

Policy: Communications Policy

Approval: Board of Trustees

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**CHELTENHAM
BOURNSIDE
SCHOOL**

Policies

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1. Rationale

Cheltenham Bournside School recognises the importance of clear and effective two-way communication with all stakeholders. The school is committed to being accessible for all who have an interest in the school. We foster links with the community, parents/carers, current students, former students and feel that successful partnerships between the school and its stakeholders are based upon open dialogue. We therefore ask all stakeholders to contact us to discuss any concern they may have. This policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective communication.

2. Key terms

- The school website: www.bournside.gloucs.sch.uk
- Social networking: Facebook (bournsideschool), Twitter (@bournsideschool) and Instagram (bournside.school).
- ParentFrog: a password protected extranet for current parents/carers.
- School Gateway: a website and smart phone app for current parents/carers facilitating communication with the school: <https://login.schoolgateway.com>
- E-PTC: electronic parent/teacher consultation booking system: <https://bournside.parenteveningsystem.co.uk>
- Parent bulletin: an email sent to parents/carers each week with latest news, important updates, events for the following two weeks and sports fixtures.
- Bournside Brilliance: a mechanism enabling parents/carers to share information and images about their child's achievements outside school.

The Information and Data Centre (IDC) is the team of staff responsible for the construction and maintenance of the school website, social networking and communication systems in school listed in the key terms, overseen by the Assistant Headteacher responsible for IT strategy.

3. Related policies

The school recognises the importance of protecting personal information that enables us to engage in effective communication. As such, this policy should be read in conjunction with our Data Protection, E-safety and Technology Information Acceptable Use, and Child Protection and Safeguarding policies. Where parents/carers feel the standards of communication fall short of expectation, they are referred to our Complaints Policy.

4. Communication with parents/carers of students at the school

4.1 Contacting the school

- Email addresses of all staff are published on the school website, with guidance relating to who to contact for specific queries.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to contact members of staff directly by email to discuss the progress of their child and to make general enquiries.
- The main school reception welcomes visitors by appointment and the telephone switch board is open during the school day between 8:30am and 4:00pm Monday to Thursday and between 8:30am and 3:30pm on Friday.
- Parents/carers should book an appointment with a member of staff to arrange a meeting. We are unlikely to be able to accommodate parents/carers who present themselves at reception without a prior appointment unless the issue is an emergency. Parents/carers are welcome to leave a voicemail for a member of staff through reception, but we encourage parents/carers to use email as the primary communication medium in the first instance.
- School Gateway provides parents/carers with a free text messaging service to the school. Messages are responded to daily by Reception, Attendance and IT Services.

Parents/carers are encouraged to use this system for shorter general enquiries and absence notifications.

- We aim to respond to all parents/carers as soon as possible. Specifically emails and telephone messages within two working days, and letters within five working days of receipt.

4.2 Two-way partnerships

- The school holds annual information evenings for parents/carers of current students specific to each year group.
- The school holds annual parent-teacher consultation evenings, where parents/carers have a formal five minute opportunity to meet their child's teachers to discuss progress. The evenings are publicised through the weekly parent bulletin, social networking and the school website. A list of dates for the meetings is also available in ParentFrog. Parents/carers book appointments for themselves using our e-PTC booking system. If a parent is unable to see their child's teacher on the evening, they may complete a contact request form for each teacher, who will respond within five working days. If a parent requires a longer appointment, this should be made directly with the teacher at a mutually convenient time.
- The school recognises that the tone and clarity of communication is important and that all adults are role models for the students. We actively encourage a two-way dialogue, and listen carefully to parental concerns. Staff at the school are highly trained professionals and have a right to mutual respect. In extremely rare circumstances, staff may discontinue a meeting or conversation if it cannot be conducted in a professional manner.
- Staff will contact parents/carers by telephone or email initially to discuss concerns with their child.
- The school periodically sends letters home to parents/carers via their child. Copies of letters are attached to the parent bulletin.
- In the event of the school being closed in an emergency, the school will send a notification/SMS text message to parents/carers via School Gateway, and post a message on the school website. Tutors will contact each parent by telephone before dismissing a child from the school premises. Parents/carers are asked not to present themselves at the school until instructed.
- In the event of a child receiving a serious, or head injury in school that requires medical attention, parents/carers will be contacted on their priority one telephone number held on the school management information system. Suitably qualified staff making first aid assessments will make a judgement as to whether parents/carers should be contacted for minor injuries.
- In the event of a child not attending a lesson without reason, having been registered previously during the day, staff will attempt to find the student in school. If the student cannot be found, parents/carers will be informed via their priority one telephone number.
- In the event of the school not receiving an absence notification for a child, the Attendance office will send a notification/SMS text message to the priority one contact via School Gateway. Parents/carers are advised that there will be a delay in processing notifications on the first day of absence, and the data will be correct in School Gateway after 11:00am each day.
- The school operates same-day detentions and will send a notification/SMS text of a detention to a priority one parent via School Gateway before 3:00pm on the day of the detention.
- The school sends electronic postcards by email to parents/carers to recognise and reward student achievement.
- The school shares a wealth of information for parents/carers on the school website and there is a dedicated parent section for key items. In addition, further information that is only relevant to current parents/carers is available in ParentFrog. This includes: extra-

curricular opportunities, exclusion work, homework tasks, and where appropriate, curriculum learning materials.

