

Breadalbane Academy



Parental Communications Policy

(Updated May 2019)

1. Introduction and Rationale

This policy seeks to define the means by which the school maintains good communications with parents and other stakeholders. It should provide an overview of what parents can expect of the school and, in turn, what the school will expect of parents.

This policy complies with relevant Perth and Kinross Council policy documents, including the [Customer Service Standards](#) (July 2010).

This policy reflects that the school's vision statement, in particular our belief that everyone in our school community is respected and has a strong voice. It is an important principle that the views of all are listened to so that together we can build the best possible experience for our young people. This is our school.

2. Parental Communication with the school

Enquiries at reception or by telephone

Parents are welcome to raise matters with the school by visiting reception or by telephone. In many cases, including where a message has to be passed to a pupil, such enquires can be dealt with directly by office staff. Where another member of staff is required to respond, the following will apply:

- Non-urgent enquires

In such cases, a message can be left with the office staff who will forward it to the relevant member(s) of staff. The school would normally aim for non-urgent enquires to be dealt with within five working days. In many cases, however – particularly where there is a time factor – responses will be far quicker.

- Matters requiring an immediate response

Where a matter is of such urgency that it requires an immediate response, it will be passed to the 'duty officer' who will usually be a member of the senior management team. In most cases, the duty officer will be available to deal with such enquires at the time of contact.

- Logging of enquiries

All enquires that require a member of staff to get back to a parent are logged centrally with details of the time and nature of the enquiry and the member of staff to whom the enquiry has been passed. This allows the school to quality assure response times.

Enquiries by email

All enquires by email should be directed to the school's generic account:

Breadalbane@pkc.gov.uk

This will allow enquiries to be logged for the purpose of quality assurance and for them to be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff, with line managers copied in as appropriate. Parents are advised on the website of broad remit areas within the school in order that they can mark their email for the attention of that person.

- Timescales for response to email enquires

The timescales for responses to email is five working days.

- Logging of emails

As with walk-in and phone enquiries, a log is kept of parental email enquiries. Any email to the school will also receive an automated reply confirming receipt and reminding parents of the standard five working days timescale for responses. This email also advises that the school should be phoned in the event of more urgent enquiries.

Letters to the school

Parents will often use letters to communicate relevant information, such as reason for absence, to a primary class teacher or a secondary register teacher. In the case of secondary, if what is being communicated should be known by more than one member of staff, such letters are best addressed to the guidance teacher. In general, any letters requiring a response should, in the first instance, be addressed to one of the following: the Headteacher, a secondary depute, the Primary Depute, secondary guidance teachers, or the Principal Teacher of Support for Learning.

Key points of contact – issued regarding learning

The key vehicle for staff-parent discussion is parent contact evenings and parents are strongly encouraged to attend these whenever possible. Reports will also be used as a means of communicating progress in learning. In secondary, parents will also receive tracking reports and - when appropriate – intervention letters. In addition to this, there will also be exceptional circumstances when the school requires to contact a parent regarding pupil progress.

However, there will also be occasions when a parent wants to contact the school to raise issues regarding learning.

- Primary

In the primary, there are often informal opportunities to share a brief conversation with members of staff. Where a longer conversation is required, parents should speak with the class teacher to arrange a meeting or contact the school office. Please be aware that it is often very difficult to cover staff during the school day and staff have limited contractual time outwith the school day for this purpose.

- Secondary

In the secondary there are fewer informal opportunities for parents to speak with teachers, and given the far larger number of pupils that secondary staff have contact with in a typical session (upwards of 120, compared to 25-30 in the primary) it is much more difficult for the school to organise direct contact between teaching staff and parents, beyond parent contact evenings. In the first instance parents should direct all enquires to their child's guidance teacher.

- Issues relating to one secondary subject area

Where the query relates to progress in one department only, such enquiries will normally be passed to the head of department who will liaise with the teacher and contact the parent. In some cases, this may lead to a meeting with staff but we would aim to deal with most

enquiries by email or phone. Such email or phone contact could be made by the guidance teacher, the head of department, or – in discussion with the head of department - the class teacher. Depending on the nature of the issue, formal meetings could involve a member or the senior management team, a guidance teacher or the head of department. Under exceptional circumstances the class teacher may also be requested to attend.

- Issues relating to more than one secondary subject area

Where parental concerns relate to more than one subject, this will be investigated in the first instance by the Guidance teacher who will involve relevant staff as required.

Parental complaints

Should a parent wish to make a formal complaint about any aspect of the school, including the performance of individual staff, this should be addressed to the headteacher. The school is subject to the [Perth and Kinross Complaints Procedure](#). Such complaints can be made by email or letter.

3. The role of parents in good home-school communications

Communication between the school and home is at its most effective where parents are clear of what is expected of them in this regard. The following are key ways in which parents can support the work of the school in terms of communication:

Pupil absence

The school's over-riding obligation is to ensure the safety of the young people entrusted to it, and it is therefore of the highest importance that reasons for any pupil absences are established as a priority each morning. It is therefore essential that parents notify the school at their earliest possible convenience where circumstances are likely to result in their child being absent from school. Where no such notification has been received parents will be sent a Groupcall message asking for such information. Parents are requested to respond to such messages as a matter of urgency, as the school will continue to pursue absences until such time as it has established a reason for an absence. In this past, this has led to the ultimately unnecessary involvement of the police.

