



Ringwood School

Policy on managing all forms of communication from parents and visitors

POLICY DETAILS

Policy Name	Managing all forms of communication from parents and visitors
Policy Category	Communication
Author	Mrs. Leanne Symonds, Headteacher
Statutory, regulatory and/or contractual considerations	None statutory
Equality assessment	Positive / <u>Neutral</u> / Adverse
Authorised By	Headteacher
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Next Review Date	September 2027
To be reviewed by	Headteacher

Statement of principles

The Governing Body of Ringwood School encourages close links with parents and the community. It believes that students benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one.

Members of staff will only communicate with parents/carers who hold parental responsibility for the child. The School will not speak to 3rd parties or other family members regarding any student in the school. The School produces separate guidance for separated parents, which can be found in Appendix 2 of the policy.

The vast majority of parents and carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school. Sometimes things do go wrong and the first port of call in this instance is the school's complaints policy and procedure that can be found on the School's website:

<https://www.ringwood.hants.sch.uk/site/data/files/information/policies/Ringwood-School-Complaints-Policy-and-Procedure-Ratified-June-2023.pdf>

We would always encourage parents and carers to use this process to raise their concerns.

On the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the school is expressed, this can result in aggression, verbal and or physical abuse to include use of intimidating language towards members of school staff or the wider school community. The governing body expects and requires its members of staff to behave professionally in these difficult situations and attempt to defuse the situation where possible, seeking the involvement as appropriate of other colleagues. However, the school expects that all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence, abuse and intimidation (verbally and in writing) and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defence.

We expect parents and other visitors to behave in a respectful and reasonable way towards members of school staff both face to face; by telephone or in writing. All members of the school community have a right to expect that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn.

Reasonable response to parental communication

When a parent or carer contacts the school by telephone or by email a member of staff will aim to return the telephone call or email at their earliest convenience and within three working days. A member of staff may well be out of school or teaching a full timetable on the day that the telephone call or email is received. A same day response should not be expected as it may well not be possible.

We will always investigate concerns raised to us by parents. But we ask that parents and carers afford us the time to find out what has happened when something has gone wrong. We ask parents and carers to understand and accept that their child's version of a situation is

subject to their child's interpretation and is not fact. We will seek to find out the full situation and get back to you.

Members of staff will not be able to meet with parents without a pre-arranged appointment. Arriving at reception without an appointment will not result in an immediate meeting and we ask that parents and carers do not do this.

This policy outlines the steps that will be taken where behaviour is unacceptable.

Most parents and carers will exhibit reasonable behaviour however the following outlines types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable when communicating with the school and will not be tolerated:

- displaying a temper, or shouting at members of the school staff, either in person or over the telephone;
- disciplining, verbally abusing or physically intimidating another person's child – please bring any behaviour incidents to a member of staff's attention, or if the incident has occurred outside of school, please report it to the police
- physically intimidating a member of staff, e.g. standing very close to her/him;
- the use of aggressive hand gestures;
- threatening behaviour – in person, over the phone or in writing;
- shaking or holding a fist towards another person;
- using inappropriate or offensive language towards a person over the phone or in writing either directly or over social media.
- using physical aggression against another person, such as pushing; hitting, e.g. slapping, punching and kicking or spitting;
- breaching the school's security procedures, eg. coming onto school site without permission or unaccompanied by a member of staff;
- persistent demanding / intimidating email correspondence to a member(s) of staff (persistent being more than twice on the same matter);
- inappropriate communication (including defamatory, offensive, prejudicial or derogatory comments) about the school, individually named members of staff or any member of the school community through social networking sites and/or casual communication.
- Smoking, vaping or drinking alcohol on the school premises (unless alcohol has been allowed at a specific event). Being in possession of or under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol on the school site.
- Bringing a weapon or item that could cause injury to a person or school property onto site.

This is not an exhaustive list but seeks to provide illustrations of such behaviour.

Procedure to be followed in the event of any of the above:

If a parent or carer behaves in an unacceptable way towards a member of the school community, the Headteacher or an appropriate senior member of staff will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation.

A written warning will be given by the Headteacher or appropriate member of senior staff, in the first instance, to a parent or carer whose behaviour continues to be unacceptable.

Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continues, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a parent may be banned from the site by the Headteacher from the school premises for a period of time, subject to review. Depending to the circumstances, the incident may also be reported to the police.

