



Silverdale School

Communications Guide

Information for parents and carers



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1. Introduction

If our students are to achieve their very best at Silverdale, it is important that communication between the school and students' families is clear. This guide attempts to explain how this communication should work and what to do if you have any issues you want to raise with the school.

Please note that the information here is based on what happens during a normal school year. The Covid restrictions may affect some of what is described here.

2. Our approach to communication

We know that your child will only get the best out of their education if we work constructively with you as their parents/carers. Therefore it's vital that communication between school and home is clear, useful and respectful.

What does 'clear, useful and respectful' actually mean?

- **Clear:** we will try to ensure that all of our communications can be easily understood. If you require communications in another format we will try and find a solution, as far as is reasonably possible.
- **Useful:** we will only send you information that is relevant and useful, and in a format that you can make use of.
- **Respectful:** all communications should be carried out in a respectful manner, using acceptable language and behaviour. We appreciate that parents/carers care deeply about their child(ren) and therefore ask that you also appreciate that our staff are professionals, who try to do their best for the many students under their care.

3. Parent/carer contact details

It is very important that we have up to date contacts details for parents and carers, for regular contact and in the case of an emergency. List them all here.

It is parents' and carers' responsibility to provide up to date contact details to the school. These contact details are used not only to contact you but to provide you with access to some of the systems and apps within school.

If any changes need to be made please email them to the School Office:

enquiries@silverdale.chorustrust.org or call on 0114 236 9991 and ask for the Data Team.

4. Website

We try to provide lots of useful information on the school website: www.silverdale-chorustrust.org

Please check there in the first instance, to see if your question can be answered.

There is a specific section for '[Current Parents & Students](#)', which is divided into the following sub-sections:

- Information for all years.
- Year 7.
- Key Stage 3 (years 8 and 9).
- Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11).
- Sixth Form (years 12 and 13 / Key Stage 5).

You can also find information on our website about staff, the curriculum, our policies, and much more.

If you have any suggestions about how the website could be improved please email: communications@chorustrust.org

5. Weduc communications app

Weduc is a communications tool that can be viewed as an app on a smartphone/tablet or as a website on a computer. If you have it on your phone (and have not disabled notifications) you will see alerts pop up on your phone screen whenever the school contacts you. This helps ensure you don't miss any important messages.

Weduc has the following areas within the app:

- **Newsfeed:** this works similarly to a newsfeed in Facebook. We post news and photos, which you can like and comment on. We are also able to post news that only certain groups see. For example, staff can post photos from a school trip that only parents of the children on the trip can see.
- **Calendar:** this has all the key dates from the school year.
- **Messages:** all the messages from school are grouped here, making it quick and easy to find them. You are also able to send messages to the main school office, or to any of the key stage offices. Even if you don't enrol into Weduc immediately you will still find all of the previous messages sent to you here.
- **Parent portal:** this displays key information about your child(ren), including their timetable, teachers, any absences, and attendance rates. This is also where student reports are published.
- **Notices:** posters and announcements on a virtual noticeboard.
- **The hub:** a collection of key information, such as the uniform policy, extra curricular clubs, term dates and social media sites.

How does Weduc send messages to you?

We chose Weduc because it provides us with the ability to contact **everyone** in the school community, even if they don't use the app. When we send a message out, it sends it by the following methods:

1. If you have downloaded the app, it will send it to you as an **in-app message**.
2. If you have not downloaded the app it will send you an **email** (provided you have supplied us with an up to date email address).
3. If you have not downloaded the app and you have not provided us with an up to date email address it will send you a **text message** (provided you have supplied us with an up to date mobile phone number).
Please note: due to the cost of text messages, we only send them for urgent communications, such as absence alerts. So please ensure you either provide us with an email address or you start using the Weduc app.
4. If you have not downloaded the app and have not provided an email address or mobile phone number, Weduc will print out a **paper letter** for you – which we can either give to your child to take home or post to you.

Why enrol to use Weduc?

One of the main reasons we use Weduc is that it allows us to send free, in-app messages to parents, which flash up on their phone screen. This is particularly useful when we have urgent messages to send to everyone in our school community, such as when the school is closed because of bad weather.

If you don't download the app you will continue to receive messages from school as emails. However, you will miss out on some of the services within Weduc. Also, we will eventually stop sending text messages, as this incurs a cost for the school.

Who can access Weduc?

All parents and carers who are listed on the school database as having parental responsibility for a child are sent enrolment details for Weduc.

Please note that users must have a unique email address to be enrolled in Weduc. If parents have provided the school with the same email address for both of them, then only one of them will receive enrolment details for Weduc.

