SIR WILLIAM BORLASE'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Communication Policy

Senior Lead Review: James Simpson, Deputy Headteacher

Committee: HR

Review Date: September 2020
Next Review: September 2023

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1. Aims

1.1. At Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, we aim to have clear and effective communication between staff and with students, parents, governors, wider members of the school community and the general public.

1.2. We aim to ensure our communications are accurate, accessible and represent information about the school appropriately. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

1.3. We believe that effective communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

    1.3.1. Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education

    1.3.2. Helps the school improve through feedback and consultation with parents/carers

    1.3.3. Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

1.4. We believe that effective communication between the school and members of the wider school community and the general public has a positive impact on the school because it:

    1.4.1. Presents a positive view of the school and its work to prospective parents/carers, prospective employees and prospective supporters

    1.4.2. Maintains the high reputation of the school at a local and national level

2. Objectives

2.1. Keep staff, students, parents and other stakeholders well informed

2.2. Be open, honest, ethical and professional

2.3. Be easily understood by all

2.4. Be written with appropriate language and tone

2.5. Be actioned within a reasonable time frame without incurring unnecessary workload to staff

2.6. Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience

2.7. Take account of relevant school policies

2.8. Be compliant with regulations concerning privacy and data protection

3. Responsibilities

3.1. The Headteacher's responsibilities

    3.1.1. Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate

    3.1.2. Regularly reviewing this policy

3.2. Staff responsibilities

3.2.1. Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school's ICT and internet acceptable use policy

3.2.2. Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

3.2.3. Staff are not required to respond to communications outside of school hours of 8.30am to 3.30pm or their working hours (if they work part-time), or during school holidays.

3.3. Parental responsibilities

3.3.1. Ensuring that communication with the school is respectful at all times

3.3.2. Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate channel in the first instance

3.3.3. Respond to communications from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner

3.3.4. Checking all communications from the school

3.3.5. Should not use their child's email account for communications unless specifically invited to do this for a school online event, and only with their child's permission.

4. Internal Communication with Colleagues and Students at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School

4.1. Verbal communication

4.1.1. Staff may use first names when communicating with one another as colleagues

4.1.2. In front of students, staff should use full formal names (e.g. Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms Surname) rather than a generic "Sir" or "Miss"

4.1.3. Members of staff have the right to expect students to address them formally and to speak to them in an appropriate manner. Students are expected to address staff by their title and surname. Staff address students by their first names. Members of staff should alert the relevant form tutor or Head of Key Stage in the event of a student not meeting these expectations.

4.2. Email

4.2.1. The school gives all staff their own SWBGS email account to use for all school business.

4.2.2. Emails from parents / local community / externals to members of the Borlase community should always be professional and written in an appropriate style and tone.

4.2.3. Staff may receive emails directly or as part of a group, eg staff, teachers. Staff should check their Primary Account and the Forums tab for relevant messages at least once a day during term time.

4.2.4. Emails to and from parents should be sent via parents@ (See Section 5)

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

4.2.6. Staff should avoid sending non-urgent emails before 8am or after 8pm. Instead, they should make use of the schedule send function to ensure delivery within working hours.

4.2.7. The sending of chain letters or emails is not permitted

4.2.8. School email is not to be used for sharing adverts

4.2.9. Staff should be wary of the dangers of "reply all" in email communication shared with a group, particularly with students

4.2.10. Staff ensure they double check the accuracy of the address of every recipient before sending to avoid communications reaching the wrong person.

4.2.11. Staff should consider carefully who they copy into an email, considering the role and responsibility of the colleague/ student.

4.2.12. Emails should not be used for personal criticism or expressions of heightened emotion.

4.2.13. Members of staff have the right to expect email correspondence from students to be written in a formal manner, in grammatically correct and punctuated English and with an appropriate sign-off. Members of staff should alert the relevant form tutor or Head of Key Stage in the event of a student not meeting these expectations.

4.3. Paper communications

4.3.1. Staff should check their pigeon holes on a daily basis in case any communication has been delivered in this way – internal and external communications are sent to staff via pigeon holes.

4.3.2. Tutors should check tutor pigeon holes for communications relating to their tutees and pass on the information in a timely fashion.

4.4. Staff Briefings

4.4.1. Staff Briefings take place at 8.30am on Mondays, where the week's events and information is shared. Minutes from the briefing are available to all staff on the Staff Information Centre. All staff should attend if working Mondays.

4.4.2. Pastoral Briefings take place after Staff Briefing* on Mondays, where key information about students / pastoral events is shared. Minutes from the briefing are available on the Staff Information Centre. All staff should attend if working Mondays.

4.4.3. If staff are not in these briefings it is incumbent upon them to check the minutes for relevant information.

4.5. Meetings and CPD

4.5.1. Departmental Meetings as part of CPD should be minuted and minutes shared with the Headteacher's PA, Claire Woodgate, for publication on the Staff Information Centre.

4.5.2. For all formal meetings, notes should be taken, action points progressed and shared with the relevant members of staff.

