Bernards Heath Junior School

Communications Policy

Policy Review (non statutory policy)

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body or nominated committee every other year.

Reviewed: **May 2026**
Due for school review: **May 2028**

Signature: …….
(on behalf of governing body)

Date……..……

Changes: Social Networking Sites - all references to twitter / x removed as account disabled. Includes new information and references to Instagram accounts. Reference to newsletters being saved on school web-site. Home – School Communication – changed regularity of school newsletters to every two weeks (from twice a term).

Communications Policy

Aims

At Bernards Heath Junior School all our children are given the opportunity to become the best they can be in a friendly, safe and nurturing environment. Our commitment to learning ensures that our dedicated and caring school community is reflective and attentive to the needs of our children. We work hard to ensure that every member of our school community has a voice.

We aim to create a community which does not judge but rather promotes the values of respect, resilience and responsibility. By developing pupil voice, we aim to assist our children to have the skills and confidence in a supported environment to share any concerns they may have. For them to have the emotional literacy to deal more positively with conflict and to understand the need to behave in a supportive and positive manner so that effective learning will take place.

Desired Outcomes

To support the vision and values of the school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with parents and with the wider school community. We need to ensure that communication between all members of the school community is clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

Definition

Effective communication involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people as well as the exchange of information. It involves attitude and behaviour as well as message. It also involves active listening. For the purposes of this policy, communication includes not only the content of the message but also how that message is communicated. Parents are asked to be mindful of the potential for the embarrassment and distress which can be caused to their children, as well as the children of others, if they witness adults being aggressive or abusive within the school environment. This is not an acceptable experience for our children or staff at Bernards Heath Junior School.

Our Approach

All communications at Bernards Heath Junior School 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 frame (no later than 10 school days)
- Be of a frequency and volume appropriate to the issue at hand.
- Use a method most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Take account of relevant school policies such as Equal Opportunities and Acceptable Use of Information Technology.

- Be compatible with our aims outlined above.
- The school will not tolerate abusive and/or aggressive behaviour.

External Methods of Communication

The school has many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community, and with outside professional and education support agencies. Good communication between school and home is essential to help children to progress. At Bernards Heath Junior School, we aim to have clear and effective communication with all parents and with the wider community. Effective communication enables us to share our aims and values, keeping parents and carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school. Staff will seek to establish open, professional relationships with parents which involve appropriate boundaries and forms of addressing each other. All our written communications will seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents / Carers

Letters

Staff will endeavour to respond to parents' letters in a timely manner, taking into account their other responsibilities and priorities. We aim to respond within 5 school days. This may take the form of an acknowledgement initially if more time is required to compile a complete response. Any letter of complaint will be referred to the Headteacher. The Headteacher or a member of The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will approve any letters to parents before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence with parents will be recorded.

E-mail

The school has a group e-mail system it uses to communicate with parents. If a parent wishes to communicate an absence, they can use the direct absence email absence@bernardsheathjnr.herts.sch.uk.

For all other communication, parents may communicate via admin@bernardsheathjnr.herts.sch.uk. If a parent communicates with the school using e-mail a copy will be printed for the relevant pupil file where appropriate. As with letters, staff will endeavour to reply to e-mails in a timely manner. If a longer response or action is required and appropriate, we will respond within 5 school days.

Parents are asked not to use e-mail for last minute messages, late in the school day, which need to be passed on to children. We cannot guarantee that they will be read and responded to in time. Equally, if a message needs to reach the teacher before the start of the school day, a phone call or written note handed to the teacher is required. E-mails may not be read until after 9.00am. E-mails to class teachers or the Headteacher will be passed on by the office staff. **We have a policy that class teachers will not e-mail parents**. Class teachers may phone parents or arrange to meet in response to e-mails. E-mails sent to admin after 4.00pm will not be read until after 9.00am the following working day, and therefore will not be acted upon until then.

Telephone Calls

Staff will be informed by Office Staff if there is a telephone message for them. Teaching will not be interrupted for staff to answer telephone calls. Teachers will usually try to phone back at the end of the teaching day. Details of telephone conversations between staff and parents will be filed.

Social Networking Sites

Staff will not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends", (see also the E-Safety Policy and Parental Acceptable Use Agreement on School Admission Form). The school is aware that some parents set up Facebook or chat groups to support each other regarding school matters. The school is not involved in these arrangements in any way and takes no responsibility for their content or operation. The school has two Instagram accounts **#bheathjuniors and #bernardsheathschooljounrney (year 6 parents only**). The Instagram accounts are used to show school events, classroom activities, trips, and important school information. Parents are invited to follow us but the school will not respond to messages sent to us through this medium. Please phone or e mail in the usual way.

Emergency School Closure Notification

In the event of an emergency school closure, school will notify parents via email and an emergency banner on school website.

Written Reports and meetings with Parents

Once a year the school provides a full written report to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each subject. The report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.

Parents and pupils have opportunities to comment on progress.

In addition, parents/carers meet their child's teacher twice a year for parent/ teacher consultation evenings. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's success and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents to contact the school at other times if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. When children have special educational needs or if they are making less than expected progress, we may request to meet with parents more regularly. To fully support staff and parents we may invite additional school staff to the meeting. We will also make any reasonable adjustments if this will enable a parent with a disability or limited English language skills to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

School Prospectus

The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents and other stakeholders a full picture of provision at Bernards Heath Junior School. This is updated at least annually and is posted on the website.

School Website

The school website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience. It includes an electronic version of the school prospectus. The school website is frequently updated. All letters and newsletters regarding the school are archived on the school website to allow parents to recall them at any time.