How can I get help to use Weduc?

If you need any help enrolling in Weduc or accessing any of its features please email communications@chorustrust.org

How can I view Weduc on a computer?

Log in at: <https://app.weduc.co.uk/>

If you ever forget this address you can access it via the 'Remote Login' button at the top of the school website.

What if I have forgotten my password for Weduc?

Just click on the 'forgot password' link on the login screen.

6. Google Classroom

We use Google Classroom to set home learning work for students. We also used it during the Covid lockdowns to provide live lessons. You can find out more on our dedicated webpage:

www.silverdale-chorustrust.org/googleclassroom

7. Student reports and parents' evenings

The school provides a written report on students' progress at regular points throughout their time with us. Reports are sent home via students. We send parents a message to let you know that your child will be bringing their report home.

We also hold parents' evenings, when you have the opportunity to meet staff and discuss any issues. These are scheduled as follows:

(Please note that dates are approximate and may vary from year to year)

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13
Settling in evening: early October	Report 1: mid November	Report 1: early December	Report 1: early November	Report 1: late October	Welcome evening: late September	Report 1: mid November
Report 1: early January	Report 2: mid March	Parents' evening: early January	Report 2: mid February	Mock exams: early December	Report 1: mid November	Parents' evening: late November
Report 2: late April	Parents' evening: late March	Options evening: late January	Parents' evening: late February	Report 2: early January	Parents' evening: late November	Mock exams: mid January
Parents' evening: early May	Report 3: early July	Report 2: mid March	Mock exams: late April to early May.	Parents' evening: mid January	Mock exams: late January	Report 2: early February
Report 3: early July		Report 3: late June	Report 3: mid June	Report 3: late March	Report 2: early February	Concerns evening: early March
					Concerns evening: early March	
					Mock exams: late June	
					Report 3: mid July	

8. Contacting the school

Notifying school of a student absence

If you need to report a student absence you can call the school on 0114 236 9991 and follow the options to report a student absence. Or you can email the relevant pastoral office:

- Year 7 pastoral office: y7pastoralmanager@silverdale.chorustrust.org
- Key Stage 3 pastoral office (Years 8 and 9): ks3pastoralsupport@silverdale.chorustrust.org
- Key Stage 4 pastoral office (Years 10 and 11): ks4pastoralsupport@silverdale.chorustrust.org
- Key Stage 5 / Sixth form office (Years 12 and 13): sixthform@silverdale.chorustrust.org

If you want to contact a member of staff to discuss your child

The pastoral teams in each Key Stage office are also the best place to start if you have an issue you would like to discuss with a specific member of staff, or if are just unsure who to talk to. They can then redirect you to the right person if necessary. You can contact them via the main school telephone number (0114 236 9991) or via the email addresses above.

You can also send general enquiries to the school reception email:

enquiries@silverdale.chorustrust.org

If you have a **safeguarding** concern you can talk to the pastoral teams or you can contact the school and ask to speak to the Safeguarding Officer.

Sending direct emails to staff

If you are ever in direct contact with members of staff about your child via email, please bear in mind the following points:

- Please note that teachers have a large workload and have to respond to parental communications in the limited non-teaching time they have. It is helpful therefore if you write your emails with this in mind. For example, make them concise and to the point, and do not send an excessive amount of emails.
- If you want several members of staff to know about the issue you are raising, please send one email to them all – rather than sending separate emails to each person. This ensures that everyone knows what is happening and they do not duplicate work.
- When sending emails to multiple people, please try to include people in the cc field who need to get the information but aren't required to take any action. This makes it clear to those people that they do not need to take action and stops people from duplicating work.

How long will it take for staff to respond?

Please bear in mind that teaching staff spend the majority of their working day with students in the classroom and have a significant planning, preparation and assessment workload. They therefore

cannot respond immediately. Many support staff also spend the majority of their working day with students, so again will have many demands on their time.

We try to meet the following standards with communications we receive:

- To acknowledge them within two working days.
- To respond to them fully within five working days.
- If further work or investigation is needed to be able to respond fully, this will be explained and a further, reasonable deadline set for a full response.

9. Meetings with staff

There may be times when you have to meet with staff to discuss an issue. Given the many demands on our staff's time, we have implemented the following measures, which we hope ensure that these meetings work as constructively as possible.

