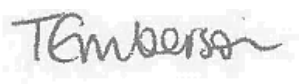
Communications Policy

(including Social Networking)

Approval Date: October 2017

Review Date: November 2028

Headteacher: 

Aim
To ensure that Three Bridges Primary School is a thriving and successful school, we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents/carers and with other members of the wider community.

We need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

All communications at Three Bridges Primary School should:
• Keep staff, pupils, parents/carers and governors well informed;
• Be open, honest, ethical and professional;
• Be actioned within a reasonable time;
• Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience;
• Ensure that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role;
• Take account of relevant school policies;
• Be compatible with our core values and School Development Plan;
• Written communications with parents/carers and other external contacts must comply with agreed practice.

Responsibilities
This section details the responsibilities of the different groups within the school.

Senior Leadership
• To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face;
• To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively;
• To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff;
• To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

All Staff
• To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment;
• To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school;
• To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the Senior Leadership Team and colleagues informed.

Internal Methods of Communication

- All staff receive a Staff Handbook, updated annually, providing them with important information about the school organisation and procedures within the school;
- An integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. SLT, teaching staff, LSA and MDMS meetings;

- All formal meetings should be structured and minuted, and members invited to contribute to the agenda;
- For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff;
- Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of e-mail, where appropriate. E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information, however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required. **Staff are reminded to ensure all school e-mails are confidential and should not be accessed at home/on your phone unless password or passcode protected;**
- Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffrooms, which staff must check daily, handed to staff personally or e-mailed directly to their work e-mail address @tbps.org.uk;
- Staff meetings take place weekly. A central record is kept of content of staff meetings by SLT;
- Weekly school events are noted at the start of each week on the notice board in the main staff rooms and included in the cover timetable email that is sent to staff on Wednesdays.
- Within each individual class, class teachers organise their own methods of communicating information to the children. This may be a news board or other type of notice board. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children;
- Class teachers can use Class Dojo to inform parents/carers of key information as this information can be translated.;
- Reminders or letters to individual parents/carers are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day;
- We have a whole school online reporting system, called CPOMS, for recording incidents, cases or any concerns we have about children. All staff have a login to CPOMS and record their concerns;
- All staff must be informed of messages given to the children;
- Any letters or messages that are sent out to parents/carers must be shared with the School Office.

External Methods of Communication

Schools have many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Our aim is to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values through keeping parents/carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents/carers play in supporting school.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents/carers, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents/carers should always be addressed in an appropriate manner.

We will try to make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions to our society by all cultural groups represented in our school.

Communications with Parents/Carers

Letters: Staff will respond to parents'/carers' letters within 48 hours (two school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to the HT immediately. Letters to parents/carers must be approved by the HT before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents/carers will be placed in pupil files and a copy given to the office staff.

E-mail: The school uses Bromcom, an e-mail system, to communicate with parents/carers. Any communication that needs to be sent to parents/carers using this system must be approved by the Headteacher. If a parent communicates with the school using e-mail, a copy should be saved on CPOMS. Staff should forward relevant e-mails from parents/carers to the Headteacher and should always do so if the content is a complaint. A hard copy of any e-mail sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the school office. The same applies to all internal mail, e-mail transmissions concerning pupil matters. All e-mails requiring an answer should be responded to within 48 hours (two school days).

Class Dojo: Class Dojo is a communication tool for teachers and parents/carers. Class Dojo is an easy way to encourage pupils, and to help them share their best moments with parents/carers. Each parent receives a username and password generated by the site. Each child also receives a username and password. Parents/carers have access to their child's page only. This is an effective tool for teachers to use when a message to parents/carers needs to be sent e.g. reminders about events, clothing requirements for a school event the following day.

Telephone Calls: Office Staff check answer phone messages each day. A file note will record details of the conversation. Office staff should not interrupt teaching staff to answer a telephone call.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs: Staff will not communicate with parents/carers or pupils via social networking sites or accept them as "friends". (See Appendix – Social Networking Policy).

Reporting to Parents/Carers: There are two Termly Learning Conferences, one in the Autumn Term and one in the Spring Term which parents/carers can attend alongside their child. A summary of the discussion is sent home after the meeting. An end of year report is sent out at the end of the academic year which explains whether the child has met/not met Age Related Expectations (ARE) in Reading, Writing and Maths, and assessment of foundation subjects is also included. End of Key Stage results for children in EYFS (GLD), Year 1 (Phonics screening) and Year 6 (KS2 test results) will be sent to parents/carers at the end of the summer term with the end of year report. Parents/carers are invited to write a comment on these. Parents/carers can 'drop-in' after school, should they wish to meet with the class teacher to discuss their child by making an appointment at the School Office.

In addition to Termly Learning Conferences events, the school also holds termly Stay and Learn afternoons for parents/carers to come in to school to see their child's work and classroom.

We will also make reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent/carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand communication.

School Prospectus: The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents/carers a full picture of provision in our school. This is updated every year and placed on the website.

School Website: The school website provides information about the school and is an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience.

