

Bierton CE Combined School



Parent / Carer / School Communication Policy

Date: September 2023

Aim:

Bierton CE Combined School recognises the importance of maintaining lines of communication with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies and within the school. Good Communication between all these groups is essential and Bierton CE Combined School is committed to being clear, professional, timely and appropriate to all who have an interest in the school.

Children achieve more when everyone works together. Parents, Carers, Governors and friends of the school can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. Effective communication will improve relationships within the school and promote partnerships with parents and the wider community.

This policy addresses the main ways in which Bierton CE Combined School ensures effective, consistent and coherent external and internal communication.

Objectives:

All communication at Bierton CE Combined School should:

- Keep staff, students, parents and carers, governors and the wider community well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within an agreed time frame.
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies Eg. Safeguarding, confidentiality, Health and Safety, Disruptive Visitors and Equalities.
- Be in accordance with GDPR policies.

Definition of Communication:

The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

Oxford Dictionary

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Disruptive Visitors Policy
- The Health and Safety Policy
- The Behaviour Policy

The Governing Board of Bierton CE Combined School acts to ensure that our school remains a safe place for pupils, staff and all other members of the school community. Abuse, threatening behaviour or violence against school staff, or other members of the school community is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Disruptive Visitors Policy July 2019.

Buckinghamshire County Council sets out the following guidelines:

Our staff are here to help you.

We would remind you that violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated.

The County Council will take legal action against and may withdraw service from anyone who verbally or physically assaults a member of staff.

Methods of Communicating:

Letters:

Staff will endeavour to reply to parents' letters as quickly as possible. Letters will be acknowledged in three working days and a reply sent within ten working days. Replies may be in the form of a letter to parents or may be via another form of communication. Letters sent to parents must be approved by a member of the senior leadership team before posting. Copies of correspondence with parents along with the original letter from parents will be placed in children's files.

Email:

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information, however, it can be difficult to distinguish between formal and informal communication. All emails from parents should be sent to the school office email address office@biertoncombined.bucks.sch.uk and not directly to individual members of staff. All emails received from parents will be acknowledged within 72 hours of receipt of the email during term time only and not including weekends. A response to the email will be within 5 working days by either email, telephone or letter. This may include informing the sender that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case, staff will indicate a timeframe in which a response should be expected.

Staff will not be expected to monitor or respond to emails outside of their normal working hours (including weekends and published school holidays).

Under no circumstances should staff contact students, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses.

Whilst this is rare, if a member of staff receives an email which is of an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassing, they will refer this to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will decide if consideration needs to be given to dealing with further communication under the schools Personal Safety in the Workplace Policy which includes abusive phone calls, text messages, notes and e-mails in its definition of non-physical violence.

All incidents of aggression and violence, physical or otherwise will be reported, investigated and appropriate action taken. Safe systems of working will be introduced and reviewed and staff will be supported.

Copies of emails and responses to emails will be recorded on CPOMS with the member of staff clearly demonstrating the date of the communication, the people involved in the communication, how the communication came in to the school (Eg. Via the office email) and the wording within the emails.

Telephone Calls:

Teaching Staff's first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning and ensure they are prepared for lessons. They therefore are highly unlikely to be able to come to the phone when a parent calls the school. If a parent telephones the school, they can

leave a message with a member of the office staff for another member of staff. Teachers will return parent phone calls within 48 hours (not including weekends or published school holidays.)

Staff should take notes about the content of telephone calls. Detailed notes from telephone calls, including main points of discussion and action required / taken should be kept on CPOMS.

Face to Face Meetings with Parents:

Any parent wishing to meet with a member of staff should contact the school in advance and request a meeting with the member of staff. This request should be responded to within the above time periods depending on the method of communication used for the request. Parents should not come to the school to talk to a member of staff without a prior appointment, the member of staff may still choose to meet with them, but there is no expectation they do so. Parents, like all visitors, should report to the main office and sign in, prior to meeting with a member of staff. If the meeting is scheduled to take place outside of the main office hours, then the member of staff will make arrangements to meet the parent at the main office and sign them in.

