

# The Bromfords School



## Communication Policy

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| <b>COMPILED BY: MR J TREE</b>  | <b>Issue: 1</b>                    |
| <b>APPROVED BY: <u>T Parfett</u></b><br>Chair, Local Governing Body<br>Date: June 2022 | <b>REVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 2023</b> |

## **Aims**

We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on students' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child/children.
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers.
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs.

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication through:

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers.
- Setting clear standards for responding to communication from parents/carers.
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible.

Staff, students and parents/carers have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. Conduct at all times should encapsulate our core ethos of aspiring to be the best we can be, in all that we do.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### *Headteacher*

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate.
- Regularly reviewing this policy.

### *Staff*

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

To protect work-life balance, there is no expectation that staff will respond to communications outside of school hours or their working hours (if they work part-time), or during weekends or school holidays.

## Home-School Communication

*Please note that in the event of any local and national crisis, or school closure, communications with the school will be subject to amendment. Online and virtual platforms will be utilized, and person-to-person presence may be limited according to local and national government guidance.*

There are two main avenues of communication into school that a parent/carer may pursue should they feel the need to do so.

Pastoral matters relating to the welfare and wellbeing of your child

1. Contact your child's Form Tutor in the first instance.
2. The next stage of contact would be with your child's Head of Year (*this does not apply to Sixth Form*).
3. The next stage of contact would be with the Director of Key Stage 3, 4 or 5.
4. The next stage of contact would be a with further designated Senior Leader.
5. The next stage of contact would be with the Deputy Headteacher
6. The next stage of contact would be with the Headteacher.

Subject matters relating to your child's classroom learning and progress

1. Contact your child's class teacher in the first instance.
2. The next stage of contact would be with subject's Head of Department.
3. The next stage of contact would be with the subject's Head of Faculty.
4. The next stage of contact would be a with a designated Senior Leader.
5. The next stage of contact would be with the Deputy Headteacher.
6. The next stage of contact would be with the Headteacher.

Following these pathways of communication will help to have your point, issue or concern heard, dealt with and resolved as quickly and as effectively as possible.

A reminder that you can email the school via [office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk](mailto:office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk) and the main switchboard number is 01268 471201.

If sending an email into school, please note that staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work email to be checked during a member of staff's personal time. Our guidance is that staff should only be sending email communications on weekdays between the hours of 7am and 7pm but there is no expectation that staff will respond to communications outside of school hours or their working hours (if they work part-time), or during weekends or school holidays. We aim to respond to you as soon as possible **and within two working days**. Please note that part-time staff may take longer to reply.

When phoning the school, office staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible. If a call is urgent, please inform the receptionist who will attempt to find the Head of Year to speak to you. Once again, we will try to respond to you within two working days, if not the same day. **Please note lessons will not be interrupted for teachers to take calls.**

We will listen to your concerns and try our best to resolve them. Staff, alongside parents and students, have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and we expect conversations to be conducted in cordial terms, even if you are unhappy with the school.

## **Meetings**

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is managed by the person who is placed closest to them. Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff and should follow the structure outlined on the previous page.

If you *urgently* need to see someone, for instance if there is a **serious family emergency** or a **child protection issue**, please phone ahead and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see you.

For non-urgent meetings we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

## **Meeting conduct expectations**

As with conversations, we expect meetings to be conducted in cordial terms, even if you are unhappy with the school. We will listen to your concerns and try to resolve them. You will be expected to use a cordial and low tone, and not raise your voice towards the staff. **You are not permitted to record the meeting.** You do not have our consent to record meetings, and if you do so covertly the Governing Body will not allow you to use any such recordings as evidence in a complaint.

According to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), it is not a criminal offence for a private citizen to make a recording in secret provided it is for personal use only. However, if the recording is then shared without consent of the participants, sold to a third party, or released in the public domain without the consent of the participants, this might then become a criminal offence.