It is also very important that parents provide the school with absence notes, when appropriate, following medical absences.

Returns

Throughout the session parents will be asked to make returns to the school by stated deadline. These could be for a number of reasons, such as data updates, confirmation of attendance of a pupil on a school trip or activity, feedback on reports etc. Whatever the reason, it considerably eases the administrative burden to the school when parents are able to observe the deadlines provided.

Updating the school on personal matters

All our pupils can be affected by things going on at home and these can have an impact on their learning. It is very helpful for the school to be made aware of anything that a young person may be experiencing away from school that could be having an impact on how they

are feeling in school. This could be a something such as a family bereavement or friendship difficulties.

Updating the school in the event of change of contact details

It is very important indeed that the school has current contact details for parents and other relatives. Parents are requested always to notify the school of such changes, both to their own contact details and those of relatives. This can be a particular problem for the school when it comes to mobile phone numbers.

4. Communication between the school and parents

The School Handbook

A school handbook is made available to all parents through the school website and is updated by December of each year. This handbook meets the requirements of the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and its purposes include:

- providing a welcome for new parents to the school
- helping parents to choose a school
- helping parents to prepare their child for school.

The handbook should serve as a practical guide to parents about school, authority and national policies and how these will impact on their child's experience at the school. It should also give them a good 'feel' for the sort of school that we are.

The school handbook is also available in hard copy upon request.

Standards and Qualities Report

The school is required under the Standards in Scotland 's Schools etc (Scotland) Act (2000) to publish an annual report including key performance measures such as those relating to attainment and attendance. This report is published on the school website in September.

General Communications to all parents

The school uses a variety of methods to communicate with all parents on matters which are of interest to them. These include:

- Groupcall – this facility allows the school to send short text messages to parents and is usually used only for matters that require to be drawn to parents' attention urgently such as unexplained absences, school bus or club cancellations or severe weather closures.
- Email – the school holds parental email addresses for almost all pupils and is increasingly moving towards this as the means of communication in preference to paper. Such changes will be subject to consultation with parents advance.
- Newsletter – the newsletter is published at a frequency of twice a term and provides parents with an accessible and attractive overview of the school's activities. The first newsletter of the session also provides a 'cut out' copy of the school calendar.

- The School Website – the school website should be a very useful resource for parents. As well as providing news updates, the website should be the place where parents are most likely to find information they need about this school. This includes the school’s calendar of events, the school handbook and other key documents. The school website also provides clear details for parents on how they can contact the school.
- Twitter account – this is particularly useful for providing updates on pupils’ achievements both within the school and in terms of extra-curricular activities.

Communication regarding the curriculum/learning and teaching

Nursery

‘New starts’ to the primary begin with an individual meeting with parents to discuss the child’s needs and create a personal plan. Matters discussed at this meeting are reviewed at parent contact appointments which take place twice annually, or sooner if required. A detailed written report is provided towards the end of the session for children progressing to primary. For all other children, a shorter report is provided. Nursery staff are usually available for informal discussion at the beginning and end of nursery sessions, but formal appointments can also be arranged if required. Parents are also provided with a curriculum overview at the beginning of each month, and the parental noticeboard is updated weekly.

Primary

There are two parents’ nights per year for primary pupils and a detailed written report towards the end of the session. Primary staff are usually available for informal discussion at the end of the school day, but formal appointments can also be arranged if required. Parents are also provided with a curriculum overview at the beginning of each term.

Secondary

At secondary, there is one parents’ night per year and an annual written report for each subject area. Should parents wish to discuss their child’s progress, contact should be made in the first instance with the Guidance teacher. Parents and pupils are also provided with course choice booklets to support them in their choices at the end of S2, S3, S4 and S5. Additional details of curriculum can be found on the subject department pages on the school website.

5. Seeking Parents’ Views

Consultation on proposed change

The school is committed to consulting parents wherever possible, particularly in cases where significant changes in policy or procedures are under consideration. As well as pupils themselves, parents are key stakeholders within the school community and their views are valued and will be taken into consideration in the making of decisions.

On-going evaluation of events

The school is also committed to seeking regular feedback from parents on activities such as parents’ nights and will always issue evaluation forms to seek their views on how such events might be improved.

Annual parental survey

In addition to these methods of seeking parental views, the school also conducts a formal parental survey, covering a wide range of the school's functions, towards the end of each academic session. These questions largely remain the same each year which allows the school to note trends – either positive or negative – in terms of parental responses. A summary of this survey is shared annually with the Parent Council and, where appropriate, their views on next steps sought.

The Parent Council

The Parent Council which meets monthly and is attended by the headteacher is a key vehicle for parents to share their views with the school leadership. These meetings are also used by the school leadership to provide parents with updates on a wide range of issues, ranging from small changes to procedures to very significant government policy changes. The school is committed to harnessing the potential of the Parent Council as a key forum for interaction with parents and will always seek to support initiatives raised through this body.

Parental Involvement in school self-evaluation and annual planning

The school is also keen to involve parents, as well as other stakeholders, in its annual processes of self-evaluation and planning and parents' representatives are invited to take part in the annual strategic planning day which takes place towards the end of each academic session.