

Headteacher Newsletter November 2022 School Communication

Dear parents,

Apologies but this is going to be a long and important communication. It concerns some changes that the school is making in response to the recent Parent Governor Questionnaire and relates to how school shares information with our parents.

One of the key themes raised was the need for improved communication between school and our families. This is something that the leadership team for the school takes very seriously and we have been working hard to find solutions in response to the need to improve communications generally.

In the past we have used the following mechanisms for communication:

- Playground drop off and collection
- The school Office (phone, email, in person)
- The School Website
- The School Blog (on the Website)
- Newsletters and Class Letters

Playground Drop off and Collection

We have changed our morning drop-off routine this term to allow the school day to be extended by 10 minutes per day and to facilitate a calm drop-off. The children have responded very positively and say that 'it is less busy.' Thank you for helping to make this change work so well. We are keen to ensure that parents still feel that they can talk with an adult when necessary and so we are ensuring that there is always a member of the team on duty for urgent messages and the office remains at your disposal if you need to discuss something with the team.

The School BLOG

As you are no doubt aware, Mr Petts has been absent from school for some time. One of the tasks that Mr Petts managed was the administration of our School Blog. Maintaining the Blog has proven both tricky (technically) and time consuming for the team. An audit of the Blog shows that it is not being used regularly and the staff feel that this is an area where improvements can and should be made. Additionally, since the Blog is not sited behind a security 'sign-in' mechanism, some parents were not keen for photos and information about their child to be included on the Blog.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have thus taken the decision that the BLOG is not proving effective as a mechanism for communication with our families. ***The school will discontinue the use of the BLOG and the BLOG site will be removed from the Website.***

The School Office (phone, email, in person)

There are no planned changes to how parents can contact school via the office.

The School Website

The school website has recently been audited by the Governing Board and we are working to update the information and ensure it remains useful to our families and compliant with the Ofsted / DfE requirements. The Website is used to signpost important information for parents about the school and includes published information and signposting. We will continue to maintain our Website and it will continue to have a school diary and relevant information. It is a useful site for Policies and technical information / reports and Governance.

We would like to update the Website in the coming 12-18 months to make it easier for parents to locate information and to ensure that it is easy to maintain. If you have any particular skills in Website Design / Development or Hosting, please do let us know. Any changes will be in the medium term as the current website is compliant and we have limited capacity for additional projects at the moment.

Online Parent Portal (restricted access)

To replace the BLOG and improve how we communicate with parents, we have taken the decision to use **CLASS DOJO** to support home-school communications. Staff have looked at the proposed DOJO system and feel that this will help them to effectively and efficiently give parents a greater insight into what happens in school. We have set up Class Dojo accounts for each teacher and child.

The platform is secure and complies with up to date privacy regulations – see here: [Privacy Policy | ClassDojo](#). The school has carefully considered the risks and benefits of using this on-line platform and further information regarding the security of Class Dojo is available upon request.

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Why Class DOJO?

Class DOJO has many functions and is free. It has been reviewed for GDPR by the Local Authority and they are satisfied that it can be used safely. Many schools, both in the UK and abroad, are already using this system.

Class DOJO can be used as a behaviour system where each child has a monster avatar that earns 'monster points' for positive behaviour and their work in school. This allows children to build rewards and be proud of their successes. It also serves as an information sharing platform: You will be able to access your child's Learning Journey from a computer via <https://classdojo.com> or by using the 'Class Dojo' App on mobile devices. You will only be able to access this by using the log in details that will be given to you on receipt of the signed user agreement attached. Points to note:

- This will only give you access to your own child's account and shared areas
- You can (and should) change your password once you have accessed the account
- Other family members can be given access on your request (please limit this to necessary adults)
- The only people in school with access to your child's account will be the class teacher(s) and teaching assistants using only devices provided by the school

Many of the most meaningful photographs taken in school show children interacting in group play or activities with peers. As this is a closed group, we therefore ask that these photos are for your own viewing and not shared publically or uploaded onto any social media websites. This is in line with our school policies (available to view in school or via our website.)

Failure to uphold this request will result in removing your access to your child's online Learning Journey.

Once you have joined (by invitation link) you will receive notifications every time your child receives a monster point. You will also be able to see 'class stories' from time to time where the teacher will post a little information about what the children have been doing in a particular lesson. Staff will be able to share whole class messages, updates, reminders, photos and videos.

We hope that you find Class Dojo to be a convenient, easy and exciting way of being updated about however child is getting on in school.

Class Dojo also enables you to message the teacher directly. With regards to messaging we would like to clarify how to use the messaging function:

DO

- Do message your child's teacher if you want to share something positive from home or congratulate your child on something they have done in school.
- Do message your child's teacher if you have a small query or would like to find out something simple.
- Do message your child's teacher if your child has any minor worries.
- Do message your child's teacher if they have had a late / disturbed night and a quick 'heads up' – without details would help us to keep a gentle eye on them

DON'T

- Please do not message your child's teacher to notify them of absences or illnesses – this should be done via the school office as normal.
- Please do not use Class Dojo to message about any urgent or serious issues; please use the school office and normal school procedures.
- Do not use DOJO to message about anything personal – we would continue to use email for this
- DO NOT USE DOJO for home rewards / behaviour – please keep this entirely separate and for school use only

Managing DOJO so it works well for all

Lessons that we have learnt from others that will help us to make DOJO fun and effective are:

- Set quiet times or turn notifications off – you do not want your day interrupted un-necessarily. We advise parents to check – in on the system in the morning for urgent messages or in the evening / once a day.
- DOJO will not be used for emergencies – we will continue to phone and use email
- Dojo is best used for quick messages rather than for conversations – please don't be offended if you receive a thumbs up to acknowledge a message rather than a typed response

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- Teachers will always endeavour to reply as quickly as possible. However, school life can be incredibly busy and whilst every effort will be made to reply or acknowledge messages, there may be a slight delay on occasions. Additionally, please do not expect a reply to any messages sent after 4.30pm or at weekends as staff are not expected to check the system out of their working hours.

We hope this clarifies any questions you may have and that you enjoy connecting with us and your children through Class Dojo. When you have returned the user agreement on the next page you will be issued with a user guide and log in details.

Newsletters and Class Letters

Class letters and Newsletters will continue to be distributed to parents regularly. We will aim to provide a Class Newsletter and Headteacher Newsletter every half term. Copies of these will continue to be placed onto the website but will also be sent out via email and on Class DOJO.

We hope that this information is helpful. As always, if you would like any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me via mrsagemell@grindlefordprimaryschool.co.uk or via the office.