Policy: Home-school Agreement

This cover sheet is for information only. Please remove from policy before publishing on your school's website.

Introduction
Previously, home-school agreements were statutory, as set out in sections 110 and 111 of The School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

However, schedule 16 of the Deregulation Act 2015, passed on 26 March 2015, removed the requirement for schools to have a home-school agreement as it omits sections 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

As of 1 January 2016, schools are no longer required to have a home-school agreement in place, however we continue to believe that Home-school agreements assist in the partnership between home and school and therefore this policy is a statutory requirement for all CfBT Schools Trust schools.

A home-school agreement is a statement explaining:
- the school's aims and values
- the school's responsibilities towards its pupils who are of compulsory school age
- the responsibility of each pupil's parents; and
- what the school expects of its pupils.

The Home-School Agreement Policy includes details as to how the school works together with parents towards achieving the best outcomes for children as well as a parental declaration. Schools must take reasonable steps to ensure that all parents of registered pupils sign the parental declaration to indicate that they understand and accept the contents of the Home-School Agreement. Where parents have separated, it is important that, where possible, both parents are given the opportunity to sign a copy of the agreement's parental declaration. Schools can also ask any pupil to sign the Home-School Agreement if they feel that the pupil is of sufficient maturity.

However, schools must not:
- invite a parent or child to sign the parental declaration before the child has been admitted to the school
- make the signing of the parental declaration a condition of the child’s admission to the school; or
- base a decision about admitting a child to the school on assumptions about whether his or her parents are or are not likely to sign the parental declaration
- impose a sanction on parents who do not sign, or on pupils whose parents do not sign the declaration
- impose a sanction on parents who do not abide by the agreement, or on pupils whose parents do not abide by the agreement.

Schools must review the Home-School Agreement from time to time. Before adopting or revising a Home-School Agreement, it is good practice for all parents of registered pupils at the school to be consulted.

Attached to this guidance sheet is a template policy provided for all CST schools. The text in GREEN is adaptable at the discretion of the institution to fit the local context.
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This policy applies to the whole of CfBT Schools Trust (CST), including all schools.

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Aims of this policy
This Home School Agreement Policy encapsulates our belief that parents are a child’s first and most important educators. It is designed to help achieve the highest possible standards of achievement through close communication and effective partnership with parents. At the end of this policy is the Home-School Agreement which parents are asked to read carefully and then sign the declaration.

Scope and publication
This Home-School Agreement Policy applies to all pupils and their parents at Oakbank School. This policy is available on the school website and is provided to all parents and pupils. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required.

Relationship to other policies
This policy relates most closely to the Behaviour and Pupil Registration Policies. It impacts on our approach to the prospectus and our aims and values. It is also relevant to many other school policies.

Ethos of the school
The ethos of the school is to foster positive relationships between all members of the school community, including all pupils, parents and staff. Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination are not tolerated. The school will act fairly in relation to pupils and parents and we expect the same of pupils and parents in relation to the school and its staff.

Communication with parents
Excellent communication with parents is essential to the ethos of the school and is encouraged through a variety of methods:

- the school prospectus and updated website
- the school’s Twitter feeds
- start-of-year meetings for parents/carers to get to know the class teacher and make a note of any future dates, explain any general policies, discuss children’s growing and changing needs
- assemblies: including class, year group, harvest, festivals and celebrations and end of term
- open mornings
- school reports on pupil progress and achievement
- meetings between staff and parents
- letters and reports
- published calendar dates
- displays and notice boards
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- establishing a home / school agreement
Assistance will be provided for parents/carers with any disability or difficulty, including for those parents for whom English is a second language, to assist with communication with the school as required.

Consultation
Regular consultation with parents/carers is also an integral part of the school’s ethos. We always endeavour to take account of the views and feedback of parents and carers.
This will include consultation on general levels of satisfaction with education provision, selected aspects of the school's work and on the impact of specific initiatives.
Methods used will include:
- surveys/questionnaires conducted by the school or commissioned by professional companies and external agents
- face-to-face interviews
- phone interviews
- newsletters
- email

Success criteria
The success criteria for judging the effectiveness of parent/carer engagement strategies are:
- parents/carers feel welcome when they come into the school and report that they have ready access to the staff they need to meet
- parents/carers often give positive feedback and the number of complaints is low
- responses from surveys are strongly supportive
- parents/carers find reports informative and helpful and feel able to support their children’s progress.