A range of information is included on the school website about how children are assessed academically. The school provides information about our curriculum and how we teach core subjects, for example, each year group's assessment information for Reading, Writing and Maths.

Home-School Communication

• Information is displayed on the notice board outside school on both sites.
• A school newsletter is sent to parents/carers each month through Class Dojo and Bromcom, with paper copies available on request or sent to parents/carers who are not on the e-mail list. It contains general details of school events and activities. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies on the school's website.
• Children take part in home learning. All children are given a home learning book, and class teachers provide a grid of activities they can complete during the term. These are differentiated according to the child's academic ability. In addition, the children practise key skills e.g. reading, spelling and maths.

Safeguarding Information

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm; that their protection is a shared responsibility; and that Three Bridges Primary School should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with our children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help any child needing protection. So, when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, who may share this information with Social Services (see note above re: CPOMS).

Guidance for the use of mobile phones by staff working with young people

All staff using mobile phones should be aware that using a mobile phone inappropriately could result in disciplinary action. Mobile phones should not be used near children.

School network: Smartphone devices such as i-Phones and their Android or Windows equivalents can be configured to use the school's Wi-Fi network rather than having to rely on connection to the Internet.

This must only be done with the consent of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and with the assistance of the school's technical staff (where present). Access to the network must only be permitted after the individual has signed a declaration to the effect that they have read and will

comply with the school's Acceptable Use Policy even though the device itself may be their own property.

Use of mobile phones during school hours: Three Bridges Primary School insists that all adults, staff, volunteers and helpers, do not use their mobiles in classrooms at all. If a text or an e-mail needs to be sent, it must be done away from the class.

During lunchtimes, when not on duty, members of staff are free to use their personal mobile devices using their own data (or school Wi-Fi, if permitted). If members of staff use their equipment in this way they are still expected to follow professional standards when doing so. They should not bring the school (or the Local Authority) into discredit or disrepute.

Use of mobile phone online outside of work: Inappropriate actions taken online outside of work on a mobile device could be taken into consideration when assessing suitability for employment and future employment. Staff, or prospective staff, will need to be aware of how their online activity may be perceived from a professional perspective.

Photography using mobile phones: Another factor to consider is that nearly all mobile phones have in built cameras and that, if used whilst at work, in school, an allegation could be made that a member of staff has taken inappropriate images with those cameras. Staff are not permitted to use their personally-owned cameras whilst on school business and doing so may be prohibited by the school's safeguarding requirements. Staff should always use school-owned iPads and adhere to the school's policy on photography, which outlines where parental permission is required. If a personal phone is used inadvertently, or as a last resort, any images must be uploaded to the school network at the **earliest opportunity** and deleted from the phone with no copies having been kept or transmitted elsewhere, and the use reported to SLT.

Communication with pupils using private mobile phones: Staff should not use their private mobile phones as a method of communication with pupils at any time. This includes giving their personal home or mobile phone numbers to pupils to allow those pupils to contact them.

APPENDIX I

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

Introduction to the Policy

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The two with the widest use are Facebook and MSN.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and children from inappropriate use of social networking sites.

SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including employees, governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the children of Three Bridges Primary School are protected from online bullying, inappropriate material or behaviour which may compromise their safety;
- That the school is not exposed to legal risks;
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected.

What is Social Networking?

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

- Blogs, for example Blogger;
- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com;
- Collaborative spaces, such as Meta (formerly Facebook) or Instagram;
- Media sharing services, for example YouTube;
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, for example X (formerly Twitter).

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation.

Terms of Use

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use:

Social Networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute;

- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns;
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner;
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff;
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies;
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents/carers;
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend';
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school staff;
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action;
- Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Guidance relating to children

No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Meta (formerly Facebook) and MSN. There is a mechanism on Meta where pupils can be reported via the Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is: http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

Meta is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from Meta's privacy policy:

"If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Meta or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us" .

"We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents/carers for permission before sending any information about themselves to anyone over the Internet and we encourage parents/carers to teach their children about safe internet use practices."

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school day;
- Pupils have responsibility for keeping their mobile phone safe. It must be kept in their school bag throughout the school day (see mobile phone policy);
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher. Parents/carers will be informed if this happens;
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day;
- Children are encouraged to report any improper contact or online bullying to their class teacher, in confidence, as soon as it happens. This information is shared with parents/carers as necessary.

This school will deal with incidents of online bullying seriously.

Guidance relating to staff

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the Headteacher. It is also strongly recommended that staff do not 'post' to social media on days when they are absent from work due to illness.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy:

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites;
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18;
- This means that no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on any social networking sites. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend;
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Headteacher in writing;
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child;
- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Headteacher or deputy Headteacher).

Child Protection Guidance

If the Headteacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy;
- Schools must refer the matter to the LADO;
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain the school's procedure;
- If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality;
- The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given;
- If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal procedure in the Child Protection Policy until the police investigation has been carried out.

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, Three Bridges Primary School protects itself from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents/carers should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

Previous Communication Policy Approved October 2016, reviewed October 2018 and September 2020, November 2022, November 2024 and November 2026.