Working Together

Communication Policy for Parents & Carers

Rationale

Abbey Academies Trust is fortunate to work with parents/carers that are supportive and polite. Most of our parents/carers recognise that educating children is a process that involves partnership between parents/carers, staff and the school community. This positive partnership and strong working relationship equips children with the necessary skills for adulthood. For these reasons we continue to welcome and encourage parents/carers to participate fully in the life of our schools.

Parental engagement with their children's learning is important in supporting attainment and progress and parents/carers have a legitimate right to understand what their child is learning at school and what progress they are making.

However, it is also important that any contact between parents/carers and the trust/school must be appropriate, proportionate and respectful, in terms of the professional knowledge, experience and skill of the staff at the school and of the entitlement of staff at the school to an appropriate work/life balance.

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a reminder to all parents, carers and visitors to our school about the expected conduct. This is so we can continue to flourish, progress and achieve in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

The policy sets out:

- The general principles underpinning the conduct of members of the trust/school community
- How it is expected that communication between parents/carers and the trust/school will take place
- What behaviour towards the trust/school and members of the school community are deemed unacceptable and open to challenge by the trust/school
- The additional steps the trust/ school can take in respect of unacceptable behaviour by a parent or carer

General Principles

The Trust Staff and Trustees/Governors will always endeavour to be accommodating and prompt in their communication/s with parents/carers. All communication/s to the Trust/School should be acknowledged within 48 hours and given a timeframe for the matter to be dealt with.

If parents/carers do not receive an acknowledgment within 48 hours, they should contact the Trust/School again to check that the communication has been received.

NB: Please note that a 48-hour acknowledgment does not apply when the Trust schools are not in session, for example, during holiday periods or weekends.

If parents/carers wish to correspond by email, they should use the School's central email address at:

- Bourne Abbey: bap.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk
- Bourne Elsea Park: bep.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk
- Colsterworth: csw.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk

This email address is monitored during the school day, with emails forwarded to the appropriate member of staff.

All communication should respect the caring ethos and values of our Trust and reflect the rationale detailed at the start of this policy.

Please remember:

- To ensure that all communications, be they written or verbal, are calm and polite and that parents/carers remain mindful of the right of the recipient to be treated with respect
- The School Office opens at 8.00am and closes at 4.30pm
- That mornings and the end of the school day in particular, are very busy
- All our staff are contracted to different working hours, so this may impact on when a response will be sent, including that staff may not answer parent/carer emails after 4.00pm
- Members of staff are very busy during the school day, i.e. with pastoral staff having many prebooked meetings and with teachers who teach for the majority of the day. Therefore, when parents/carers would like to speak with a member of staff, we ask that they make an appointment to do so at a time when staff can give both sufficient time and their full attention
- It is important to note that it will not be possible to see parents/carers who arrive at school without an appointment, due to the prior commitments of staff
- If the matter that you need to contact the Trust/School about is still not resolved, parents/carers should follow the procedure in the Trust's Complaints Policy (available on the website)

The need to maintain positive communication

There are many reasons you might want to communicate with the school or a member of staff at the school. This could be simply phoning in to report a child's absence or just informing the member of staff at the gate when you drop your child off that they have forgotten their PE kit or have been complaining of feeling a little unwell. These short conversations to impart information are entirely necessary. As stated previously, the School enjoys very positive and productive relationships an communications with the majority of our parents and carers.

Please remember:

- Timeframes for a matter to be dealt with appropriately will be decided by the recipient of the communication or by the Trust/School's Complaints Policy. Parents/carers should not demand an immediate response or a response within their own timeframe
- Lengthy, frequent, demanding, or disrespectful communications to staff will seriously undermine their ability to carry out their core duty of educating the children

