



# **Bottisham Village College**

## **Home-School Communications Policy**

### **1. Aims of The Communications Policy**

The principles of this policy are directly linked to the ethos of the college: Inspiring, Caring and Enriching. It is our hope that the college's communication with home fosters and furthers these key aspects of the school's vision.

It is vital to understand that home-school communication is not simply about the exchange of information and ideas: it is as much about the process than the actual message we are intending to send. To that end, it is vital that the college has the highest standards of literacy and professionalism, ensuring that our communication embodies the central ethos of the college.

Within the college, it is our belief that a professional, courteous approach to communication, coupled with a focus on wellbeing and workload is a sound approach.

- Bottisham Village College believes that a positive relationship with parents and carers is central to an outstanding education for all young people in our care;
- Bottisham Village College will aim to both instigate and respond to communication with parents and carers;

- Bottisham Village College will respond to all communication within a specified time-frame and in a manner which is both positive and conducive to strong relationships with parents and carers;
- Bottisham Village College will ensure that communication within the college is appropriate, professional and mindful of workload. (see *“In-School Communications Policy”*)

## **2. Principles of Effective School Communication**

All communications from and within the college should follow some straightforward principles:

- To keep staff, students, parents governors and the wider community informed about the work of the college;
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional at all times;
- Use jargon free, plain English that is easily understood by all;
- Be actioned within the agreed timeframes;
- Be compatible with our central ethos: Inspiring, Caring and Enriching;
- Follow a professional style;
- Have an exemplary standard of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## **3 Communication with Home: Bottisham Village College’s Responsibility**

### **3.1 Email Responses to Parents**

Bottisham Village College will respond in detail to emails from parent and carers within a time-frame of 5 working days. However, a holding email will be sent within 24hrs to confirm receipt. On many occasions, a response to an email may be via telephone.

Some email principles should be adopted:

- All emails to parents should be proofread for accuracy and appropriateness;
- When subject teachers send an email home, Heads of Faculty must be copied-in (CC or BCC);
- Sensitive information should not be emailed home;
- Members of CLT should not be included into emails sent to parents, unless by prior arrangement, to ensure appropriate lines of communications;

- Parents must be referred to by their formal title;
- Attachments should be sent as PDF files to avoid alteration.

### **3.2 Telephone Responses to Parents**

If an emergency, the college will ensure that the correct person will contact home in response as soon as is possible within the confines of the working day. In all likelihood, this will be a member of the college leadership team, a Head of Faculty or Head of Learning.

### **3.3 Written Communication**

Responses to letters from parents will be typed by the administration team for consistency. All letters home need to be approved by a member of CLT.

At times, the college will send letters to parents for a range of reasons: PSHE Day Organisation, Trips and Visits Administration etc. If registered with the school, this will be done via the SchoolComms system; if parents are not registered, this will be done through the postal system.

Formal written conventions must be used in letters home.

### **3.4 Social Media**

The college will make extensive use of Social Media to offer parents live, updated and pertinent information about the day to day running of the college. These aspects can be found here:

<https://twitter.com/bottishamvc>

<https://www.facebook.com/BottishamVillageCollege/>

<https://www.instagram.com/bottishamvc/?hl=en>

The college will ensure that all students photographed in these communications have given their permission.

The college will regulate the comments placed on all social media sites by members of the public and, if deemed unacceptable, will follow usual protocols. This will apply to comments on accounts administered by Bottisham Village College, but also other accounts which mention the college's name directly.

### **3.5 Reports**

The college will issue formal reports once per year, and will update parents twice per year concerning academic progress and other key performance indicators, with current anticipated Grades set against students' GCSE target grades. Additionally, the college will ensure that parents are aware of data relating to a range of aspects: behaviour, attendance, effort, homework, organisation.

Live student progress data can be accessed at any time through the college's "Parental Intranet" facility.

### **3.6 Attendance**

The college will send letters to parents to alert them when attendance of their child is becoming a cause for concern. In some cases, parents will be invited in for a meeting to discuss their child's attendance.

