

**The Federation of Broughton and West Tytherley Primary
Schools**



PARENT COMMUNICATION POLICY

March 2023

Federation of Broughton and West Tytherley Primary Schools

Parent Communication Policy

This Parent Communication Policy aims to set out the methods of communication available to parents for contacting the school and our expectations of parents, staff and pupils when engaging with the school.

Why do we have a Parent Communication Policy?

Our duty of safeguarding the children under our care – and protecting other members of the school community – is one of our most important responsibilities. Good, respectful communications are an essential part of that responsibility.

We encourage clear, open communication links with parents as we believe it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. It provides parents with the information they need to support their child's education and helps to build a partnership between home and school. Such communication can be entirely positive and practical – for example to seek information, ask a question, clear up a misunderstanding or to draw attention to a matter. Sometimes there is a need to resolve an issue, misunderstanding, or complaint.

We already have well-established processes for interacting positively with parents, which include:

- availability of staff at drop off and pick up throughout the year.
- Responding to emails and phone calls in a timely manner.
- fortnightly newsletters.
- regular blog posts and other website news and updates.
- regular parent evenings.
- school reports.

Our approach, through all these is to make sure we can engage constructively with all parents. We recognise that circumstances can arise that can be emotional and challenging for parents and staff to work through. Nonetheless, we expect all our community to show mutual respect. We have clear expectations and guidelines on behaviour for all members of our community. This includes members of teaching staff (through the staff code of conduct) and pupils (through our Behaviour policy). We also expect parents to engage constructively with school staff and to work together with them in the best interests of our children.

This Communication Policy seeks to support that constructive approach by:

- Setting out methods for effective communication between parents and members of staff.
- Providing information on the timescales for communication.

- Illustrating examples of unacceptable behaviour and the possible actions that could be taken if unacceptable behaviours arise.

There may be occasions when issues cannot readily be resolved through effective communication between parents and the school, and if issues remain unresolved following positive engagement, parents can issue a complaint. One of the aims of this policy is to minimize the risk of complaints arising. However, if they do, the school's Complaints Policy, available on the school website, sets out the process that should be followed. Stage 1 of the policy suggests that other forms of communication can often help in resolving issues and we encourage parents to use these routes.

Key terms

We use the term 'parents' in this policy to refer to:

- Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil.
- Anyone caring for a child at the school (such as grandparents or child-minders).

The term 'member of staff' as referred to in this policy includes:

- Anyone employed by the school.
- Anyone training in a professional capacity at the school.
- Governors (when acting in this capacity).
- Volunteers at the school (when acting in this capacity).
- Anyone employed through an external agency, acting in a professional capacity on the school site.

POLICY PROVISIONS

We will only communicate with parents in respect of their own child at the school. Requests to raise a concern on behalf of another parent will be declined, as will be requests for information about another child. Should any correspondence be received from legal advisers, this will be shared with the school's legal advisers.

Methods of communication with the school

For routine communications with the school, the following guidance will apply.

Meetings

Face-to-face conversations are generally the best way of communicating with the school at drop off or pick up for quick, short messages.

When a member of staff is not able to speak to a parent immediately, or face-to-face due to school commitments, or a longer conversation is better, a request for an appointment can be made to discuss the matter either in person or by telephone, at a later date. The school will aim to arrange that meeting within two working days.

Please note that outside teaching hours, all staff have additional duties which they perform either before school, during break/lunch or after school so availability of staff outside of teaching hours should not be assumed.

If a meeting is requested, the Headteacher will decide which member of staff is best suited and best placed to attend.

Email

Parents are welcome to email the school about non-urgent issues in the first instance. The appropriate emails are:

adminoffice@broughton.hants.sch.uk

adminoffice@west-tytherley.hants.sch.uk

Emails will be most helpful if they are factual and concise and explain concerns in a clear way. Lengthy and overly detailed accounts, or those that use inflammatory language, can make it more difficult to understand what is being explained and to respond in a timely or clear way.