If the staff cannot immediately resolve your concern, they will give you a timeframe for when they will feed back to you. A set of brief notes will be kept of the meeting. A copy of these notes can be sent to parents on request. Ground rules that support a conducive and productive environment which are based on:

- Letting everyone participate
- Listening with an open mind
- Thinking before speaking
- Attacking the problem and not the person

## **Contacting You**

Our preferred method of contacting you for generic events (trips, school closures, special reminders, detention notification etc.) is via email or text message. If your child is not present for morning registration, and you have not advised us of the reason for absence our attendance team will contact you.

In addition, staff may contact you by phone or email, in order to discuss progress and behaviour or arrange a meeting.

Please ensure your email settings allow receipt of emails from the school so that communication is not automatically directed into your Junk/Spam folder of your inbox.

## **No Response**

If you have not received a response from the school within three working days, please contact the school by emailing [office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk](mailto:office@bromfords.essex.sch.uk) and we will chase up your enquiry. Communication with parents and carers is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

## School Website & Social Media

The Bromfords School observes the DfE guidance as detailed in '[What academies, free schools and colleges must publish online](#)' (February 2021). We use our school website, [www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk](http://www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk) to inform parents of school dates, calendar events, policies and procedures and subject information and generic educational information.

The school has a number of social media accounts;

- Our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/bromfordsschool>
- Our Twitter account [@bromfordsschool](https://twitter.com/bromfordsschool)
- Our Instagram page - <https://www.instagram.com/bromfordsschool/>

These are information only **and direct messages will not be responded to**. Parents should contact the school through the communication pathways previously referenced in this policy.

## Newsletter

Parents will also receive the link via email to our half-termly school newsletter

## Social Media

### *Expectations*

In line with Compass Education Trust's Code of Conduct and our Positive Behaviour Policy, the expectations regarding safe and responsible use of social media applies to all members of The Bromfords School community. The term social media may include (but is not limited to): social networking sites, blogs, wikis, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatroom and instant messenger. All members of The Bromfords School are expected to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner.

- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is not permitted.
- All members of The Bromfords School community are advised not to publish specific and detailed private thoughts, concerns, pictures or messages on any social media services, especially content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others.
- We will control student and staff access to social media whilst using school provided devices and systems on site.
- Inappropriate or excessive use of social media during school hours or whilst using school devices may result in disciplinary or legal action and/or removal of internet facilities.
- Concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of The Bromfords School community on social media should be reported to the DSL (or deputies) and will be managed in accordance with our anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour and child protection policies.

### *Staff Personal Use of Social Media*

- The safe and responsible use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites will be discussed with all members of staff as part of staff induction and will be revisited and communicated via regular staff training opportunities.
- Safe and professional behaviour will be outlined for all members of staff (including volunteers) as part of our code of conduct/behaviour policy and as part of acceptable use policy.

## *Reputation*

- All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within the school.
- Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or institution into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.
- All members of staff are advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media sites. Advice will be provided to staff via staff training and by sharing appropriate guidance and resources on a regular basis. This will include (but is not limited to):
  - Setting the privacy levels of their personal sites.
  - Being aware of location sharing services.
  - Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
  - Logging out of accounts after use.
  - Keeping passwords safe and confidential.
  - Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as that of the school.
- Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of The Bromfords School on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school, and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post online and to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance with our policies and the wider professional and legal framework.
- Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about students and their family members or colleagues will not be shared or discussed on social media sites.
- Members of staff will notify the Senior Leadership Team immediately if they consider that any content shared on social media sites conflicts with their role.

## *Communicating with Students and Parents/Carers*

All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add as 'friends' any current or past students or their family members via any personal social media sites, applications or profiles. Any pre-existing relationships or exceptions that may compromise this, will be discussed with DSL (or deputies) and/or the Headteacher.

If ongoing contact with students is required once they have left the school, members of staff will be expected to use existing alumni networks or use official school provided communication tools. Staff will not use personal social media accounts to contact students or parents/carers, nor should any contact be accepted, except in circumstance whereby prior approval has been given by the Headteacher. Any communication from students and parents/carers received on personal social media accounts will be reported to the DSL (or deputies).