If the aggression or intimidation are repeatedly taking place in a written form or verbally on the telephone, the Headteacher will issue an initial warning and further communication of a similar kind will then result in a restriction over written and telephone communication with the school for a period of time, subject to review. This may happen in the case of persistent and harassing emails that seek to continually raise the same issues. In this case the parent or carer will be advised to use the Complaints Policy first.

https://www.ringwood.hants.sch.uk/_site/data/files/information/policies/Ringwood-School-Complaints-Policy-and-Procedure-Ratified-June-2023.pdf

In imposing a ban/communication restriction the following steps will be taken:

1. The parent or carer will be informed, in writing, that she/he is banned from the premises or that their written or verbal communication will be restricted, subject to review, and what will happen if the ban is breached, e.g. that police involvement or an injunction application may follow
2. Where an assault has led to a ban, a statement indicating that the matter has been reported to the local authority and the police will be included. Where communication breaches harassment legislation, the police will be informed.
3. The Chair of Governors will be informed of the ban/restriction.
4. Where appropriate, arrangements for students being delivered to, and collected from the school gate will be clarified. As will arrangements for communicating with parents or carers over any safeguarding or critical educational matters involving their child if they are subject to a communication restriction.
5. The ban or restriction will be reviewed following a specified period of time.

Ringwood School has a close working relationship with the local police and unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of unacceptable behaviour(s).

Conclusion

The Governing Body itself expects all communication between the School, the wider school community, its students, parents and carers to be of a positive and constructive nature and may take action where behaviour by anyone communicating with the School is unacceptable or there are serious breaches of our home-school code of conduct or health and safety legislation.

In implementing this policy, the school will, as appropriate, seek advice from the school's health and safety and legal advisors, to ensure fairness and consistency.

Appendix 1: Inappropriate use of Social Network Site

Nationally, social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, school staff, and in some cases other parents/students. The Governors considers the use of social media websites being used in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the students or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the School as described in the Complaints Policy. This allows concerns to be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any student or parent/carer of a child/ren being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on any social media network sites, they will be

reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site. All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report content or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer or student removes such comments immediately. In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse of social networking and other sites.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly is the issue of cyber bullying and the use by one child or a parent to publicly humiliate another by inappropriate social network entry. We will take and deal with this as a serious incident of school bullying. Thankfully such incidents are extremely rare.

Appendix 2-

Guidance for parents of Ringwood School who are separated:

In families where a student's parents are separated, we recognise that relationships can be accompanied by tension and our main aim is not to put any additional stress on the student concerned. The student is our main priority, and we hope parents will make every effort to recognise this and support us and their child.

We therefore request that parents respect the following. The guidance will apply unless there are court orders in place stating otherwise, (and we will need to see copies of such orders), or the whereabouts of one parent is unknown. Parents and partners may need to check on who has legal parental responsibility.

The School will always encourage parents to engage with their child's education and will:

- send formal documentation, such as reports, to both parents with parental responsibility if requested
- send routine school information, such as school trips, to the parent with whom the child lives, in the case of shared access, the parent with whom the child lives for most of the time
- make available online access to the student's profile page, covering academic progress, SEN status and attendance. This can be linked to multiple email addresses
- encourage students to be organised, in terms of having homework etc, in the right location to bring into school
- not facilitate contact arrangements for a separated parent. If a parent wishes for such arrangements, they must do so with the other parent or obtain a 'contact order' through a Solicitor
- not allow a student to be collected during the school day by any parents or guardian without prior arrangement
- when prior arrangement is in place, the School will not be able to prevent a child being collected from school by a guardian with a parental responsibility if the child is happy to go
- not accept and pass on messages, gifts or cards for a student on behalf of a parent
- need to be informed, through the data collection sheet, as to the people who we may call in the event of an accident or emergency, these will be called in the sequence given to us

- not act as a line of communication between parents who are in conflict regarding their child's education
- need to be informed as to who can give messages to the school about the child's welfare, such as a change in travel arrangements or collection for medical appointments. This may include other family members or partners or a parent
- only accept one request for an appointment for Parents' Evenings, unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is only realistic for teachers to discuss the child once per parents' evening. We hope parents can make amicable arrangements to accommodate this
- request parental permission for ArborPay to enable financial transactions with the School. Any parent with legal responsibility for a child can have an Arbor account and as part of this they can have an ArborPay account.
- request consent to administer an anesthetic or other urgent medical treatment

We hope this makes the situation clear for parents; it is in line with our Child Protection Policy and will allow us to fulfill our duty of care to all our students.