- When communicating with Staff/Trustees/Governors, language should remain respectful and calm. It is not acceptable to use language that calls into question colleagues' professional ability; represents any form of personal attack or seeks to direct how they carry out their professional role
- It is entirely inappropriate to use raised voice, invade personal space, and use language that is disrespectful, rude, offensive, aggressive or threatening. Parents and carers will be given a warning about the use of their language, if there is a continuation the member of staff may terminate any communication and refer the matter onto the Senior Leadership Team or Chief Executive Officer
- It is unacceptable to record conversations/meetings with Staff/Trustees/Governors without making them aware of the recording and seeking their express permission to capture what could be personal information and breach their human right to privacy, which extends to their workplace
- We politely ask parents/carers not to resort to any form of communication over Trust/School related matters, including of its staff or Governing Body or any other matters that relate directly to the Trust/School, via a medium other than the School's Complaints Policy, including social media platforms. We do however, strongly encourage parents to communicate with us, if there are any issues, so we can resolve any matter/s together

Inappropriate use of social media sites

The Trust/School seeks to teach pupils the importance of appropriate and responsible use of social media and it is therefore vital that everyone in the school community, including parents/carers lead by example.

The Trust consider the use of social media platforms and websites to complain/make personal comments about the School or members of Staff/Trustees/Governors as unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour and not in the best interests of the pupils nor the School. Instead, concerns and queries parents/carers may have should be made through an appropriate channel such as the Trust's Complaints Policy so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any pupil or parent/carer of a child/children being educated in any of the Trust schools is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site.

All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The Trust/School expects that the parent/carer or pupil will remove such comments immediately.

In serious cases the Trust/School will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social media platforms.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent/carer to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entries. We will deal with any such matter as a serious incident of school bullying. However, please be reassured that thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.

Please note that the inappropriate use of a communications network can give rise to offences under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 or the Communications Act 2003 and if persistent, could be deemed to constitute the offence of harassment.

Attending the school premises

All of the Trust schools are a place of learning, with an important duty to safeguard and protect the health and safety and well-being of the pupils and staff we serve.

Schools are private premises and not public spaces. Parents/carers have an implied right to enter the School as a parent/carer of a child/children currently attending the School but it is open to the School to remove that right of entry at any time it deems this to be a necessary course of action.

Please remember:

- Parents/carers should behave appropriately when on the School premises. We politely ask and remind parents/carers to not shout, swear or cause any form of disruption that interferes or threatens to interfere with the core operation of the School
- Threats of violence, use of violence towards people or property on the School's premises is a criminal offence, and will likely result in the matter being reported to the police
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or reprimand them because of their actions towards your own child is inappropriate. Such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences
- We cannot give out any other pupil's personal details due to GDPR regulations
- Do not bring dogs onto school premises unless the dog is a guide dog or other form of assistance dog and consent has been given for the presence of the dog to assist its owner on school premises
- Do not smoke or vape, or consume alcohol or other drugs on any part of the school premises
- Do not use a mobile phone within the school buildings unless you have been given specific permission to do so e.g. to take photos or videos for your personal use during an assembly or production

Additional steps by the school

The following is not an exhaustive list:

- A member of staff/Governor will challenge unacceptable behaviour calmly and by asking the person/people concerned to stop; to respect personal space; stop shouting or using inappropriate behaviour or may end a telephone call/meeting or direct the person to leave the premises
- The Trust/School may communicate with a parent/carer to challenge unacceptable behaviour and set out conditions to establish a way forward, this may include a Communication Strategy (e.g. only communication through email or letter)
- Please note that School premises are not public places but private premises and you have an implied right to enter the school as a parent or carer of a child at the school but it is open to the school to remove that right of entry at any time it deems this to be necessary. The School will comply with, and fully implement, the Department for Education Controlling Access to School Premises, should it deem it appropriate to do so
- If the School decides the matter requires a more formal approach we may instruct our legal advisers to communicate with the parent/carer, warning them about their behaviour and/or putting in place Communication Strategy to restrict their means of corresponding with the Trust/School and/or banning them from School premises if felt to be appropriate
- In serious instances where the peace is breached or the law broken, the School will report the matter to the police

We trust that parents and carers will assist our School with the implementation of this policy and we thank you for your continuing support of the School.

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."

John Wesley