4.5.3. Presentations shown at CPD are published on the Staff Information Centre.

4.6. Staff Handbook - the Staff Information Centre

4.6.1. Essential Information for Staff is available on the Staff Information Centre. This fulfills the role of a staff handbook at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School. If a member of staff cannot locate essential information they should consult their line manager or inform the Deputy Headteacher.

4.6.2. The Staff Information Centre should be regularly updated.

5. External Communication with Parents

5.1. Letters

5.1.1. Staff will endeavour to reply to parents' letters as quickly as possible. We aim to acknowledge letters within 2 working days and reply within 5 working days of receipt of the letter.

5.1.2. Letters sent to parents, either individually or as part of a group, should be written in a formal, professional tone. They should conform to the guidance set out in the Letters to Parents Protocols.

5.1.3. All letters sent to parents must be approved by the Deputy Headteacher before posting or emailing.

5.1.4. Letters to groups of parents (a Year group, or the whole school) will be placed on the school website under Recent Mailings.

5.1.5. Copies of written correspondence (hard copy) with parents must be placed on student files.

5.1.6. All communications involving finance should be checked by the Finance Officer/ Business Manager.

5.1.7. Medical letters should be retained either on the general student file or in a specific medical file for relevant students.

5.1.8. The correct salutation must be used when writing letters.

5.2. Email

5.2.1. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information; however it does not replace face to face meetings where discussion may be beneficial or required.

5.2.2. We encourage all parents to inform the school of their current email address, to allow them access to email, which is a quick and efficient method for the school to communicate with parents. Those who do not

have access to email will confirm this with the school and receive a paper copy of any correspondence.

5.2.3. Email is used to send out a variety of information, either to a targeted group, or to all parents on School Email.

5.2.4. The newsletter, information about whole school events and all letters relevant to the whole school are sent out to all parents on email and, in addition, specific communications regarding trips and events are sent out to the relevant groups of parents. It is usual practice that parental emails are sent as part of Friday Mailing.

5.2.5. Emails sent out as letters to whole year groups may be found on the website under **Recent Mailings.**

5.2.6. We aim to have 100% of parents signed up to email to facilitate paperless communication.

5.2.7. If a parent has a query about their child they will be able to email 'parents@swbgs.com' and the communication team will ensure it is directed appropriately and monitor that there has been a response.

5.2.8. The SENDCo can be contacted via SENDCo@swbgs.com and the Safeguarding lead directly via rhwilliams@swbgs.com

5.2.9. All email should be treated as letters and should be checked carefully. Staff should acknowledge email as they would a letter, within 2 working days, and send a full reply within 5 working days using parents@. Emails sent should be written formally, in the same way as a letter written on school headed paper. It should follow the school 'house style'.

5.2.10. Staff may check any email which is of a sensitive nature with their line manager .

5.2.11. Staff are not expected to read or reply to emails outside normal working hours.

5.2.12. Staff sending emails to external organisations should have them checked by their line manager, relevant SLT lead or the Deputy Headteacher before sending.

5.2.13. Staff sending emails to students/ parents should ensure they are formal and no personal details are shared, eg telephone numbers, other email addresses.

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

5.3. Telephone Calls

5.3.1. Staff should take notes about the content of telephone calls, as they would with meetings with parents. Detailed notes from telephone calls, including main points of discussion and action required/taken should be kept on student files and the relevant staff informed, eg form tutor / HoKS / HoD/ SLT.

5.3.2. Where the telephone call relates to a safeguarding issue, the DSL should be informed and information recorded on CPOMS

5.3.3. Staff should not contact students or parents or conduct any school business using staff personal telephone numbers.

5.3.4. The exceptions to this is on

5.3.5. i) school trips where students may need a contact number; if staff use personal mobiles then student numbers should be deleted at the end of the trip, likewise the staff number from the student phones. A school mobile phone is available if a staff member prefers to use this rather than their own phone.
ii) An emergency on site where there is no easy access to a phone and a parent needs contacting.

5.4. SchoolComms School Gateway App

5.4.1. Parents are encouraged to download the school communication School Gateway App

5.4.2. The app enables the school to more easily contact parents regarding absence as well as allow for more effective, targeted mailings.

5.4.3. The app can be used by parents to notify the school of student absence.

5.5. Meetings with Parents and Parents' Evenings
*NB the COVID addendum outlines policy in COVID; parents are updated of changes.

5.5.1. Parents Evenings and Information evenings are published on the school calendar on the website. Parents use the online booking system to make appointments.

5.5.2. 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 usual communications protocols and in a timely manner. A meeting may not always be necessary and where relevant a parent query will be resolved by telephone or email.

5.5.3. Parents are not able to meet with a member of staff without an appointment as staff are timetabled in lessons and meetings. If a parent comes to the school without a prior appointment, it is unlikely an appointment can be made unless there is an emergency.

5.5.4. Parents (like all visitors) should report to reception and sign in prior to meeting with a member of staff. If the meeting is due to take place outside office hours, separate arrangements can be made.