Responsibilities and expectations
The school will do its best to:
- communicate and consult with parents as set out above
- regularly celebrate children’s achievements
- encourage children to do their best at all times, to think of themselves and to achieve their full potential
- encourage children to take care of their surroundings and others around them
- care for the children’s safety and general wellbeing
- provide a balanced curriculum and meet each child’s individual needs
- be open, friendly and welcoming at all times and offer parents the chance to become involved in the life of the school
- encourage children to make healthy choices
- operate and enforce a balanced Behaviour Policy and School Rules
- provide structures to support parents/carers and involve them socially as well as educationally in the life of the school.
We require parents/guardians/carers to do their best to:

- ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time
- ensure that the school has up to date contact telephone numbers
- ensure that their child is dressed appropriately for school in line with the School Uniform Policy
- ensure their child has the appropriate equipment for school where possible
- support the school’s guidelines on good behaviour and disciplinary action in line with the school’s Behaviour Policy
- provide a written note or a telephone call to explain an absence
- attend open evenings or review meetings to discuss their child’s progress
- tell the school about any problems at home that might affect their child’s behaviour
- encourage their child with homework and ensure it is completed on time
- encourage and support their child to eat well and make healthy choices
- support their child in responding positively to the general expectations and regulations of the school.

The school expects pupils to do their best to:

- come to school regularly and on time
- be polite, friendly, kind, and helpful to everyone
- act appropriately and follow the school rules and Behaviour Policy
- show respect for the belongings of others and their own work
- work hard at school and do their homework.

Together we will:

1. support pupils’ learning, to help them to achieve their best
2. assist with any special needs
3. encourage pupils to keep the school rules.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Headteacher will ensure that this policy and the agreement are reviewed at least every two years in consultation with parents, pupils, staff and Local Governors.
Appendix 1: Parent/carer consultation meetings – guidance notes

Parent/carer consultation evenings are one of the school's biggest opportunities to communicate with parents/carers. It is essential for any school to make these a success.

**Preparation**
Teachers will be in place well before their first appointment. Teachers will have available for consultation: pupil records, list of appointments, notes, papers, pen and diary.

Staff will have regard to their appearance and that of their surroundings. A professional appearance must be kept at all times; parents/carers need to feel that they can take the teacher’s message seriously.

**Beginning the interview**
For some parents/carers, coming to see teachers creates anxiety. Staff must aim to put parents/carers at their ease (smile, say hello clearly and make sure of their name). Staff will introduce the child’s name into the conversation as quickly as possible to assure the parents/carers that you know him or her.

**Sequence of interview**
Staff should strive to be honest, informative, analytical, constructive and supportive. If members of staff are going to be critical of a pupil, they should begin by mentioning one of his/her strengths. Staff opinion should be clearly supported by evidence and should suggest a constructive way forward.

The interview only lasts a few minutes, so try to shape it. For example: ‘This is where x is now, this is where I think they ought to be going, so these are the steps that x, together with the school and parents/carers ought to be taking to get there.’

An effective parent/carer/school partnership is essential in supporting the child and conveying the same message to him/her. Staff should observe parents/carers closely, and maintain good eye contact, being aware of any feedback, both verbal and non-verbal.

If a parent/carer becomes aggressive or critical, staff should remain calm and professional. Refer him or her to a senior member of staff.

If a pupil is to be told of a decision at the interview, staff and parent/carer should decide clearly who is going to inform the child, and note the action in the minutes of the meeting.

**Ending an interview**
Staff should ensure meetings are kept in a timely fashion. It is unprofessional and inconsiderate to get very behind the schedule and to keep parents/carers waiting long after their appointment.

**Generally**
If staff need to make notes about an interview, this should be done before seeing the next appointment. If staff have promised future contact or actions, these should be noted in the minutes of the meeting and recorded in a diary or calendar.

**Recording discussions**
Each child’s Pupil Record should have a Parent/Carer Interview Sheet attached and any significant remarks or points made at parents’/carers’ evenings, or any casual parent/carer consultations, should be recorded as and when necessary.