreement.

Communication and Professional Conduct

We will keep parents and carers informed of key developments where appropriate. However, it is neither practical nor necessary to consult or communicate on every operational matter.

To ensure staff time remains focused on teaching and supporting pupils, we will not engage in repetitive, speculative, or adversarial correspondence on matters that have already been settled. All members of our school community are expected to communicate with courtesy and mutual respect.

We recognise that plans and arrangements may occasionally need to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Where this happens, the school will provide timely updates. We ask for patience, understanding, and continued partnership in such instances.

Final Statement

The school makes thousands of decisions each year, all guided by professional expertise, experience, and statutory frameworks. While we acknowledge that we may not get everything right, every decision is made in good faith, with integrity, and in the best interests of our pupils.

We ask all parents and carers to respect this process and to engage constructively with staff and leaders. A strong and united home-school relationship helps ensure the best possible outcomes for every Roundhay child.

Please note: Our published Communications Policy sets clear expectations for respectful engagement and outlines how the school will respond to unreasonable or abusive behaviour, including the legal protections in place for staff.

Appendix 2

Legal Justification for Restriction of Contact

Proportionality

Restrictions on parental contact are lawful where they are necessary and proportionate to protect staff and pupils. Restrictions must be linked to behaviour, not opinion, and essential safeguarding or statutory contact will always be maintained.

Statutory Basis

- Education Act 1996 (section 547): offence to cause nuisance or disturbance on school premises; schools may ban individuals from site.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (section 89): duty to set and enforce behaviour policies.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997: criminal offence to pursue a course of conduct that could be reasonably interpreted as amounting to harassment.
- Malicious Communications Act 1988: offence to send communications that are threatening, offensive or knowingly false with intent to cause distress.
- Defamation Act 2013: legal recourse for false and damaging statements about staff or St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: duty to protect staff from risks to health, including stress and harassment.
- Human Rights Act 1998: freedom of expression and family life may be restricted to protect the rights and freedoms of others, including staff and pupils.

Government Guidance

The DfE's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2023) states that schools may:

- Limit or restrict contact with unreasonable complainants.
- Close complaints once the procedure is exhausted.
- Treat repeated or harassing communication as vexatious.

Precedent

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has upheld schools' rights to restrict contact to a single channel or limit frequency of communication where behaviour is unreasonable. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) recognises vexatious or excessive requests as lawful grounds for non-response.

Conclusion

Restriction of contact is a lawful and necessary tool for St Francis Catholic Primary School, Morley to:

- Protect staff wellbeing and workload.
- Ensure effective safeguarding of pupils.
- Prevent harassment, abuse or vexatious behaviour.
- Focus resources on the education and welfare of all pupils.