

BISHOP'S HATFIELD GIRLS' SCHOOL

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY



Date of last review: Autumn Term 2023

Date of next review: Autumn Term 2025

School Based Policy

Communications Policy

Overview

It is very important to us that we work closely in partnership with parents and carers, and communication between home and school is key. We recognise however that it can often be difficult communicating with teachers because they have a very full timetable; and we know that parents and carers also have very busy lives. Additionally the school has recognised that the need to communicate with parents and carers places a significant demand upon our staff within a busy teaching day. As a school we have decided that we need to manage both parental expectations and ensure the highest standards of home-school communications.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Improve our communications with parents and carers
- Reduce the demands on staff to respond to parental emails in the evening and weekends so that work and home boundaries are clearer
- enable parents and carers to better understand the context in which teachers are working, and modify their expectations of an immediate reply
- ensure that communication is distributed and directed more appropriately across the staff team by signalling the first ports of call

Who to contact

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of your child is best managed by the person who is closest to them. We therefore request that parents and carers follow the protocol outlined below to ensure they get the best response to their enquiry or issue.

a. Academic issues

In the first instance, please contact the following members of staff who are responsible for the pupil in the following order:

1. Subject Teacher (please refer to your daughter's timetable or Go4Schools)
2. Head of Faculty

The Head of Faculty may choose to escalate the issue to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

b. Pastoral issues

In the first instance, please contact the following members of staff who are responsible for your child in the following order:

1. Form Tutor (list available on Key Contacts page of our website)
2. Head of Year (again, please refer to Key Contacts page of our website)

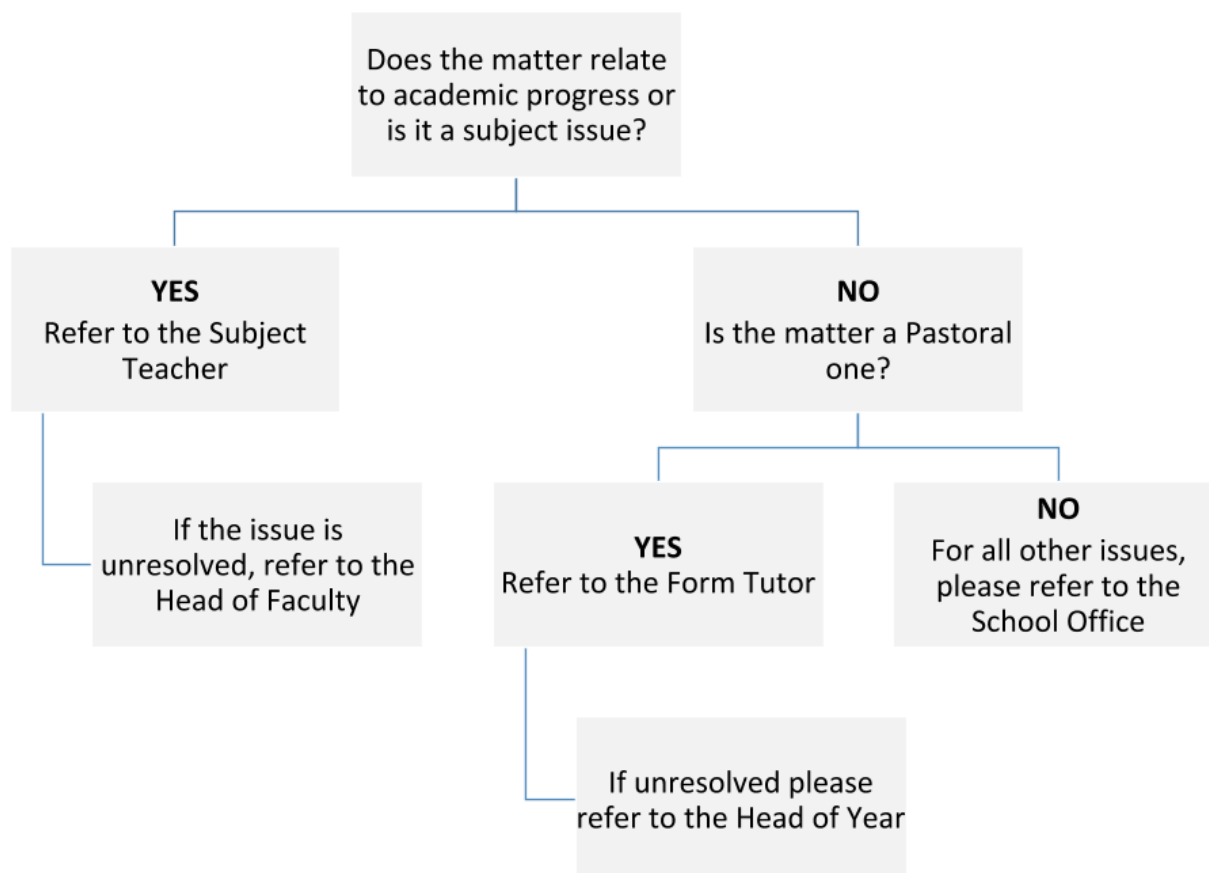
The Heads of Year are highly experienced in resolving pastoral issues although they may choose to escalate an issue to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

c. Safeguarding concerns

If the concerns are of a Safeguarding nature then please send your concerns via email to admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk and/or safeguarding@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk making your concern FAO the Safeguarding Team.

d. Administrative matters

Administrative matters such as changes to contact details should be addressed to the School Office by telephoning Reception or emailing admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk.