Home – School Communication

A calendar of school events will be produced at the start of each year and issued to parents via the school website. We also have an electronic calendar which is embedded in our website. Term dates and academic year dates are published at least a year in advance and are on the website.

A school newsletter is sent to parents / carers every two weeks during term time. It contains general school news, details of school events and activities. Where more key information is required, additional newsletters will be sent out. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies on the school website. Each September the Headteacher issues an updated General Information letter for all parents. Many letters are directed at particular year groups for things such as trips, plays and visiting groups. All letters are archived under the month in which they were issued under useful title headers to enable easy retrieval.

Pupils are issued with Reading/Home learning diaries to record their educational activities away from the school site. If parents write a message for the teacher in the diary, children need to be reminded by parents to show it to their teacher. On occasion, children are expected to convey verbal messages as we regard this to be an important skill in preparation for secondary school.

The school encourages parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity so that we can respond appropriately.

Parents/carers have the opportunity to have a brief word with the class teacher and Headteacher after school when they collect their child(ren). The Headteacher and staff are regularly on the playground at 3:25pm. The Headteacher is usually available for a quick message first thing in the morning but if a longer appointment is required this may have to be arranged at a later time.

We arrange various meetings for parents throughout the year such as preparation for residential trips, for new parents and information evenings about curriculum matters, such as e-safety and Relationships & Sex Education.

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

Prior to pupils joining in Year 3, they are invited to visit the school to enable us to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to Bernards Heath Junior School. Children identified by the Infant School as requiring additional support with transition, are invited to a number of accompanied pre-visits.

There are clear handover meetings with the Infant School; these are in the form of discussions between the two headteachers, our SENCo and the class teachers of both schools.

At the other end of transition, there is a comprehensive handover of our children to their respective secondary schools. Year group pastoral heads and SENCos visit the children. For children with significant Additional Needs, we facilitate additional accompanied visits to secondary schools.

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed of the most effective ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from Health Professionals and Specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Child Protection agencies.

We recognise 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. When any member of staff has safeguarding concerns about a child, these will be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection who may share this information with Hertfordshire Children's Services.

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Parents have a right to view the information we hold about their child(ren) and we can provide contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

Communication by Parents/Carers

We welcome communication from parents/carers and expect any communication to reflect the vision and values that the school aims to instill in the pupils, which include respect and responsibility.

Informal discussions in school

Teachers are not always able to meet for a lengthy meeting on the playground. If parents approach a teacher on the playground, they may request a follow-up meeting at a mutually convenient time.

No parent/carer should enter the school building without signing in and permission If a non-DBS checked volunteer, a member of staff will supervise them. This is for safeguarding purposes. If your teacher is not available/on the playground at pick-up, parents / carers should go to the school office to request a meeting or send an e-mail to the admin team. Please note that class teachers may be on directed time and therefore unavailable. In this case, the office staff will notify the class teacher to make contact at an appropriate time.

Formal/Requested meetings

If requesting a meeting, we ask that parents inform teachers of the details they wish to discuss in advance of meeting. We expect all communication to be respectful and civil. Conversations should be at an appropriate and proportionate volume, frequency, and length, and consider the requirements and resources of a mainstream primary school. We ask parents to allow staff time to implement any agreed actions.

Meeting protocols

There may be times where a problem may arise. As per our complaints policy, any incident or problem should be raised with the class teacher in the first instance (a member of SLT may be present at a meeting it is deemed necessary). Teachers may request a meeting with the parent without the child to protect the child from sensitive or difficult conversations.

With any communication, the school expects parents/ carers to:

- Work together with staff in the best interests of our pupils.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect – setting a good example with speech and behaviour.
- Approach the right member of school staff to help resolve any issues of concern.
- Respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff within the school.
- Seek a peaceful solution to all issues.
- Use calm and thoughtful language when communicating with the school.
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond.
- Understand that resolving a specific issue can sometimes take some time.
- In the case of a complaint which has not been resolved with the class teacher or head teacher, to then follow the school's complaints procedure.

To support this, parents/carers will not:

- Engage in confrontations in front of pupils.
- Verbally abuse or use intimidating behaviour towards any member of the school community.
- Threaten the use of violence to people or property.
- Send abusive messages to another member of the school community, including via text, email, or social media.
- Post complaints, defamatory, offensive, or derogatory comments about the school, its staff or any member of its community, on social media or messaging platforms

If at any point the above expectations are not followed, a member of SLT will be alerted and, and if applicable, the staff member will stop the meeting. The school will gather information from those involved and speak to the parents / carers about the incident. If any breeches of school expectations are found, the school will take appropriate steps to resolve matters to protect the physical, emotional and mental health of pupils and employees.

The school will always respond to an incident in a proportional way. The final decision on how to respond to breaches of the code of conduct rests with the headteacher. The school has a duty of care to protect all stakeholders and therefore staff may request the presence of a senior leader if they feel subject to any perceived aggressive or intimidating behaviour.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the school may then:

- Send a warning letter to the parent / carer.
- Invite the parent / carer into school to meet with a senior member of staff or headteacher.
- Arrange supervised meetings with another member of staff.
- Contact the appropriate authorities (in cases of criminal behaviour).
- Seek advice from our legal representatives regarding further action (in cases of conduct that may be libelous or slanderous).
- Ban the parent / carer from the school site.

The headteacher will consult the chair of governors before banning a parent from the school site.

The governing body reviews this policy every two years. The governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

Date: May 2026

To be reviewed: May 2028