The school will aim to respond within two working days. If a response is unable to be provided within this timeline, which can be to ensure a full and considered response, then a revised timeline will be given. We ask that parents await a response from the school and that further emails are not sent pending that response, unless the new deadline has passed.

Phone calls

If a query or concern is time-sensitive and urgent, parents should call the school office. In most circumstances, teaching and leadership staff are unlikely to be immediately available to receive calls due to teaching and other commitments. The numbers to call are:

Broughton school office: 01794 310286

West Tytherley school office: 01794 340338

If the query or concern is not time-sensitive and urgent, parents should email or call the school office and the relevant member of staff will aim to contact them within two working days. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), a response will be made to schedule a phone call at a convenient time.

For general enquiries, please call or email the school office.

Social media

The school cannot respond to concerns raised via social media.

Where the social media site is run by the school, comments will be removed if they do not meet the criteria of the social media site.

Should the school be made aware of any physical threats or abusive behaviour towards members of staff or children on social media, the school will report this to the police and will seek the immediate removal of this content from the site.

Communication during school hours/ working days

Staff will aim to respond to communication during core school hours or their working hours (if they work part-time).

Parents should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside core school hours or during half-term or school holidays.

Staff may choose to work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside these hours, but they are not expected to do so.

Types of unacceptable communication and behaviour

We consider some forms of communication and some types of behaviour unacceptable in all interactions between parents, members of staff and pupils. The list below is not exhaustive but seeks to provide illustrations of behaviour that has no place in our school community:

- The use of highly personal, or judgmental language in written or verbal interactions.
- Any physical aggression e.g., slapping, hitting, punching and kicking.
- Physical intimidation – such as standing very close to an individual.

- Aggressive hand gestures, including finger pointing.
- Spitting.
- Shaking or making a fist.
- Shouting (either in person on school grounds, over the telephone or over video conferencing).
- Swearing, or using offensive language including derogatory language about a protected group or characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Making threatening or offensive comments. This can include verbal comments, via texts, emails, or social media.
- Sending abusive messages via text, email or social media.
- Sending a large volume of emails in respect of the same matter over a short period of time.
- Continuing to raise the same issue despite it having been already addressed.
- Posting defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments on social media platforms.
- Disrupting, or threatening to disrupt, school operations (including events on the school grounds and sports team matches).
- Not conforming to the school's security procedures.
- Covertly recording phone calls or meetings.

Actions that may be taken as a result of unacceptable behaviour and communication

In the first instance, (if the unacceptable behaviour has occurred on site) the school will ask those involved to desist and/or leave the site if necessary. If the behaviour is of a serious nature, then the police will be contacted.

Thereafter the school (Headteacher/Member of School Leadership team) will gather information on allegations of unacceptable behaviour. This may include talking to the parties concerned or others as witnesses to the behaviour.

If unacceptable behaviour by a parent is thought to have occurred, the school may take the following actions, dependent on the severity/gravity of the behaviour:

- The parent will be told verbally that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
- The parent will be told in writing that his / her behaviour is considered to be unacceptable and, if it is not modified, the school will take further action.
- Advising the parent that all future meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and will be minuted.
- Putting in place a contact plan to deal with any communication between the individual and school. For example, except in emergencies, communication to the school must be in writing only to a named individual and the school can set out timescales for school responses.
- A warning letter or an immediate ban from the school site.

- Contacting the police where behaviour is criminal in nature.
- Seeking advice from the local authority's legal team regarding further action.

If unacceptable staff behaviour is considered to have occurred, the member of staff will be subject to the measures and sanctions set out in the staff code of conduct and in the terms and conditions of their employment.

The school will always seek to respond to any incident in a proportionate way.

The final decision on how to respond to the unacceptable behaviour and communication rests with the Headteacher and, where necessary, the Governing Body.