### **3.6 Wellbeing and Pastoral Care**

Should the college see it as necessary, contact will be made with home to inform parents about any concerns relating to a student's wellbeing. In all likelihood, this will be from one of a range of members of staff:

- Pastoral support worker
- Head/Assistant Head of Learning
- Form Tutor

At all times, telephone calls home will be professional and courteous.

### **3.7 The Parental Intranet and School Website**

The college invites all parents to be able to access the BVC Parental Intranet. Here the college can communicate live and dynamic data sets relating to students: financial aspects, behaviour, rewards and academic progress.

<https://parents.bottishamvc.org/CookieAuth.dll?GetLogon?curl=Z2F&reason=0&formdir=5>

### **3.8 Meetings with Parents**

Parents' evenings take place once a year and staff should ensure that they are well-prepared for these:

- Assessment data;
- Pieces of work to illustrate key points;
- Focus on the “Good at” and “Work On” principles of Bottisham Village College;
- Teachers should not dominate the meeting, including all stakeholders in the conversation;
- Teachers are to be mindful of negativity, with issues framed in an honest but constructive manner.

It may be necessary at other points in the year to meet with parents. Some simple steps are to be applied:

- To keep notes of the meeting, followed with an email to parents with agreed action points;
- Parents to be signed-in to school in the usual manner;
- Where meetings are to be challenging, staff are to ask for the support of their line-managers.

### **3.9 Disputes between home and school**

Although the vast majority of parents are supportive of the college, disputes can happen. In all cases, staff should speak with their line-manager for advice and, in some cases, take over the communication from members of their team.

At all times, professionalism must be demonstrated by Bottisham Village College staff.

Where parents become abusive or aggressive in whatever form of communication is being used, politely inform them that the communication will have to cease and that they may wish to speak to the relevant line-manager.

Inform the line-manager immediately.

For persistent complaints and harassment, the relevant CLT line-manager will discuss with the Principal whether this is a persistent complaints situation which requires further action.

## **4. Communication with School: Parental Responsibility**

### **4.1 Absence**

If a child is unwell or unable to attend school for any reason, parents are to telephone the following number: 01223 811250 extension 444 before 8.30am.

It is parents' and carers' responsibilities to ensure that the college has up to date contact details. The college should have a number to phone during the school day and more than one emergency contact.

#### **4.2 Email**

Parents are welcome to email staff at the college, should there be a query; responses can be expected within 72 hours. Queries may consist of curriculum enquiries, pastoral queries and general queries.

Where possible, Bottisham Village College staff are encouraged to return most parental emails with a telephone call, to avoid lengthy email trails and to expedite any actions that need to be taken.

If parents are unsure as to whom their enquiry should be addressed, they may email: [enquiries@bottishamvc.org](mailto:enquiries@bottishamvc.org) and it will be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff.

Should email communications be deemed as inappropriate, personal and aggressive, it shall be handed to a member of the College Leadership Team who will make contact with parents with a formal response concerning communication from home.

#### **4.3 Telephone**

In some cases, parents may wish to telephone the college: 01223 811250. This will take them through to the main switchboard where parents can choose an option on where they wish their call to be directed.

Should the member of staff they require be unavailable, our Administration Team will be able to pass on a message. Parents can expect a response to this message within 5 working days.

Naturally, in the case of emergency, the college will expedite any concerns.

#### **4.4 Visiting the College**

It is unlikely that the college will be able to meet with parents during the school day if the visit is unannounced.

However, If parents wish to come into the college unannounced to meet with particular members of staff, they are to sign-in at main reception. Should the particular member of staff be available, parents will be met by them in reception.

In the vast majority of cases, staff will be engaged in teaching and the day to day running of the college and unavailable to meet. Parents are welcome to wait in the college until such a time as they are free or agree a time for communication to take place. Staff will be unable to leave their teaching and management commitments to meet for an unplanned meeting.

If parents wish to arrange a meeting with a member of staff, the college would welcome this arranged via email or telephone.