



Robert Bloomfield Academy

Communications Policy

Current Version	<i>May 2021</i>
Minor changes made	
Significant changes made	
Ratified	Local Governing Body
Validity	2 Years
Next Review	May 2023
Author	S Farmer, Principal

Communications Policy (May 2021)

To be reviewed May 2023



Purpose

To promote partnerships between the school, parents and carers, pupils and the wider community through efficient and effective communication.

Definition of communication

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects the school's reputation. Parents and carers, trustees and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting the school's reputation. We strive to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and effective in their purpose.

Principles

RBA uses a number of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient.

All communications should

- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies and procedures.
- Be compatible with our core values and School Improvement & Development Plan.
- Be treated as a priority where issues affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil. Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority.

The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised. Staff will always seek to establish friendly relationships with parents and carers but they will ensure relationships and communications are professional and parents will be addressed in a formal manner.

The use of a parent, carer or staff member's first name is not appropriate; all communications will be to and from the indicated Pronoun on Sims (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Dr etc.) The Communications Policy embraces the principles of the school's Equality Statement and Online Safety Policy.

Responsibilities

Those in a leadership role

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

All staff

- Communication hours are between 8am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday during term time. Weekends and school holidays (including bank holidays) are designated “No Comms time”.
- To consider the most appropriate communication strategy and avoid relying on email
- To avoid generic emails to large groups of staff
- To communicate effectively regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.
- To ensure that emails are checked frequently at least once a day and responded to within an appropriate time frame. If necessary.
- Any internal communication marked as urgent, which is important and to be actioned within the requested time frame. and will be communicated in person.

Internal Communications (Between Staff)

- All staff receive an induction pack providing them with important information about organisation and procedures within the school
- Communication between staff is professional
- All official communications are compliant with GDPR policy
- Staff will only use professional @bestacademies emails when communicating with each other and with the community
- A digital diary will be populated by the Leadership every year. All staff will have access to this
- The school will provide, free of charge, a teaching planner with key policies and procedures included to support effective communication strategies

Internal Communications (Between Staff and Students)

- Only official email accounts (staff and student) will be used.
- Staff Code of Conduct and IT policies details effective safeguards to support staff when communicating with a student digitally
- Emails will be formal and signed off as Mr/Dr/Mrs etc – your chosen/ preferred pro noun.
- Ensure digital comms direct to a student does not contradict messages sent to families (such as dates/ events etc)
- If you receive a digital communication that is concerning, please follow all procedures identified in the Safeguarding Policy
- Live Streaming / Live Google meeting must only be during the school day and follow the Remote Education safeguards and guidelines

Communications with Parents/Carers

There are numerous forms of communication to support families. We have broken them into the following rationale with a clear expectation of when and in which format comms would be suggested. A Summary chart is found in the appendix and on our website site

An immediate issue/ concern/ alert: School → Home

School will contact families via telephone. Examples of this level of comms would include medical issues, sickness, changes to schedule, bus delays etc. Staff are mindful that families at work may not be able to take phones calls and will use the designated emergency contacts provided. It is the responsibility of the family to ensure RBA has an up to date list of contacts. (Safeguarding policy states 3 contacts per child)

An immediate issue/ concern/ alert: Home → School

In an emergency, please phone us. You can email our main office enquiries account, RBA-enquiries@bestacademies.org.uk, but this is only checked at certain times during the day. Telephone contact is the quickest form. Please note, it is unlikely that you will be able to speak to anyone other than reception. Telephone contact with members of staff must be pre-booked. You can request a call back and the member of staff will confirm a suitable time over email in the first instance.

