

ARCHBISHOP BLANCH SCHOOL



Archbishop Blanch
SCHOOL

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

POLICY WRITTEN BY:	Deputy Headteacher
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**Community, Compassion, Forgiveness, Friendship,
Thanksgiving, Trust**

ARCHBISHOP BLANCH CE HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This policy should be taken and used as part of Archbishop Blanch Church of England School's overall strategy and implemented within the context of our Mission Statement and Instrument of Government aims.

As a Church of England School, we accept and respect all members of our community as unique children of God, precious in His sight and of infinite worth.

1. Rationale and Aims

- 1.1. Archbishop Blanch School recognises the importance of maintaining lines of communication with parents and carers, with other schools, with the community, with outside agencies, and within the school. Good communication between all these groups is essential, and Archbishop Blanch School is committed to being accessible and open to all who have an interest in the school.
- 1.2. Children achieve more when everyone works together. Parents, carers, governors and friends of the school can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve. Effective communication will improve relationships within the school and promote partnerships with parents and the wider community. Quality communication will enhance the school's reputation.
- 1.3. This policy addresses the main ways in which the school ensures effective, consistent and coherent external and internal communication.

2. Guidelines

- 2.1. To make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination. We recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural and other groups represented in our school and community.
- 2.2. All communications should:
 - Keep staff, students, parents and carers, governors and the wider community well informed
 - Be open, honest, ethical and professional
 - Use jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all
 - Be carried out within an agreed timeframe
 - Use the method most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- 2.3. Letters sent out on behalf of the school should use Standard English, using inclusive and accessible language and should be on Archbishop Blanch School headed paper. Emails and text messages should also be appropriate in tone. Staff should address parents as Mr, Ms or Mrs rather than using first names.
- 2.4. All letters sent out by Archbishop Blanch School are authorised by the Head Teacher (or delegated member of the Leadership Team) .
- 2.5. If needed to aid communication, the school will provide interpreters and support for parents or children with disabilities or special needs.
- 2.6. We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents and the wider community; in newsletters, in the school prospectus, with press releases or on the school website. The local or national press may on occasions publish photographs of children participating in events at school. If so, this will be done in accordance with the signed data information sheets returned to the school and only used when permission for use of photographs has been granted by someone with parental responsibility. A list of students for whom permission has not been granted is maintained by pastoral staff and these students are also highlighted on SIMs so that all staff are aware.
- 2.7. Children who are not allowed to have their photographs taken or who cannot be filmed are marked centrally on the SIMS system. The Data Team can run these reports when required.
- 2.8. Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable before use.

3. Home - School Communications

- 3.1. Our home–school agreement explains the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents, and what the school expects of the children. We ask parents, students and tutors to sign this agreement on entry to the school and at the beginning of each school year in the front of the annual Student Planner.
- 3.2. The agreement covers our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, policies including uniform, and homework.
- 3.3. Children achieve more when schools and parents work together. Keeping parents informed enables the school to share aims and values and reinforces the important role that parents play. Archbishop Blanch School recognises that communication is a two-way process and aims to ensure parents are listened to and their concerns dealt with in a professional, timely and appropriate manner.
- 3.4. Archbishop Blanch School has the following service standards to ensure a prompt response for communication requests by parents. Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone to return a call. **The following response times are usually adhered to:**

Communication from Parents	Suggested Response Time
Phone calls	Returned within 48 business hours of Parent's call
Emails	Email reply within 72 business hours of receipt (set up an automated out of office email reply when staff are away)
Written letter	Acknowledge receipt of letter within 72 hours

Communication sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays will elicit no reply until term-time.

- 3.5. Staff will contact parents to raise issues by phone, text message, email or letter. Parents may contact the school by any of these methods.
- 3.6. Email is the simplest form of communication. All students at Archbishop Blanch School will be given an individual email account during his/her time at the school, which they are expected to check regularly. Students can send and receive emails from many computers in the school and remotely.
- 3.7. Details such as term times, home-learning timetable, dates for parents' evenings and other school events will be posted on the school website and reminders may be sent by text, email, or letter.
- 3.8. Letters received by staff and their replies will be kept on file. Letters to parents will be approved by the Head teacher (or delegated member of SLT) before being sent out. Appropriate, timely professional advice will be sought before replying where necessary. Any letter of complaint will be referred to the Head teacher immediately in line with Archbishop Blanch School Complaints Policy.
- 3.9. Particular achievements and articles about life at Archbishop Blanch School may be highlighted on the website and in the Head teacher Update. A termly newsletter is published to parents and is emailed as well uploaded to the website. These are both key vehicles for communicating in a variety of ways: alerting parents and students to forthcoming issues; celebrating the life of the school; communicating information about school trips; giving students a voice; publishing various results, and so forth. Key dates are published on the website on the school calendar. Parents are invited to attend Parent Evenings each year. Parents are also invited to appropriately themed events to cover issues relating to the relevant year group of their child (e.g. Options Evening for Year 9)
- 3.10. Communication about student progress takes place formally for each student through termly reports and at Parents Evenings.