- Parents/carers will receive email notification of their credentials for ParentFrog within the first two weeks in September, or within two weeks of a child joining the school in-year.
- The school conducts bi-annual surveys with parents/carers, communicated by the school bulletin.
- The school has a Parent Voice Forum which meets at regular intervals throughout the school year, and provides feedback to school processes and policies in consultation. The school recruits new members to the forum every two years, advertising vacancies in the parent bulletin.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to share their child's achievements outside the school curriculum using the Bournside Brilliance form. The school will actively celebrate and publicise these achievements through meetings with Heads of Year, senior staff, and on the school website.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to share their view of the school using Ofsted's Parent View: <https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

5. Communication with the wider community

5.1 Open evenings, literature and online services

- Prospective parents/carers are invited to an annual open evening for both the main school and Sixth Form and to attend an open morning by appointment to see the school in operation. Prospective parents/carers should contact the Headteacher's PA to arrange a visit. The school has a main school prospectus and Sixth Form prospectus that is freely available from reception outlining the aims of the school and the curriculum offer.
- The school website is used extensively for communication with the wider community to celebrate good news stories, key documents, and events. We recognise that it is important to present documents on the school website in a screen-readable format to ensure accessibility.
- The school uses social networking to report good news stories, reminders for parents/carers of events, to publicise key events at the school, and to provide galleries of photographs of events.
- Comments to posts from the school are routinely monitored by the Information and Data Centre, and if a question is posed, it is responded to within 48 hours.
- Comments that contain profanities, or those of which are likely to bring the school into disrepute will be blocked or deleted. Comments of an offensive or illegal nature will be reported to the platform provider and/or the police as appropriate.
- Former students are encouraged to maintain contact with the school through the alumni programme. A 'keep in touch form' is available on the school website.

5.2 Use of photographs

- The school celebrates events and student achievements with photographs on the school website, social networking and display screens at school. When a student joins the school, parents are required to complete a data collection form, which asks them to indicate whether they either consent, or do not consent to photographs of their child being used. Parents may withdraw this consent at any time by contacting IT Services. In all cases, only full names with no photograph, or first name with a photograph will be used.

5.3 Media

- All contact from the media to the school will be directed to and responded to by the Headteacher. Staff should not discuss school matters with the media unless explicitly instructed to do so by the Headteacher.
- Press releases for major events at the school are communicated to the Gloucestershire Echo by the Information and Data Centre. We aim to do this with two weeks' notice.

6. Communication with students

- The school has a “Bournside charter” that applies equally to staff and students. The charter outlines the school expectations of treating others kindly and thoughtfully, speaking politely, and helping others when they are struggling.
- In addition to the day-to-day communication between staff and students, the school has a Junior Leadership Council (JLC) whose role is to feedback student opinion and suggestions to the senior leadership team twice a year. Every year group has a representative on the JLC, nominated by their peers. The membership of the group is reviewed annually.
- Students are encouraged to discuss academic and personal matters affecting their academic progress with their tutor, who will in turn communicate with a child’s Head of Year and subject teachers. The school also has dedicated student support staff that students can share safeguarding matters with.
- Students undertake a wellbeing survey annually that seeks their opinions on their happiness at school, behaviour of peers, their safety, bullying and the quality of student support. This report is presented to the senior leadership team and the Head of Year.
- The school has Anti-bullying ambassadors who provide students with an opportunity to talk to identified, trained peers about concerns, as well as raising the profile of the school’s anti-bullying programme. Membership of the anti-bullying ambassadors is reviewed annually.

7. Student use of mobile and tablet devices

- As a technology enhanced learning school, students are permitted to bring electronic mobile devices to school to use for their studies. Staff will have clear expectations when, and how students are permitted to use devices in their classrooms.
- Students are not permitted to use mobile devices whilst walking in the corridors.
- Students are not permitted to contact their parents/carers or other family members whilst at school to discuss issues occurring within school. Students should instead discuss the matter with their teacher, tutor, Head of Year or student support staff. These adults are best placed to judge how and when to communicate with parents/carers so as not to raise undue alarm.

8. Communication with staff

- All staff are encouraged to have a supportive, open, honest and professional dialogue with colleagues.
- Staff are encouraged to communicate key messages at a weekly staff briefing and by email. Staff agree to respond to all email communication within 48 hours.
- The Headteacher is available to meet any member of staff between 8:00am-8:30am each day.

New staff are supported with an induction programme, and are mentored in their first year at the school by their Head of Department and a Head of Year if they are allocated a tutor group.