Ahead of the meeting

- Firstly, consider whether a face to face meeting is necessary. Could the issue wait until parents' evening? Could it be discussed on the phone? Would a brief sharing of information in an email suffice?
- Staff should agree the purpose for the meeting with parents at least 24 hours before the meeting, so it's clear why it is taking place. This could happen via email or over the phone.
- If it is possible to send information beforehand that needs to be read for the meeting, both staff and parents will try to do this. Staff will prepare for the meeting, to try and make it as constructive as possible.
- Meetings will normally be scheduled during the school day, between 8am and 4pm. Whilst parents may request other times, please bear in mind that staff are only contracted to work within these core hours. Any meetings outside these times are at their discretion.
- It may take some time to schedule a meeting if several members of staff need to be involved.
- If a mutually convenient meeting time cannot be agreed, consideration should be given to arranging a phone conversation instead or meeting during parents' evening.
- Meetings should have an agreed start and end time. Generally, meeting lengths are:
 - 15 to 30 minutes for general meetings, such as meeting a subject teacher or year group/key stage representative. This also includes *SEN Assess, Plan, Do, Review* meetings.
 - 1 hour for My Plan reviews.
 - 2 hours (maximum) for ECHP annual reviews.

- If you need specific access arrangements for a meeting, please make this known in advance, so reasonable adjustments can be made. If you wish to bring a translator please advise of who this will be. Translators under the age of 18 cannot usually attend, unless it is for parents' evening appointments.
- If meeting at the school please consider beforehand how you will travel there and think about whether you can use public transport or walk. If travelling by car please note that there is limited car parking on site. If you are parking on the roads near to the school please consider our neighbours by not blocking their driveways or obstructing access in any way.
- Everyone involved should arrive on time for the meeting.

During the meeting

- A member of staff will chair the meeting, to ensure that it runs smoothly and that the agenda is kept to.
- If, at any time, attendees' language or behaviour is unacceptable (for example, by being rude or aggressive) the chair can warn them about this. If such behaviour continues the chair has the right to either schedule a short break or end the meeting.

After the meeting

- Where appropriate, staff should take notes of the agreed actions from the meeting and share as necessary.

10. Phone calls

As mentioned above, phone calls are often an easier way for parents and staff to discuss matters, particularly at short notice. If a member of staff calls you but does not get a reply, they will try to leave a message for you, making it clear who you should contact in school.

If, at any time during a phone conversation, the language or tone is unacceptable (for example, by being rude or aggressive) the member of staff has the right to end the call.

Staff should not use their own mobile phones for calls or text messages with parents/carers. Therefore please contact staff through school reception on 0114 236 9991.

11. Newsletters

Regular email messages from the Headteacher are sent to parents and included on the website at www.silverdale-chorustrust.org/schoolnews.

12. Social media

Official school accounts

We try to also highlight any news or activities in school on our social media accounts:

- Facebook: @SilverdaleSch and @SilverdaleSixthForm
- Twitter: @Silverdale Sch and @silverdale6form
- Instagram: @silverdale_school

Departmental and other accounts

Departmental or subject accounts can be used to share topical news with students studying that subject, but may also contain news about their activities.

Facebook pages include:

- Silverdale Alumni Association: @silverdalealumni
- Silverdale Parents' and Teachers' Association (PTA): @silverdalepta

Twitter accounts include:

- PE: @SilverdalePE
- Geography: @SilverdaleGeog
- Business and Economics: @SilverdaleEconomics

Instagram accounts also include:

- Art: @silverdale_art
- Design & Technology: @dtsilverdale
- Silverdale PTA (Parents' and Teachers' Association): @silverdalepta

Unofficial school accounts

Any unofficial social media accounts in the school's name and/or using the school's logo will be investigated and also reported to the appropriate social media company. If it is discovered that students have created them they may be subject to disciplinary action.

Writing about the school on social media

If you choose to write about the school on social media please consider the impact of your words. When teaching our students about online safety we emphasise how nothing ever 'disappears' on the internet, even if you think you have deleted it.

We ask that, if parents, carers or students have a complaint, that they raise it directly with the school, rather than via the wider media (see section 14 about 'Complaints' below). This allows us to fully investigate the matter, but also avoids any potential safeguarding issues such as releasing confidential information into the public realm.

If communication is malicious, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action.

13. Consulting with parents and carers

Whenever we are considering significant changes to the school we will try to consult with parents and carers, to gather their views. Examples of this in the past include consulting on changes to the school day.

14. Complaints

We aim to delivery education of the highest standard. However, on occasions you may feel that we have fallen short of your expectations. If you wish to make a complaint please follow the process outlined in the Chorus Education Trust Complaints Procedure which can be found at: www.chorustrust.org/policies

It outlines the 3-stage process to follow, which starts with raising your issue with your child's form tutor or key stage/year leader. We hope that any concerns can be resolved at any early stage.

Thank you for your co-operation!