5.5.5. A member of staff may ask for their line manager or another relevant member of staff to accompany them, eg Head of Key Stage /Year / Head of Department / SENDCo or a member of SLT.

5.5.6. If a meeting with a parent is taking place outside normal school hours, the member of staff should try, where possible, to ensure that another colleague is nearby and must ensure another colleague is aware of the meeting.

5.5.7. It is perfectly acceptable to call a meeting to a close in order to allow time for further research or investigation.

5.5.8. Staff will call 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 their line manager and seek further advice. Follow up action would be taken by the line manager or more senior member of staff as appropriate.

5.5.9. Key Stage Parent Forums are held termly with Class Reps to discuss current issues of importance to parents and the school.

5.5.10. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements.

5.5.11. There is a parent/ teacher evening every year for every year group.

5.5.12. There are a range of other opportunities for parent to come into school as appropriate to the year group/ key stage e.g. Open evenings, options evenings, information evenings, ucas evenings

5.6. Social Networking and Messaging Sites

5.6.1. Staff will not communicate with parents via social networking sites or accept them as their "friends", eg Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, Whatsapp etc for school business. If staff receive requests they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead

5.6.2. Staff will not communicate with students via social networking sites or accept them as their 'friends', eg Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, What'sapp, private Twitter accounts etc.

5.6.3. The school has official Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts which are used to communicate information about the school to members of the school community, as well as to the wider public.

5.6.4. Parents are encouraged to follow the school Twitter account, but there is no expectation that all parents do so and any important messages posted on Twitter (e.g. snow closure) will also have been communicated to parents by other channels.

5.7. Written Reports

5.7.1. Parents receive regular written communication about their son/daughter's progress during the academic year through Orders which give grades for effort and attainment in relation to target grades.

5.7.2. Parents are invited to comment or to ask staff for further detail via parents@ if desired.

5.7.3. Parents have the opportunity to meet their child's subject teachers once a year, at parent evenings.

5.7.4. When students have special educational needs or if they are making less than expected progress or experiencing medical, emotional, behavioural or disciplinary difficulties, we would expect to have communication with parents more regularly.

5.8. The School Website

5.8.1. The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

5.8.2. The website shares regular news stories including our Twitter pages.

5.8.3. The school website is the key source of information for parents about the school calendar, term dates, uniform regulations and policies.

5.8.4. Departments maintain subject specific pages linked from the main website that convey information about the subjects, specifically GCSE and A level course information

5.8.5. All past newsletters and letters sent to parents are stored on the website in the Recent Mailings section for approximately 2 months after their issue.

5.9. Student Planners

    5.9.1. All students are issued with a planner. This enables parents to record information that they wish to share with the tutor (however they should avoid writing confidential information there) and for teachers to communicate with parents. Most importantly, parents should use planners to check homework and communicate day to day issues with the form tutor.

5.10. Accessibility

    5.10.1. Sir William Borlase's Grammar School will make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand communications from the school.

6. External Communication with Other Schools and Outside Agencies

6.1. Transition

    6.1.1. Before joining Year 7, students are visited in their primary schools to support their transition to Sir William Borlase's Grammar School.

    6.1.2. New students joining Year 9 or Year 12 have the opportunity to come into school before joining.

    6.1.3. There are introductory days for new students.

    6.1.4. If a student joins Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, then communication with the previous school will take place, alongside parental liaison. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and SENDCo will send requests for all relevant information to be shared with regard to the incoming students in each year group. If a student is receiving external support then the Safeguarding Lead and or SENDCo should be made aware and discussion as to how to best support the student will take place.

6.2. Child Protection and Welfare

    6.2.1. We are supported and regularly communicate with various agencies and groups of professionals who keep the school informed on ways to meet students' needs to ensure that students can participate fully. Support comes from such services as Educational Welfare, Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teaching Service, Social Care etc.

    6.2.2. The school recognises that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. Effective communication with external agencies is a vital part of safeguarding. The school is clearly in regular contact with students, and therefore in a unique position to identify and help them. If any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who may share this information with parents and any relevant agencies and staff.

6.3. Dealing with the Media

6.3.1. The school website, Twitter account and newsletter are the main forums for communicating school news to the wider community.

6.3.2. On occasions, the school may be approached for comment or news by local or national press. These enquiries should be directed to the Headteacher's PA, Claire Woodgate, for the attention of the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher. No member of staff should give comment or quotations to the media without obtaining the permission of the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

The school holds information on students in the school and from time to time is required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents about the types of data that is held, why it is held and to whom it may be passed. This is a requirement under the GDPR 2018. Parents and students have a right to view the information the school holds, and that the school has contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

8. Other relevant policies

Other policies relevant to this Communications Policy can be found on the school website. These include:

8.1. Staff and Student Acceptable ICT Usage Policies
8.2. Privacy Policy
8.3. Complaints Policy
8.4. Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
8.5. Attendance for Learning Policy
8.6. Data Protection Policy
8.7. Equalities Policy