If a meeting with a parent is taking place before or after school, the staff member should ensure that another colleague is nearby and aware that they have a meeting. It is perfectly acceptable for a member of staff to call a meeting to a close in order to allow time for further investigation.

Staff should draw a meeting to a close in the event of the parent becoming angry or abusive. The member of staff should report such an incident to a member of the Senior Leadership Team and seek further advice. A member of the leadership Team will then either accompany the member of staff to a further meeting with the parent or hold it without the original staff member present.

If a staff member feels uncomfortable meeting a parent (for any reason) they may request for another member of staff to be present at the meeting. If a parent has a history of making accusations against members of staff or a history of abusive or angry behaviour then the member of staff must ensure they have another member of staff present and that minutes are taken of the meeting during the meeting.

Where a complaint has been received by a parent/carer, and where the school feels it is appropriate to do so, an additional member of staff may be in attendance at any meeting to protect both parties from any issues with mis-communication.

All meetings with parents should be recorded on CPOMS noting down the key areas discussed, the members of staff present and the actions taken or actions required as a result of the meeting.

Parents should be aware that schools have the right, under trespass laws, to bar someone causing nuisance or disturbance from the site. This action would only be taken in extreme situations including for example, if the school considers that aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or pupils. It is enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened.

Where a complaint has been made by a parent/carer and where the Governors feel it is appropriate, the parent/carer may not be allowed on school premises except to collect/drop off a child/ren or to attend a complain meeting. The aim of this is to protect both parties from issues with mis-communication.

Social Networking Sites / Blogs etc:

Staff will not communicate with students via any social networking site or accept them as 'friends'. Staff will not communicate with parents regarding any aspect of schooling via social networking sites. The exception is networks set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning.

ParentMail Communication:

The school staff will send out information and reminders to parents using ParentMail as the main form of communication. ParentMail allows parents to receive information direct to their email address or phone via the APP.

Parents are not able to communicate back with the school via ParentMail, instead they should use one of the other forms of communication described above.

PurpleMash:

PurpleMash is a platform for the sharing of work. Staff will set children's homework using the PurpleMash Platform and children will upload their completed work back on to the platform for marking. Children will also be able to share pictures of them completing other activities outside of school for their Teacher to see.

All work uploaded to PurpleMash will be acknowledged by a member of staff with a 'like'. One piece of work a week will also have a comment written in response to the child's work. Staff will ensure that across the weeks they write comments on a range of different subjects of work. Staff will check the work before the next set of homework is set.

Tapestry:

In Nursery and Reception Classes, Tapestry will be used to share observations of children in their learning. Photographs of children, along with a short comment, will be sent via tapestry for the parents to view. Parents can also upload photographs to Tapestry to share children's achievements outside of school.

In Nursery, staff are expected to share two photographs with comments on the activities for each child, each week. In Reception, staff are expected to share one photograph with a comment about the activity for each child per week.

Summary of Communication and Response Times:

Communications sent over the weekend or during published school holidays will not be responded to until school opening hours where the time periods suggested will then begin.

Method of Communicating	Suggested Time Scale
Letters	Acknowledged within three working days Responded to within ten working days
Emails	Acknowledged within 72 hours. Responded to within 5 working days.
Telephone Calls	Returned within 48hours
Face to Face Meetings	Appointments requested in advance via phone call or email and responded to within the above time periods.

Parents and carers are entitled to certain information under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, within a statutory time frame. However, persistent correspondents may cause a significant level of disruption in the school. In this situation, schools can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, they can limit the number of times the parent can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term.

Types of Communication from School:

Whole School Newsletters – A whole School newsletter will be sent out to parents on ParentMail to keep parents informed of whole school strengths and areas for development. The newsletter will also include reminders of upcoming dates. A copy of the whole school newsletter will be placed on the school website.

Class / Year Group Newsletters – Once a Month, class/year group newsletters will be sent out to parents to share what the children have been learning, what areas of learning are coming up, reminders about homework set and further reminders about key dates. These newsletters will be sent out via ParentMail and a copy of the newsletter placed on the school's website.

Calendar of Events – A list of key dates for the school events will be sent out once a term to keep parents informed and up to date with events happening within the school.

