

Style guide for parent letters and news

Example College, communications team · school year 2026-2027 · fictional practice document for the Dify guides

1. Who we write for

Our parents are busy, read on their phones, and do not all have English as their first language. A letter from school must be clear at first reading: what is happening, what does it mean for my child, and what do I need to do. A parent who has to phone the school after reading has received a poor letter.

2. Reading level and tone

We write at CEFR level B1: short sentences (twelve words on average), everyday words, one topic per paragraph. Active, not passive: "The form tutor will call you", not "You will be called by the form tutor". Friendly and direct, without padding. No exclamation marks, no capitals for emphasis.

We address parents formally but warmly. Students are referred to by first name or "your child"; in website news "students", never "kids". Staff are addressed by first name.

Avoid	Use instead
utilise, facilitate, in respect of, with regard to	use, arrange, about
educational professional, practitioner	teacher
trajectory, process	approach, plan, period
within the framework of	for, because
you are required to, you are requested to	please, could you
asap, re., w.r.t., n.b.	write the words in full

3. Structure of a parent letter

1. A subject line that says what it is about, at most eight words. Not "Important information", but "Year 8 parents' evening on 8 October".
2. First paragraph: what, when, for whom. In two or three sentences.
3. What it means for you: what changes, what you need to do, by when. Each action on its own line, with a date.
4. Closing: who to contact with questions, with name and email address or phone number. Sign with name and role, not "the management".

A parent letter is at most one A4 page, preferably shorter. Attachments only when there is no other way; the essentials always go in the letter itself.

4. News on the website, the parent app and social media

Website: at most 200 words. Headline of at most eight words; the first paragraph answers who, what, where, when. End with a next step or a way to get in touch.

Parent app: at most 80 words, because parents read this on a phone. One message, one date, one action. No introduction.

Social media (the school's Instagram and LinkedIn): at most 60 words, warm in tone, with the event as the hook. At most three hashtags, always including #ExampleCollege. Photos of students only with consent (see chapter 5).

5. Names, photos and privacy

In news we refer to students by first name only, and never with class and surname together. Students appear recognisably in photos only with parental consent, recorded per school year in the parent portal. Without consent we photograph from behind or focus on hands and work. Grades, absence and support are never mentioned in group messages; those always go in a personal conversation.

6. Who writes and who checks

Form tutors and heads of year write their own letters. Letters to a whole year group or to all parents go past the communications team first. Messages about incidents, safety or the press always go through the school leadership; never publish those yourself.

7. Contact

Communications team, Example College: communications@examplecollege.example, on school days from 8.30 to 16.00.