	Vanguard Learning Trust *As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. We have a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through a curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, and the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential.*

Home-school communication protocol

Summer 2026

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Section 1: General principles

1.1 Aim of communications protocol

The aim of the protocol is that stakeholders communicate effectively and in a respectful manner; this includes students, parents and other members of the wider community. Vanguard Learning Trust aims to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate. Effective communication is much more than the exchange of information; it involves the management of relationships, expectations and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about the message. In addition, the Trust has a duty of care as an employer to its employees that they work in a safe environment and mitigate risks associated with their health and wellbeing.

1.2 Other relevant policies

The other policies that are relevant to this protocol are:

- Home-School agreement outlined in all schools' behaviour policy
- Complaints policy
- Behaviour policy including information on rewards and sanctions
- Policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour on school premises
- Attendance policy

1.3 Definitions

There are a number of terms used throughout this protocol; these definitions are as follows:

- Core working hours are 8am to 4pm for all schools in the Trust. This does not mean that all staff's working hours are between this time period. For support staff, this depends on their contractual hours and teachers on their directed time.
- Parent means all natural parents, any person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility for a child and any person who has care of a child, in accordance with section 576 of the Education Act 1996.
- School is one of those in Vanguard Learning Trust.
- Staff are all employees and temporarily employed individuals
- Trust represents Vanguard Learning Trust

1.4 Expectations of staff relationships with parents

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and cordial relationships with parents, they will also ensure that the relationships are on a professional basis. Parents will, therefore, always be addressed in a formal manner (eg. Mr/Mrs, etc.) and parents and staff should avoid developing any type of new friendship with one another. Parents should not ask staff for any personal information and should not request to be 'friends' with a member of staff through any social network in order to form a new relationship.

1.5 Social media contact

The Trust appreciates that some parents may be known to staff personally, especially those living in the vicinity of their school. It is imperative that any correspondence does not relate to school matters and parents should appreciate staff's professional responsibility in relation to specific information they may become aware of through a social media platform.

1.6 Conduct of parents

All parents should communicate with staff, both in person and via email, in an appropriate and respectful manner. This is an expectation of the Home-School agreement which parents sign when their child joins the school as outlined in the behaviour policy. Whilst the majority of parents communicate appropriately, occasionally parents' communication is unreasonable and causes distress to staff. As noted in Section 1.1, the Trust has a duty of care to ensure staff are not subjected to abusive or confrontational communication and must take necessary actions to deal with any incidents. The Trust has a policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour on the school's premises; it can involve banning parents from the premises, restricting communication and/or taking legal action especially in the case of harassment. In relation to electronic communication, parents should

not copy their child into any emails as communication should be between parents and school staff. If it is necessary to involve the child in the matter, which is often the case, this will be done in person at school not through electronic correspondence.

Section 2: Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Chief executive officer

The chief executive officer is responsible for:

- overseeing the writing and implementation of this protocol;
- ensuring staff are consulted on the protocol at least every three years or earlier if required;
- seeking trustees' approval for the protocol and any revisions; and
- ensuring that headteachers understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to the protocol.

2.2 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring the implementation of this protocol;
- monitoring that communications with parents/guardians are effective, timely and appropriate;
- updating the school information in the appendix when necessary; and
- reviewing this protocol annually with the CEO.

2.3 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- responding to communication from parents/carers in line with the expectations of the protocol; and
- working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information.

2.4 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times;
- making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance;
- responding to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner; and
- checking all communications from the school.

Section 3: Contacting school

3.1 School information

Appendix 1 summarises each school's specific information. There is a separate page for each school.

3.2 Modes of contact

Appendix 1 states how parents can contact the school and the core contact hours which, as defined in Section 1.3, are between 8am and 4pm. The main modes of contact include telephone, email, contact link on website and letter.

3.3 Response time during term time

Staff are expected to acknowledge or respond to a parent's communication within 24 hours, or 48 hours at the latest in terms of working school days. It may be longer if staff are absent from school for reasons such as attending school trips, meetings or courses. It is important that parents recognise teachers' commitments during the school day are their lessons, after-school clubs and meetings, and therefore it is unlikely that they will respond the same day to a communication from a parent. Non-teaching staff are, however, more likely to be able to respond the same day.