Information about Curriculum Trips – Information about trips to enrich the teaching and learning opportunities for the children will be sent out via ParentMail. Contributions and Parent Consent will also be sought through ParentMail. Staff will try to ensure parents are given as much notice as possible for any enrichment trips.

Curriculum Clubs – Letters detailing the curriculum clubs on offer before and after school will be sent out on ParentMail and parents can place their preferences on ParentMail Forms. Parents will be notified if their child has got a place via ParentMail. Curriculum club details will be sent out at the beginning of each term to share the clubs on offer for that term.

Letters from the FOBS Team –Electronic copies will also be sent out using ParentMail to alert parents to the information and forms on Parentmail will be used for any replies. Letters involving FOBS events will be sent out to provide parents with as much notice as is possible.

Annual Consent Letters – Each year, under the new GDPR act, parents are asked to update and complete annual consent letters. These will be sent home on paper – usually on a coloured piece of paper to make them stand out. Parents are to return these letters to the school as quickly as possible.

Parents Evening Appointments Booking Forms – Appointments for Parents Evening discussions with teachers will be booked using School Cloud. Parents will book an appointment and then the meeting itself will take place virtually on school cloud.

Communication following a minor injury – An email from MedicalTracker will be sent to parents following any trips to first aid. This will go to the email addresses provided for Priority 1 and Priority 2 contacts for the child. If the child has suffered a small bump to the head at any point in the day, the class teacher will endeavour to catch the parent in person at pick up time to inform them and discuss how they have presented during the rest of the day.

Communication following a major injury – If a child has a major injury which requires further medical attention then a phone call will be made to the parents. The school will try to contact the priority parent initially and will then work their way through the contact list provided. Depending on the severity of the injury, the school will seek further medical advice from an ambulance or take the child to hospital. In these cases, we will keep the parent updated throughout until the parent is able to join their child.

Communication due to a child suffering with illness – If a child becomes unwell at school and it is deemed that they need to go home for some rest and to recuperate, or if a child has been sick, a phone call will be made to the parents.

School closures – Where an incident affects the whole school community such as a power failure, water failure or snow fall, the school will send out an email and a text message using ParentMail. A message will also be placed on the county council website for school closures.

Serious Incident - In the unlikely event of a more serious incident, the response will, inevitably, depend on the circumstances. The first and greatest priority will always be to look after the students. The second priority will be to give parents the fullest possible account of events as soon as possible; Bierton CE Combined School

will always tell parents/carers personally if their son or daughter is injured, or has suffered some mishap unless the emergency services take this responsibility and instruct otherwise.

Other forms of communications – Where letters require a reply, these will usually be sent out on paper to allow parents to complete the reply slip. Letters that are informing parents of information and updates will be sent out via ParentMail for reference.

The school cannot get involved in disputes between parents in the event of separation or divorce. All correspondence and information will be sent to all holders of parental responsibility (letters, school reports, calendar, invitations to school events) unless there is a court order to the contrary. We can usually arrange for separate appointments at Parents' Evenings if required. The interest of the student must always be paramount and it is important that parents agree on decisions to avoid the child or the school being involved in disputes including, for example, participation in school trips.

School Website:

- Bierton CE Combined School website provides a range of information about the school.
- Bierton CE Combined School updates its website regularly to inform all members of the school and local community.
- Bierton CE Combined School is aware of the statutory requirement for schools to ensure key documents and data are available on the website.

Parental Volunteering:

Any parents wishing to volunteer at the school are asked to complete a volunteer application form and provide appropriate referees. Whilst we welcome and encourage parents to volunteer with a range of opportunities at the school, there may be occasions where it is not appropriate and a decision is made by the Headteacher and the Governors to politely decline an offer of volunteering.

Parents' Responsibility:

Parents have a responsibility to ensure the school has up to date contact details including an email address at all times. If any of the parents/carers contact details change, the parent is responsible for putting this in writing and signing to say they agree to the changes being made on the school database.

Freedom of Information:

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities. It does this in two ways:
 - public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities;
 - Members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.
- As well as responding to requests for information, Bierton CE Combined School must publish information proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by the scheme.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly monitored and will be reviewed in September 2024.