



Bexhill
Academy



Communications / Parent Engagement and Partnership Policy

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Reviewed by: T Hillman

COMMUNICATIONS/PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP POLICY

For Bexhill Academy

INTRODUCTION

Bexhill Academy recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (pupils, parents/carers, Trust Board Members, Local Authority, outside agencies, national bodies etc.) and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the school.

The key stakeholders for Bexhill Academy are parents/carers and pupils and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective two-way communication between home and Bexhill Academy.

PARENTS/CARERS AS PARTNERS IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Parents and carers have a key role to play in their child's education. Bexhill Academy will make every effort to encourage and make arrangements for parents/carers to contribute to the shared view of their child's needs.

We encourage communication with parents/carers and teachers via email and telephone conversations. By attending year group Parent/Carer Consultation Evenings and getting feedback on your child's progress and attainment, you can talk with your child at home about their learning experience and progress requirements.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To ensure that effective communication and consultation takes place between Bexhill Academy, parents/carers, pupils and other stakeholders.
- To ensure robust processes for consultation between Bexhill Academy, parents/carers and pupils on key service areas.

Bexhill Academy recognises that engaging and working with parents/carers is vital in providing their child with an excellent education. At regular opportunities throughout the year, the academy will ask parents/carers what they expect from and what they think of the academy. We intend to involve as many parents/carers in their child's education as possible as part of the community aspect of the school's work.

Our aims include the following: -

- To make Bexhill Academy as welcoming and inclusive as possible. Signage will be clear, informative and positive.
- All written and telephone enquiries are to be dealt with promptly.
- A variety of forms of communication with parents/carers, for example telephone contact, email, post, text and home visits are encouraged.
- Parents/carers are contacted for positive as well as negative reasons.
- Information is given to parents/carers on what pupils are taught and strategies for helping their child are circulated.
- Parents/carers will be encouraged to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided to ensure this support is effective.
- Bexhill Academy will encourage the use of parents/carers as volunteer helpers within the boundaries relating to safeguarding children.
- Bexhill Academy will promote family learning and family fun activities.

COMMUNICATION

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes, updates via Head Teacher's Newsletter or email) or online through social media or through the website. Our aim is to utilise all means of communication effectively.

Staff will endeavour to reply to parent/carer letters as quickly as possible, preferably within 2 working days. Any letter or complaint will be referred to the Head Teacher, Dr Neal, for advice prior to response.

Communication between the academy and parents/carers will operate in the following ways:

- All prospective parents/carers may receive a prospectus on request or in person by coming to the academy reception
- Prospective parents/carers are invited to an Open Evening in Term 1 of the academic year proceeding the year of entry to the academy
- Prospective parents/carers are invited, along with their child, to an Induction Evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined, essential information given and information about the academy is presented
- Parents/carers are invited into a Year 7 "Settling In Evening" in Term 1 of Year 7 to meet the pupil's teachers and review how the pupil has settled into the academy. Academic and Pastoral information will be duly shared.
- Parents/carers are invited to attend at least one full parent/carer consultation evening each year to review the academic, personal and social progress of their child.
- Parents/carers will receive reports of academic progress on a regular basis.
- Bexhill academy will use social media to post updates including student achievement. Where parents have given permission, this may include student images. This may include.
 - student work
 - Students taking part in activities, trips or visits
 - School sports fixtures
 - School events or notable occasions
 - Student personal success outside of the Academy where parents have requested

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school where teachers may be teaching full time or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after academy hours. Parents/carers may feel frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate response, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call.

For this reason, please contact reception in the first instance. Bexhill Academy will also be proactive in encouraging use of a wide range of communication methods, with email contacts published on the website. All parents/carers are encouraged to give an email address for prompt and effective communication. The Parent Mail system is also in operation to ensure messages can be sent promptly and directly to the parent/carers mobile phone and/or email address.

ACCEPTABLE COMMUNICATIONS

Respect is at the core of our academy values. We will respectfully respond to all queries and communication with politeness and courtesy.

We expect that your communication remains courteous and respectful also. If any telephone communication is not constructive or respectful staff will end the conversation and direct, you to explain your concerns via email. It will then be dealt with by a senior member of staff.

Please be reminded that parents/carers are not to take audio or visual recordings of any meeting without the prior express permission of the Head Teacher.

We thank you for your understanding and support in communicating in a respectful and courteous manner.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PARENTS'/ CARERS' COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

The MAT recognises that all its members of staff are dedicated professionals who are committed to delivering high standards. We expect all parents/carers to respect this and to raise any issues in a polite and calm manner. If a staff member feels s/he is not being treated in a polite or calm manner by a parent and wishes to make a complaint about this, they should in the first instance discuss this with their line manager. If their line manager is unable to resolve the situation through discussion with a member of the SLT, this should then be escalated to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher will then write to the parents to ask them to adjust their approach, reminding parents of the above Guidelines for Communication between parents/ carers and staff. If the parent/ carer does not adjust their approach, the Trust Board may write to them stating that the academy will cease to deal with them until they have apologised to the relevant member of staff and improved their behaviour.