3.4 Telephone calls
Staff can be contacted via the main office, and if the member of staff is not available the office team will relay messages. Staff will check messages each day and endeavour to respond to a parent's telephone message within the expected response time as outlined in Section 3.3. If a member of staff is unable to contact parents within 48 hours, they will refer it to an appropriate member of staff who will be able to deal with the matter in the first instance.

3.5 Email and website
Parents can email staff as stated in **Appendix 1**, noting which member of staff it is for the attention of. Parents can also use the 'contact us' link on the website. Staff may forward emails from parents to a member of the school's senior leadership team (SLT) to deal with if appropriate. The Trust discourages staff from entering into direct email communication with parents unless for specific reasons that are approved by the school's headteacher, for example, in order to facilitate ongoing communication between a member of staff and a parent.

3.6 Online communication
Schools in the Trust have different platforms to communicate with parents directly with ongoing information such as attendance. This is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

3.7 Letters
Letters can be emailed or posted to school. The name of the member of staff should be written on the envelope for posted letters. The office will ensure all correspondence reaches the appropriate member of staff. The mode of response will depend on individual queries.

Section 4: School meetings

4.1 Onsite meetings
Parents are encouraged to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Parents should contact the relevant member of staff to request a meeting. Parents should appreciate that it can take several days for a mutually convenient time to be agreed. Parents must not arrive at school to request an immediate appointment unless in the case of an emergency, eg. a safeguarding matter where their child is at risk of harm. Parents are welcome to be accompanied to onsite meetings by an additional adult. They must inform the school in advance of the meeting and it is important to note that the individual accompanying the parent can be an advocate for them but they cannot be a legal adviser and/or an individual representing any other third party.

4.2 Reasonable adjustments for parents attending meetings and accommodations
Reasonable adjustments can be made to the arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at school or to receive and understand a communication. In addition, accommodations can be made such as school staff arranging a meeting with an interpreter if required; this may take time and therefore will need to be factored into the arrangements. Whilst it is appreciated that parents may require support with translating written communications from school when English is not their first language, they should not ask their child to translate; this is because it may not be appropriate, especially when it is specifically about the student as the audience if for those individuals with parental responsibility.

4.3 Parents' evenings
Parents' meetings allow parents to meet their child's teachers at least once during the year for a consultation. This gives parents the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. Schools can make arrangements for separated parents who request individual meetings. The information on parents' evenings is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

4.4 Other types of meetings
There are other types of meetings that happen on a regular basis and schools have outlined them in **Appendix 1**. Some residential trip leaders hold a meeting in school prior to departure to outline the arrangements. Other residential trip leaders provide details in a final information letter.

4.5 Surreptitious recording
The Trust does not give anyone - parents, visitors, students, staff, governors, trustees or third-party employees - permission to surreptitiously record a meeting and/or conversation. This may be in contravention of the 2018 Data Protection Act. Legal advice will therefore be sought if any person is suspected of recording a meeting. Should a parent request to record a meeting for their personal use, this will need to be agreed by all parties involved.

4.6 Meetings with the headteacher
The headteacher will meet with parents, but generally after the matter has been dealt with by the relevant members of staff. This is to ensure issues are handled at the correct level and to allow the relevant/appropriate staff to try to resolve a parental concern. This is also to ensure that the headteacher can deal with any Stage 2 complaints raised in line with the Trust's complaints policy.

Section 5: Internal communication by school

5.1 Internal communication with parents
Each school has a preferred main method of communication with parents which is outlined in **Appendix 1**The schools in the Trust use a number of channels to communicate effectively with parents including emails, updates from the headteacher as well as parent bulletins.

5.2 Letters via email to parents
Letters are an important part of the regular and ongoing communication with parents. Letters are always written for school visits and to provide regular information. Parents must ensure that they use a personal email address, as it is likely that by using a work email address, parents are contravening their employer's IT usage and/or data protection policy and the Trust takes the position that parents should not be sharing their work details with staff.

5.3 Progress and written reports
The school provides regular reports that inform parents of their child's progress in each subject. These reports identify areas of strength as well as areas for future development. The school encourages parents to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress as highlighted in the report. Each school has summaries in **Appendix 1** of the arrangements for reporting to parents about students' progress.