## *Students' Personal Use of Social Media*

- Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to students as part of an embedded and progressive education approach, via age-appropriate sites and resources.
- Any concerns regarding students' use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with existing policies, including anti-bullying, peer on peer and behaviour.
- Concerns will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly when concerning underage use of social media sites, games or tools.
- Students will be advised:
  - To consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
  - To only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others, by making profiles private.

- Not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other responsible adult's permission and only when a trusted adult is present.
- To use safe passwords.
- To use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
- How to block and report unwanted communications.
- How to report concerns both within the school and externally.

### **Communications from Staff**

The use of personal email addresses by staff for any official school business is not permitted. All members of staff are provided with an email address to use for all official communication. Staff are encouraged to use MS Teams to contact students, using their school login details only. Members of staff are encouraged to have an appropriate work life balance when responding to emails/using MS Teams and guidance is that communication is only sent between the hours of 7am and 7pm on weekdays only. Staff can use the option within Office365 of delaying the sending of an email message if they wish to compose emails outside of these times.

#### *Reminders for Staff*

- All language and content should follow professional etiquette standards at all times.
- If you are unsure of the tone/content/spelling/grammar in a communication, be it to an internal or an external audience, you should ask your line manager for support before sending.
- Staff must follow all safeguarding and professional standards at all times in the actions and content within their communication.
- Staff can use the communication tools of email and MS Teams in any school sanctioned communication process, but must not engage in phone calls, social media platforms, etc directly with students.
- If staff are concerned about any aspect of correspondence with any student, the DSL (or deputies) should be contacted immediately.
- If a student fails to follow the agreed protocols, staff MUST stop all correspondence and inform the DSL (or deputies) that you have done so.

### **Student email**

- Students will use provided email and MS Teams accounts for educational purposes only.
- Students will be made aware of the expectations and the 'responsible internet and network usage' policy through the Home-School Agreement signed by the parent/student on joining the school and will receive education regarding safe and appropriate email/MS Teams etiquette throughout their time in school.

### **Remote Learning**

The school will use Microsoft Teams for 'live lesson' video conferencing, when remote learning provision is required. Staff should refer to the updated Remote Learning Policy, April 2022, for further information and advice on setting up and delivering lessons via MS Teams alongside related safeguarding protocols.

## Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones

The Bromfords School recognises that personal communication through mobile technologies is an accepted part of everyday life for staff, students and parents/carers, but technologies need to be used safely and appropriately within the school.

### *Expectations*

All use of personal devices (including but not limited to tablets, games consoles and 'smart' watches) and mobile phones will take place in accordance with the law and other appropriate policies, such as anti-bullying, behaviour and child protection.

- Electronic devices of any kind that are brought onto site are the responsibility of the user/owner.
  - All members of The Bromfords School community are advised to take steps to protect their mobile phones or devices from loss, theft or damage. **We accept no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of such items on our premises.**
  - All members of The Bromfords School community are advised to use passwords/pin numbers to ensure that unauthorised calls or actions cannot be made on their phones or devices; passwords and pin numbers should be kept confidential and mobile phones and personal devices should not be shared.
- Mobile phones should be used appropriately and within the law, the use of the video, picture taking and audio recording facilities of mobile phones may not be used at all on the school premises, if they are the phone will be confiscated and parent/carers may be contacted depending on what has been captured/recorded.
- The sending of abusive or inappropriate messages or content via mobile phones or personal devices is forbidden by any member of the community; any breaches will be dealt with as part of our behaviour policy.
- All members of The Bromfords School are advised to ensure that their mobile phones and personal devices do not contain any content, which may be offensive, derogatory or would otherwise contravene our behaviour or child protection policies.

### *Staff Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones*

Members of staff will ensure that use of personal phones and devices takes place in accordance with the law, as well as, relevant policy and procedures, such as: confidentiality, child protection, data security and acceptable use.