A professional dialogue

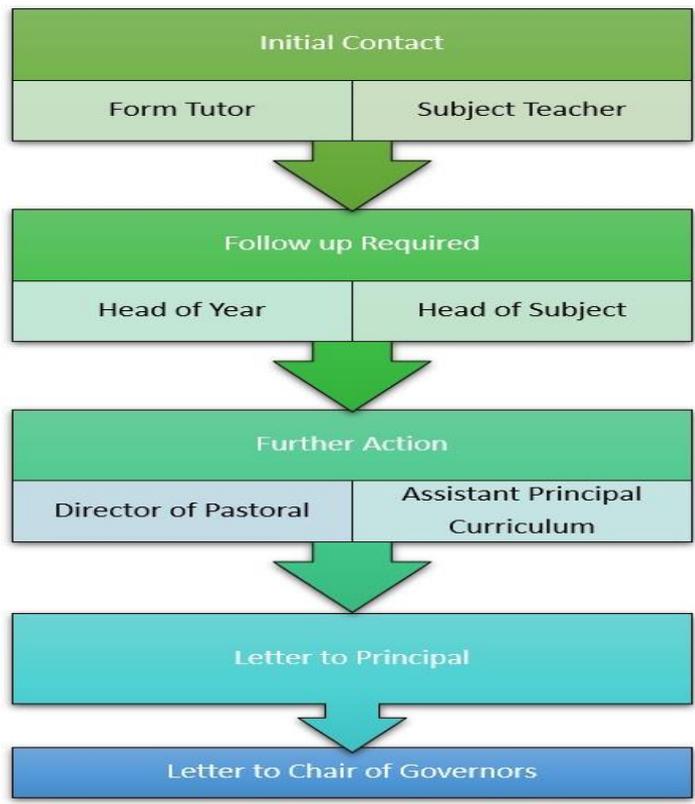
This may too take the form of a phone call, but staff will normally seek to arrange a time to call via email. Likewise, families can book a time to have school contact them. This can be arranged via email to our general enquiries account. Examples would be to discuss the outcome of an issue raised, update families on an academic target and comms of this, non-urgent, nature.

Social Media

We will post regular content on our official Twitter Page and Official Facebook Page. Sadly, unregulated Facebook groups are created each year, despite our requests not to. All stakeholders need to be aware, the administration of these groups is not endorsed by the school, nor do they represent the school. We would not recommend families joining such groups as often, misinformation is reported, leading to confusion and potential anxiety for families.

Escalation of Comms

In all matters, we ask that your first contact point is the Form Tutor, or the Subject Teacher (for academic specific communication). You can contact them directly or via the Main Office email account. The following chart demonstrates the next stages and steps, should you need to escalate the matter further. If comms are received that have bypassed Form Tutor or Subject teacher, for example straight to a Head of Year or Subject Leader, they will be redirected to the initial contact point. Families must follow the communication escalation chart. If you wish to make a formal complaint, there is separate guidance in your complaints and grievance policy, found on the school website.



Communication Reply Guidelines

A family contacting RBA can expect the following reply timescales. In most cases, staff will respond as soon as they are free to do so, but the nature of contact may require investigation or review ahead of a reply. We are also considerate of staff workload.

Communication hours are between 8am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday during term time. Weekends and school holidays (including bank holidays) are designated “No Comms time”. Matters pertaining to safeguarding or the imminent risk to a child have a separate, out of hours system identified below and on our school website. Comms received after 4:30pm via email, or phone messages left on our answering system will not be responded to until the following day.

Families may of course send comms outside of these hours as they need, but RBA staff will not respond until the next working day. This is to protect the workload and wellbeing of the RBA staff. Similarly, staff will not contact families outside of the posted hours nor expect a response in this time either unless this is a prior arrangement between both parties.

Urgent, safeguarding comms during school hours, where a child is potentially at risk or in danger, should be made via telephone to us during school hours. Where this is not possible, an email marked “URGENT, for the attention of the Safeguarding Team” should be sent to RBA-enquiries@bestacademies.org.uk. RBA will contact you immediately to confirm receipt of the email and provide next steps.

Our Safeguarding team are available during school hours – which are between 8am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday during term time.

For out of hours concerns, the Central Bedfordshire Child Protection Team are available as below.

Telephone: 0300 300 8123

Email: cs.accessandreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Please note, this is for genuine emergencies. If in doubt please refer to our website for contact details of out of hours and external support, including social services and the police. This is not for matters pertaining to school behaviour incidents.

For matters relating to a conduct incident or where an investigation is required, RBA will ensure you have a holding communication on the day of your comms or the next working day if received after hours and then a full update with 2 working days from that point. Please note, comms received after 5pm on a Friday will be read on Monday and the 2 working days from that point will be Wednesday morning.

For matters that are non-urgent or do not require further investigation, holding comms will not be provided. Staff will aim to reply to you within two working days.

Zero Tolerance of aggressive communication

All communication to RBA must be done so in a polite and respectful manner. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive communications. We have a highly skilled and trained staff-body who will work with all parties to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for everyone. We welcome feedback and challenge – that makes us stronger, but we will never accept rude or abusive conduct towards members of staff.

Part Time Staff

All RBA part time staff are requested to have an automatic response to the effect of “Please note, I am not at work on Wednesdays and will not see any emails until Thursday morning. For any urgent concerns relating to 6M please contact Mrs Smith” – wording is an example. Staff are requested to ensure their emails have a clear message to indicate working pattern and provide an alternative option for comms for families.

RBA does not expect staff who are part time to respond to communication on days outside of their employment – both internally and externally.