5.4 Google Classroom
All schools in the Trust use Google Classroom as the main platform for students' learning. Schools have outlined their use of Google Classroom for home use in **Appendix 1**.

5.5 Parent bulletin
A typical parent bulletin includes 'good news' stories from the school community, alongside the promotion of upcoming events or elements of school life. The frequency and content is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Section 6: External school communication

6.1 Purpose of external communication

The main purpose of external communication is to showcase the school community to a wider audience. Therefore, communication is more general in nature and does not provide any specific information to parents about their child.

6.2 Website

The Trust's schools' websites provide information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience, primarily for an external audience. The school's website has a 'contact us' section that allows parents/carers to contact the school. The specific enquiry will then be conveyed to the relevant member of staff depending on the nature of the query.

6.3 Social media

Some of the Trust's schools currently use social media as outlined in **Appendix 1**. The focus of the school's social media accounts is to promote school activities and celebrate the achievements of the school community. Parents and students are encouraged to follow the school's social media via the parent bulletin. Whilst individuals have a right to express their opinions, in particular, through their own private social media accounts, the school expects that parents refrain from expressing negative opinions about the school and/or individual members of staff; it will be considered in terms of defamation of character and harassment, in particular making false and malicious allegations. Legal action will be sought which could lead to further action if social media brings the school's name into disrepute and/or is defamatory about staff and/or members of the school community.

6.4 School and Trust community newsletters

Schools produce newsletters for parents as well as an external audience, often drawing on information in the parent bulletin; specific information about each school's community newsletter is provided in **Appendix 1**. The purpose is again to showcase achievements and activities through a central publication. In addition, the Trust publishes a termly newsletter in relation to Trust-wide activities and this is available on the Trust's website.

Section 7: Common reasons to contact school

7.1 Sickness absence

If a student is unable to attend school because of sickness or an unavoidable cause, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the school of the student's absence. Each school has provided information in **Appendix 1**. Specific information about unauthorised absences can be found in the attendance policy.

7.2 Exceptional leave

If parents need to apply for leave in advance, they should refer to the information in **Appendix 1** which outlines the school's procedures. All applications need to be made in advance and parents should be aware that the headteacher can only approve an application under exceptional circumstances. They are not in a position to authorise family holidays. Where the headteacher deems leave requested for an exceptional circumstance is not met and the requested leave is taken, a referral may be made to the local authority's attendance support team to issue a penalty notice on the school's behalf.

7.3 Providing feedback

The Trust welcomes parents providing feedback and/or raising concerns. In most cases that relate to concerns, this can be communicated informally through the different modes outlined in Section 3 which prevents situations escalating. Parents can refer to the Trust's complaints policy which is available on all schools' websites.

Section 8: Parental groups and feedback

8.1 Parent association

All schools in the Trust have a parent association which is commonly referred to as the PTA (parent-teacher association). This provides a platform for parents to support a number of school initiatives and activities and all parents are invited to join the association. School information is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

8.2 Stakeholder feedback

8.2.1 Parent meetings

A member of each school's leadership team chairs Parent Voice meetings. A range of parents make up this group and all parents are invited to take part. The group also has clear terms of reference that state that the focus is on school issues as a whole and not individual cases. The purpose of Parent Voice group is to:

- provide a voice for parents in school on issues that are important to them;
- improve the school's understanding of how to engage parents in their children's learning and in the life of the school;
- support the school to develop strong home/school partnerships;
- support improvement by discussing the school's strengths and areas for development from a parental perspective;
- help make links with the wider community; and
- capture the unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience that parents can offer.

Each school has outlined its Parent Voice arrangements in **Appendix 1**.

8.2.2 Stakeholder feedback surveys

The Trust co-ordinates a programme of termly stakeholder feedback surveys throughout the academic year to gather the views of parents/carers and students on key aspects of school life. Each survey is linked to a specific aspect of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and forms part of the Trust's assurance and school improvement processes. These surveys are divided into two parts:

- Part A consists of a small number of Trust-wide questions which are common across all schools and enable the Trust's central team to analyse feedback, identify themes and evaluate strengths and areas for development across the Trust. Findings from Part A contribute to the Trust's assurance processes and help inform strategic decision-making and support for schools.
- Part B consists of additional questions determined by individual schools to reflect local priorities, contexts and improvement objectives linked to the termly survey theme. Schools are responsible for analysing and responding to the feedback received through Part B.