- 3.11. The Student Planner is the usual route for routine matters. The Student Planner is used as a key vehicle for communication between parents and the school and this planner is fully explained at the induction evening for new parents in July and to all students as they start at the school. The planner is expected to be monitored on a weekly basis by parents/guardians and will be monitored by the student's form tutor and it is imperative that the planner is used to its full potential.
- 3.12. Parents/guardians/carers have a responsibility to ensure the school has up-to-date contact details, including an email address. In the case of sudden incidents affecting the school, such as a fire or severe weather, parents will be texted and information will be put on the website, the Twitter page and on the Local Authority website.
- 3.13. We will try to contact parents/carers by telephone if their son or daughter is injured or taken seriously ill. Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or text message which may direct them to a special message posted onto the school's website. If the school is closed for more than one day, due to adverse weather or some similar problem, an update will be posted on the website.
- 3.14. In the unlikely event of a more serious incident, the response will, inevitably, depend on the circumstances. The **first and greatest priority will always be to look after the students**. The second priority will be to give parents the fullest possible account of events as soon as possible; Archbishop Blanch School will always tell parents/carers personally if their son or daughter is injured, or has suffered some mishap unless the emergency services take this responsibility and instruct otherwise.
- 3.15. The school cannot get involved in disputes between parents in the event of separation or divorce. All correspondence and information will be sent to the designated primary contact with parental responsibility unless a written request is made for both parties with parental responsibility to receive information (letters, school reports, calendar, invitations to school events). This will not apply if there is a court order to the contrary. Unfortunately, we cannot arrange for separate appointments at Parents' Evenings. The interest of the student must always be paramount and it is important that parents agree on decisions to avoid the child or the school being involved in disputes including, for example, participation in school trips, or subject choices.

4. New and Prospective Parents and Students

- 4.1. The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our school. This is produced annually. Details are also held on our school website.
- 4.2. Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening where they receive a school prospectus, have a tour of the premises and view presentations. New Year 7 parents are invited to an induction evening in the June/July of Year 6 where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented. In the October of Year 7 parents are invited to meet the student's form tutor to review how the student has settled into the school.
- 4.4. The aim is for the perception of the school by prospective parents, neighbouring primary schools, other schools, outside agencies and the wider community to match the reality. By having clear, consistent and positive communication, Archbishop Blanch School will develop a positive public profile that will attract prospective students, increase parental involvement, improve the self-image and morale of the school community, encourage a sense of pride by valuing people and achievements, increase community involvement and help to recruit high quality staff. Establishing and promoting a high quality image will also help to develop business links with potential sponsors, funding providers, educational providers and employers who may be able to provide opportunities for students such as employment and work experience.
- 4.5. On knowing a student will be joining Archbishop Blanch School, we liaise with their previous school to obtain important information including their curriculum levels and support requirements. There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. Separate SEN transfer information is organised by the LA.

5. General Marketing, PR and the Local Community

- 5.1. As well as informing parents about their own child, a co-ordinated approach will convey a positive message about the school to families and to the wider community.
- 5.2. Clear signage and a welcoming reception area are the starting point for visitors. Good news stories and positive messages will be displayed via the noticeboards around school and on the electronic screens in reception.
- 5.3. Successes will be highlighted throughout the year. Some will be suitable for reporting solely on the school website/newsletter/social media while others may also be turned into press releases for distribution to community and local media.
- 5.4. When press coverage is achieved, parties who may be interested such as parents, staff, governors and the community will be informed via email, social media, the newsletter and the school website.
- 5.5. All publications and press releases which include pictures of students will be checked before release/ publication to ensure that they do not include any students whose parents have informed us they do not wish their child to be photographed.
- 5.6. An easy-to-use website is crucial for online visitors, as is an up to date and informative one.
- 5.7. All publications and prospectuses will be mindful of the equal opportunities policy, reflecting and celebrating the diversity of our community and avoiding stereotypes.

6. Running the School

- 6.2. All systems and procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook and are regularly reviewed.
- 6.3. Written communications are delivered through pigeon holes in the staff room or via email.
- 6.4. Regular CPD sessions keep staff well informed.
- 6.5. Supply Teachers and Cover Supervisors are given relevant information to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. The daily cover sheet is produced daily and emailed to relevant staff.

7. Archbishop Blanch School Website

- 7.1. Archbishop Blanch School website provides a range of information about the school. All parents are provided with details to access the Parents' pages which provide additional material.
- 7.2. Archbishop Blanch School updates its website regularly to inform all members of the school and local community.
- 7.3. Archbishop Blanch School is aware of the statutory requirement for schools to ensure key documents and data are available on the website. A full list of these documents can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online>

8. Mobile Phones

Under the school's mobile phone policy all phones must be locked away during the school day. In an emergency, parents must therefore contact Reception, not contact their child directly. Students should go to Student Services if they need to contact home during the school day.