Guidelines for parents/carers

- If you send an email/leave a telephone message/have a meeting which has an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassing, or if the email/conversation exchange is not moving forward constructively, staff will ask the academy to contact you to ask you modify your approach. Regrettably, if this persists, the academy will be unable to help you further with your query.

When contacting/ responding to the school

- It is worth reminding yourself, when you are about to raise an issue, that staff at Bexhill Academy really do care about children and want them to succeed. If, from the outset you make it clear you want to work collaboratively with the school to resolve your issue, the staff member will be genuinely motivated to help you
- Expect staff to be respectful and polite, but it is helpful if you approach them in a way that naturally elicits this response
- Remember that you may initially only have your child's version of events about an issue, so be prepared on occasion to hear an account which may run counter to this.
- It would be very much appreciated if parents could raise any issues they may have with one person in the first instance as raising an issue with multiple staff members slows down the process of the issue being dealt with
- If what is being said by a teacher seems unfair, please try to ensure that the tone of the email/ your telephone call remains calm and make it clear that you have heard and understood what the teacher's concern is, just as we will expect them to respond views which they may not necessarily agree with in calm and empathetic manner.

- Inevitably, the hardest contact to deal with will concern a child's disappointing behaviour or academic performance. It is easy to get defensive when someone seems to be questioning your child in this regard. But this is when empathy is needed the most: the problem will not resolve itself unless it is first acknowledged and understood.
- If, for whatever reason, the contact with staff does not going well despite your best efforts to resolve the issue, escalate your concern via the academy's Complaints Procedure.

HOME/ACADEMY AGREEMENT

Our Home/Academy Agreement is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the academy's aims and values, our responsibilities towards the students, the responsibilities of parents/carers and what Bexhill Academy expects of the students. We ask parents/carers to sign this agreement when their child starts at Bexhill Academy.

BEXHILL ACADEMY WEBSITE

Parents/carers without access to a computer should be encouraged to make contact with the academy to arrange for computer access at the school.

The Bexhill Academy website is a good source of general information and includes:

- School prospectus
- Curriculum resources
- Holiday dates
- Copies of letters to parents/carers
- Information about lessons
- Special events
- News Updates
- Essential Bexhill Academy emergency details
- Safeguarding Information, Support and Guidance

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES etc.

Staff are not permitted to communicate with parents/carers or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". This is part of our safeguarding procedures to protect pupils and staff.

Where Bexhill academy posts on social media channels this will only be via the official Bexhill Academy accounts by authorised staff. Posts will not include the ability for staff, parents or students to communicate with each other. All posts including student likenesses will have permission to do so and no information will be shared that may otherwise identify them.

EMAIL

Parents/carers may wish to contact Bexhill Academy via email as an alternative to telephone or letter. The email address is office@bexhillacademy.org

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Parents/carers will be invited to special open sessions, events and presentations throughout the course of the year.

PARENT/CARER INVOLVEMENT

Parents/carers may receive questionnaires on aspects of the services provided by Bexhill Academy. Replies are confidential and will be collated and analysed by the Senior Leadership Team. Issues arising will be shared with the Executive Principal and discussed by the Trust Board and the Leadership Team.

Parents have the opportunity to provide Bexhill Academy with images of their child's successes outside of Bexhill Academy. Parents will share the image through the socialmedia@bexhillacademy.org email address. On sending the image the parent/carer gives permission for Bexhill Academy to use the content in its social media posts, an auto reply will confirm to parents that the content has been received. Content received from parents must include consent given to all students included in images.

SUPPORTING PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN WITH SEND

Bexhill Academy recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents/carers of all children with additional needs. The SEN code of practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents/carers and user-friendly information and procedures. All professionals will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents.

All staff within Bexhill Academy are expected to help parents/carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents/carers understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to (see SEND policy).

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

- A calendar of school events is produced and updated on the academy website for parents/carers and pupils.
- The weekly newsletter is made available to parents/carers. It contains general details of academy events and activities as well as celebrating successes.
- We will send letters when necessary, including via ParentMail, and store copies on the academy's website.
- Bexhill Academy encourages parents/carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity.
- If a child is absent from school, and we have no indication of the reason, Bexhill Academy staff will contact a parent/carer by telephone/text message to find out the reason for the absence.
- Bexhill Academy has an official Facebook and Instagram page.

COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER SCHOOLS AND OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Prior to pupils joining Year 7, students are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to Bexhill Academy. We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better 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 East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service, Children's Services and Child Protection Units. We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our academy should provide a safe and secure environment.

We hold information on all of our pupils in Bexhill Academy and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details will be sent to parents/carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data and who we pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 2018.

USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs are used in and around the academy for many purposes, including displays, records of practical work and records of important events.

We may use photographs of students or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community including through social media. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of students participating in academy events.

Where student images have been used, parent/carer permissions will have been sought in advance.

Photographs used in the press will not be captioned with students' names.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Bexhill Academy will review this policy every year and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy.

Parents/carers can support Bexhill Academy in the implementation of this policy by reinforcing our values in their home-school conversations with our students. We welcome parent/carer feedback on this policy.