Survey findings are reported to the board of trustees and local governing bodies, as appropriate. In addition to the Trust's stakeholder feedback programme, schools may undertake their own local surveys to gather feedback on specific aspects of provision or school improvement priorities. Where areas for development are identified, actions are incorporated into school improvement planning.

Section 9: General points

9.1 Communication with other schools and outside agencies

9.1.1 Outside agencies and other schools

Schools share information with outside professionals or agencies for several reasons. Firstly, schools collaborate with external experts such as educational psychologists, health practitioners and special education professionals in order to provide comprehensive support tailored to the diverse needs of students. These professionals bring specialised knowledge and skills that complement the expertise of school staff, enabling a holistic approach to student well-being. Additionally, sharing information with external professionals fosters a network of support, facilitating early intervention and effective strategies for addressing various challenges students may face,

whether academic, social, or emotional. In addition, information sharing is essential for identifying patterns of behaviour, or circumstances in a child's life that may be evidence that they are at risk of harm or are being harmed and need some form of support or protection; this is outlined in the guidance provided by the Department for Education (click here). The appropriate and secure exchange of personal information between practitioners and other individuals with a responsibility for children is imperative to help keep them safe from harm. This includes times when children move between schools; information will be shared between the sending and receiving school to ensure that children are supported throughout this period of transition.

9.1.2 Reporting incidents to the police

The school works closely with the local community support and designated ward officers. The school will automatically inform the police for the following reasons:

- when the school is the complainant, eg. theft of school property;
- when the school has information relating to illegal drugs – use and/or supplying – or the possession of weapons;
- when a member of staff has been assaulted by a stakeholder (either on or off the school premises)

In situations when there is a physical altercation between students, the school will support parents if they decide to contact the police should they wish to proceed with criminal proceedings by providing all the evidence gained through the school's investigation. In terms of sharing information with the police, the 2018 Data Protection Act (1988) does not apply if the school receives a request that personal information is required for the prevention and/or detection of crime. In addition, information can be shared if school staff believe it is reasonable to do so.

9.1.3 Data protection and sharing information

Details about the types of data held, why that data is held and who it may be passed on to are detailed in each school's privacy policies which are available on the school website for both students and parents. This is a requirement under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). Parents have a right to view the information held at school and are permitted to have contact details of the agencies to which information is passed. This guidance also makes clear that schools do not need to consent to share personal information about a child and/or members of their family if a child is at risk or there is a perceived risk of harm. Schools do need a lawful basis to share information under data protection law but when schools intend to share information as part of action to safeguard a child at possible risk of harm, consent may not be an appropriate basis for sharing. Schools will endeavour to be transparent about decisions to share information and will seek to work cooperatively with a child and their carer(s) wherever possible.

9.2 Parents' knowledge of an incident

If parents withhold information from the school, this will be taken into account if they decide to make representation to the school's headteacher and/or governors, in particular, but not exclusively, as part of the statutory exclusion process and/or the school's complaints policy. If the information is vital to the investigation, the headteacher and governors will apply the same principle as the legal system; senior staff and possibly governors will have to draw an inference as to why parents are not co-operating and a decision will be reached based on the balance of probabilities of the evidence, including the lack of it.

Version history

First issue/revision date	Approved by	Summary of changes if not first issue
July 2026	BoT	Oak Farm has been added to Appendix 1. Section 4.2 has been amended to note the difference between reasonable adjustments and accommodations. Sections 5.1 and 6.3 have had specific examples removed. Sections 7.1 and 7.2 have been updated to ensure alignment with the Trust's attendance policy. Section 8.2.2 has been updated to reflect current Trust-wide practice.
July 2025	BoT	Some words/phrases have been amended throughout the document for clarity or readability. Updates have been made to sections throughout the document to ensure they reflect accurately what is happening in practice.
July 2024	BoT	New protocol (based on a previous school parent communication policy)