Please note that teachers want to respond to parental queries at the earliest opportunity and will do their best to do so. However, the majority of teachers' time is taken up teaching and preparing for lessons. Teachers' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, and they may be unable to respond to you on the day a query is made. We have also agreed with staff that there is no expectation to respond to queries during their personal/family time.

How to Contact the School

Pupil absence text facility

The school has a text facility for you to inform us if your child is absent or late. Every guardian is allocated their own individual contact number for text messages.

You will receive a text message from the school when your child enrolls at the school. Please save this number in your phone and use this number only to text the school if your child is unwell or has an urgent appointment.

You must provide your child's name and form before 9.15am on each day of absence and the reason for the absence.

Requests for leave for medical appointments, instrumental exams etc should be made in writing with as much notice as possible. Please see the Attendance page of our website for more details of our policy and procedures.

Student planner

Communication by email or student planner are the preferred method:

- Notes in student planners are by far the best way to get a message to a teacher promptly and should be used for the majority of everyday communication;
- The student is responsible for showing the note to the correct teacher. This is the best way to ask them to contact you if you require a more detailed conversation.

Telephone

Please use the main reception number to leave a message for a teacher to contact you:

- Reception staff will relay messages to teachers as soon as possible.
- If a call is urgent, please inform the receptionist who will attempt to find an appropriate member of staff to speak to you.
- We will try to respond to you within two working days, if not the same day. This initial response may ask for more information or for more time to investigate the matter raised.
- Please note lessons will never be interrupted for teachers to take calls.

Email

Please email admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk and mark your email For the Attention of [name of teacher] or use the member of staff's email address if you are already in dialogue with them. Please note:

- Teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and the school does not expect work email to be checked during a teacher's personal time.
- We aim to respond to you as soon as possible and within two working days. Part-time staff may take longer to reply. This initial response may ask for more information or for more time to investigate the matter raised.

Emails are a fast and efficient means of communication which offer many advantages. However, we ask parents and carers to consider the tone and implications of any message, as well as the length and frequency of communications. All communication should be polite and respectful as too often hastily sent emails or comments by an upset parent can cause great hurt or offence. Our staff put every effort into making school a positive experience for the girls and we do not wish to undermine this goodwill. We will not tolerate any form of abusive behaviour (physical, verbal or written) from

parents/carers towards any member of our staff. Please see our Dealing With Abusive Parents policy for more information.

Meetings

The day-to-day care, welfare and safety of the pupil is best managed by the person who is placed closest to them, i.e. their Form Tutor.

- Meetings should always be pre-arranged with members of staff.
- If you urgently need to see someone, for instance if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, please phone ahead and the reception staff will do their best to find an appropriate member of staff to see you.
- For non-urgent meetings we will aim to meet with you within five working days. The school will determine the level of urgency at its discretion, to enable it to manage multiple demands.

Social Media

Social media is a fast and efficient way of communicating with parents and carers about school activities and events, and your active support of our posts is very welcome. However, occasionally a hastily written comment or posting can be hurtful and destructive and we therefore ask everyone in the school community to keep public messages professional and positive. Parents and carers should also not attempt to “friend” or “follow” any individual member of staff. When the Headteacher is made aware that social media is being misused, they will not hesitate to request to see the messages and, where necessary, request that comments are deleted and ‘group chats’ are closed down. In the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content, the Headteacher will report it to the appropriate authority.

Contacting your child

Parents/carers should not attempt to contact their child directly by phone or email during the school day. If in an emergency a parent needs to contact their child then they should contact the school office and they will pass on any urgent messages as necessary.

Contacting You

Arbor is our main communications system and the Arbor app may be downloaded so that parents can receive messages and notifications as well as accessing information about their child.

Our preferred method of contacting you is via our Arbor email system. However, we will send Arbor app messages or texts with urgent messages such as school closure or if a pupil has not arrived at school.

Further communication channels such as how to access your child’s progress reports and keep up with school news are outlined in the Communications and Payments section of the school website.

No Response

If you have not received a response from the school within three working days please contact the school by emailing admin@bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk and we will chase up your enquiry.

Communication with parents and carers is important to us, and we will continue to monitor this policy and our approach to improve the process further.

Complaints

We strive to resolve all queries and issues as quickly as possible and with the best possible outcome. However, should a parent or carer have a complaint, it is important to follow the school's Complaints Procedure which is detailed in the Policies section of our website.