- Staff will be advised to:
  - Keep mobile phones and personal devices in a safe and secure place during lesson time.
  - Keep mobile phones and personal devices switched off or switched to 'silent' mode during lesson times.
  - Ensure that Bluetooth or other forms of communication (such as 'airdrop') are disabled during the school day.
  - Not use personal devices during teaching periods, unless written permission has been given by the Headteacher, such as in emergency circumstances.
  - Ensure that any content brought onto site via mobile phones and personal devices are compatible with their professional role and expectations.
  - Members of staff are not permitted to use their own personal phones or devices for contacting students or parents/carers.
  - Any pre-existing relationships, which could undermine this, will be discussed with the DSL (or deputies) and/or Headteacher.
- Staff will not use personal devices to take photos or videos of students and will only use work-provided equipment for this purpose. lessons or educational activities.
- If a member of staff breaches our policy, action will be taken in line with our code of conduct.



- If a member of staff is thought to have illegal content saved or stored on a mobile phone or personal device or have committed a criminal offence, the police will be contacted.

#### *Students' Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones*

Students will be educated regarding the safe and appropriate use of personal devices and mobile phones and will be made aware of boundaries and consequences.

- Our behaviour policy clearly states that we expect students' personal devices and mobile phones to be switched off and out of site during lessons and at any time during the school day in the school building.
- Students are therefore permitted to bring in mobile devices for their use on the journey to and from school.
- Additionally, mobile phones are only allowed to be used by students during break and lunchtime **in our outside spaces**. If a device is seen or heard inside the building during the school day, staff will confiscate these items and pass to Student Reception for students to collect at the end of the day if they comply with the member of staff's request.
- If students do not comply with staff the confiscated phone will have to be collected by the parent/carer.
- Students whose phone has been confiscated persistently will be addressed by staff and contact will be made to discuss next steps which could result in the device being banned from school premises.
- If a student needs to contact their parents/carers they will be expected to request use a school phone in the first instance.
- Parents are advised to contact their child via the school office; exceptions may be permitted on a case-by-case basis, as approved by the Headteacher.
- Mobile phones or personal devices will not be used by students during lessons or formal educational time unless as part of an approved and directed curriculum-based activity with consent from a member of staff. The use of personal mobile phones or devices for a specific education purpose does not mean that blanket use is permitted. If members of staff have an educational reason to allow students to use their mobile phones or personal devices as part of an educational activity, it will only take place when approved by the Senior Leadership Team.
- **Mobile phones and personal devices must not be taken into internal or external examinations.** Students found in possession of a mobile phone or personal device during an external exam will be reported to the appropriate examining body. This may result in the withdrawal from either that examination or all examinations.
- If a student breaches the policy, the phone or device will be confiscated and will be held in a secure place.
- Staff may confiscate a student's mobile phone or device if they believe it is being used to contravene our behaviour or bullying policy or could contain youth produced sexual imagery (sexting).
- Searches of mobile phone or personal devices will only be carried out in accordance with the following guidance [www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-andconfiscation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-andconfiscation)
  - Students' mobile phones or devices may be searched by a member of the leadership team. Note that Section 15 of the above document gives schools the authority to 'examine or erase the data or files without consent if they suspect that the file on the on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or break the school rules.
  - Content may be deleted or requested to be deleted if it contravenes our policies. Mobile phones and devices that have been confiscated will be released to parents or carers.
  - If there is suspicion that material on a student's personal device or mobile phone may be illegal or may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence, the device will be handed over to the police for further investigation.

### **Visitors' Use of Personal Devices and Mobile Phones**

- Parents/carers and visitors (including volunteers and contractors) must use their mobile phones and personal devices in accordance with our acceptable use policy and other associated policies, such as: anti-bullying, behaviour, child protection and image use.
- We will ensure appropriate signage and information is displayed and provided to inform parents/carers and visitors of expectations of use.
- Members of staff are expected to challenge visitors if they have concerns and will always inform the DSL (or deputies) or Headteacher of any breaches our policy.

### **Officially provided mobile phones and devices**

- School mobile phones and devices will be suitably protected via a passcode/password/pin and must only be accessed or used by members of staff to which it is allocated.
- School mobile phones and devices will always be used in accordance with the acceptable use policy and associated policies, such as: anti-bullying, behaviour, child protection and image use.