Absence

If a child is absent, parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the absence, using our dedicated absence reporting line. For full details please refer to the Attendance Policy.

Meeting with Parents and carers

Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must contact the school to make an appointment. This request should be responded to within 2 working days.

GDPR

All comms, both internally and externally, must adhere to our GDPR Policy (a copy of which can be found through our website). In whatever format the communication takes place, it is important that only information pertinent to the matter being discussed is transferred. As an example, this means that for phone calls only discussions about the child of the parent/carer should be talked about, other students should not be named and no information should be passed over; in an email communication, the same should apply, along with also considering the use of just first names in the email body. Attachments in emails should only include data for the student’s subject to the purpose of the communication, and only that data that is relevant. In writing, any documents sent should again only include data relevant to the purpose of the communication.

It is also important to ensure that communication is to the individual you are intending. Sending data or messages to a generic email address should be avoided unless you are sure that the intended recipient will be the person picking up the email.

If a breach of GDPR is suspected, either by a communication being sent out incorrectly, or by receiving something that is not intended for you, then the Data Protection Lead should be informed by sending an email to RBA_DPL@bestacademies.org.uk

Reports and Progress

The annual school calendar will include details of scheduled periods of reporting to parents/carers on the progress of their children, along with a programme of consultation sessions throughout the year.

For consultation sessions, these may be either with a form tutor or with subject teachers, and may take place either virtually or in-person. Parents/carers will be notified of a forthcoming session and invited to make bookings to see the relevant tutor/subject teachers.

In each term there will be a report sent home to parents/carers, giving academic details of their children for that term. The report will be distributed electronically, and a paper copy will be sent home for those parents/carers not registered to our Sims Parent App. Parents/carers will be notified of the forthcoming arrival of each report.

We welcome feedback for such important activities, and so there will be an opportunity for parents/carers to submit and feedback after the consultation evenings, as well as responding to their child's report.

Accessibility

We will endeavour to 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 a communication.

Documents printed using a larger font can usually be provided and requests should be made via Reception.

Before sending or posting information electronically staff should test to ensure cross platform access.

The School Website <https://www.robertbloomfield.beds.sch.uk/> provides a range of information about the school, including:

- Inclusion information
- Pupil Premium information
- Homework
- Uniform list
- Timetables
- School events Holiday dates
- School prospectus

It is used to promote the school to a wider audience and is updated regularly.

Google Classroom in Google Apps for Education

The Google platform is a powerful tool for motivating pupils as it gives them more choice and flexibility about when and where they complete their learning. It also encourages parent and carers involvement in learning, especially with extended learning tasks.

Author & Date

Author: Sam Farmer, Principal

Approved by: Local Governing Body

Date: May 2021

Review Date: May 2023

Appendix 1 – Who to Contact

Area	Who	How
Absence (notify by 9.30am)	School Absence Line	01462 628800 Option 1
Admissions (Y4 or in year)	School Admissions Team	Contact Admissions Team via email
(Lost) Bus pass	School Reception	Contact School Reception via General Enquiries email
Medicines	Medical room	Medical Reception 01462 628800
Homework	Form tutor	Via child's diary or via email
Lost property including PE Kit	School Reception	Contact School Reception via General Enquiries email
Ingredients for cooking	Food Teacher	Homework diary or via email
Absence Request forms	School Reception	Forms available from Reception
Pupil Well-Being	Well-Being Team	Contact the Well-Being Team via General Enquiries email
School policy enquiry	Head of Year	Check RBA Website
School lunches	Catering Manager	01462 628800 Option 2 (Kitchen)
Lunch payments	Finance Office	01462 628800 Option 3 (Finance)
Free school meals	School Reception	Contact School Reception via General Enquiries email
Payment for residential trips	Finance Office	01462 628800 Option 3 (Finance)
Peripatetic music lessons	Head of Music	Contact the school via General Enquiries email
Sports fixtures	PE staff	Contact the school via General Enquiries email
Parentmail / Letters home	School Reception	Contact School Reception via General Enquiries email
SIMs App	SIMS Help Email	Sims Help Email via General Enquiries email
Governance	Clerk	Contact the Clerk via email to RBA-Clerk@bestacademies.org.uk
Governors	Chair of Governors	Contact the Clerk via email to RBA-Clerk@bestacademies.org.uk
Grievance	Principal/SLT	Letter/email to the Principal's PA. RBA-PrincipalsPA@bestacademies.org.uk

General Enquiries School Email address: RBA-Enquiries@bestacademies.org.uk

Admissions Enquiries School Email address: RBA-Admissions@bestacademies.org.uk