



# **SANDWELL ACADEMY**



## **Communications Policy**

November 2023

## Document Details

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## Change Record

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# 1. Introduction and Aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the Academy and parents/carers has a positive impact on students' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the Academy improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- Builds trust between home and the Academy, which helps the Academy better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the Academy communicates with parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of Academy staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

In the following sections, we will use 'parents' to refer to both parents and carers.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

### 2.1 Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy

### 2.2 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the Academy's ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)

Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core Academy hours 8.00am to 5.00pm or their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

A copy of the Academy's ***Acceptable Use of ICT, Mobile Phones, Email, the Internet and Social Networking policy*** can be found on the Academy website: [Useful Documents & Policies - Sandwell Academy](#)

## 2.3 Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the Academy is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Respond to communications from the Academy (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the Academy

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our ***Parental and Visitor Code of Conduct***. This can be found on the Academy website: [Parental & Visitor Code of Conduct - Sandwell Academy](#)

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core Academy hours 8.00am to 5.00pm or during Academy holidays.

## 3. How we communicate with parents

Staff will always seek to establish open and approachable relationships with parents. It is appropriate that relationships are professional and parents are addressed in a formal manner.

The sections below explain how we keep parents up-to-date with their child's education and what is happening in the Academy. Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

### 3.1 Email

We use email to keep parents informed about the following things:

- Upcoming Academy events
- Scheduled Academy closures (for example, for staff training days)
- Academy surveys or consultations
- Class activities or teacher requests

### 3.2 Text messages

We will text parents about:

- Child absence
- Payments
- Short-notice changes to the Academy day
- Emergency Academy closures (for instance, due to bad weather)
- Asking a parent/carer to contacting the Academy as soon as possible when we have been unable to make contact by telephone

### 3.3 Academy calendar

Our Academy website includes a calendar which outlines the Academy terms and holidays for the academic year. [Term Dates - Sandwell Academy](#)

Where possible, we try to give parents at least 2 weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including non-uniform days, special assemblies or visitors, or requests for students to bring in special items or materials).

### 3.4 Phone calls

Staff should only contact parents/carers by telephone using the Academy telephone system, except in an emergency. The main points of discussion and action required/taken should be recorded on the students Bromcom communication log. All phone calls are recorded for monitoring purposes.

Telephone calls will be made where:

- Immediate contact with a family member is required i.e. for injuries or accidents.
- Staff including Personal Tutors/Heads of Year/Subject teachers wish to discuss students' performance (both positive and negative)

A member of staff will call the first named contact as listed. In the event that no live contact can be made, the member of staff will leave an answer phone message.

### 3.5 Letters

We send the following letters home regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Academy updates

### 3.6 Homework books/Academy planners

Each child has been issued with an Academy planner. Several sections within the planner need parent/carer consideration:

- Student charter – this should be read, discussed and acknowledged by parent/carers and their child.
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreement – this should be read, discussed and acknowledged by parent/carers and their child.
- Homework – planners should be signed weekly by parents to acknowledge that homework has been recorded and completed by their child. This will also be checked and signed by the child's personal tutor and will as a result create a dialogue between parent/carer and Personal Tutor.
- Absence – when a child is absent from the Academy we should be notified of a reason for this through the Academy attendance officer. Parents/carers should complete the **Explanations for Absence** page which can be found in the back of the student planner. This will be shown by the child to the Personal Tutor who will notify the Attendance Team at the Academy.

### 3.7 Reports

Across the year parents and families will receive a series of reports to update them on the progress of their child.

Report types:

**Data Report** = Progress data and Learning Attributes only

**PT Report** = Progress Data, Learning Attributes and a Personal Tutor comment

**Mock Grades Report** = Mock grades only

The Academy report cycle is outlined below:

Year	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
7	Data Report and Parents evening		PT Report			PT Report
8		Data Report and Parents evening		PT Report		PT Report
9		PT Report		Test results and Options evening		PT Report
10		PT Report		PT Report	Data Report and Parents evening	Mock grades
11	PT Report	Data Report	Mock Grades and Parents Evening	Data Report	PT Report	
12	Data Report (Settling in)	PT Report		PT Report Include BTEC Grades		Mock Grades and Parents Evening
13	PT Report	Data Report	Mock grades and parents evening	Data Report	PT Report	

### 3.8 Meetings

In addition to reports, each year group will have one scheduled Parents Evening. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The Academy may also contact parents to arrange meetings outside of Parents' Evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of students with special educational needs (SEN), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

### 3.9 Academy website

Key information about the Academy is posted on our website, including:

- Term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about Session 3

Parents should check the website before contacting the Academy.

### 3.10 Rewards and Sanctions

The Academy uses a range of rewards and positive reinforcement strategies. Examples of these include:

- Verbal praise and 'praise' positive
- Verbal praise and praise postcard sent home
- PT star student and phone call home
- Whole school Star Student
- Praise assemblies
- Motivational rewards/prizes
- Praise which students add to the ***Achievements, Awards and Targets*** section of the Student Planner

By these means the Academy, seeks to motivate students, create a positive learning environment, raise student self-esteem, and provide systems which can be used by staff to contribute to raise levels of achievement.

The following sanctions are used by the Academy in instances of inappropriate behaviour:

- Informal warning
- Formal warning (Disruption Stage 1)
- Moved within the classroom (Disruption Stage 2)
- Moved from the teaching venue to a colleague support venue (Disruption Stage 3)
- Lunchtime review
- Conduct review
- Isolation with the Intervention Education Centre (IEC) or SMT colleague support

### 3.11 Home-Academy communications app

**My Child at Academy (MCAS)** is an online information portal for parents/carers to be given access to student information. Parents/carers will be able to view their child's behaviour events, attendance record and recent reports. Additional information, such as their timetable, lessons and teachers are also available. Parent/carers should note that MCAS is a portal which allows them to monitor their child's academic performance in real-time via a web browser. Any queries regarding the information displayed should be directed to the child Personal Tutor at the Academy.



## 4. How parents and carers can communicate with the Academy

Parents should use the list in [appendix 1](#) to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the Academy General Office number and email address.

### 4.1 Email

E-mail provides a quick, effective way for parents/carers to communicate information about their child. The Academy is proactive in encouraging the use of email, with staff email contacts being available on the Academy website. <http://www.sandwellAcademy.com/page/meet-the-staff>

Parents should always email the Academy, or the appropriate member of staff, about **non-urgent issues**. The first point of contact should be the child's Personal Tutor (PT). They will direct enquiries to the relevant member of staff where necessary.

Parents/carers are reminded that teachers have little to no time during their teaching day to check emails and therefore requests which require immediate or quick action should not be sent via email. For example, emailing your child's teacher to inform them you will be collecting them for an appointment or to change pick-up arrangements is not appropriate due to the high likelihood that the message will not be read in time.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days (48 hours), and all emails requiring an answer will be responded to in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 4 working days. Staff are not expected to, and are discouraged from, checking and responding to emails outside of their working day. However, staff are encouraged to work flexibly and respond to emails in a way that suits them to balance their working hours. Staff do not expect families to read, respond or action emails outside hours that suit them. Email does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. All staff should seek face to face communications, when email is not the most effective form of communication. Staff and families are discouraged from entering into in-depth discussions about a child's progress or well-being via email.

Please note that lengthy email correspondence can increase work load and demands on staff. In sensitive matters, it is also possible that nuance and intended meaning are not understood which can make situations more challenging. Where possible, parents should attempt to hold a conversation with staff on matters related to their children.

### 4.2 Phone calls

If a query or concern is **urgent**, and parents/carers need a response sooner than 4 working days, they should contact the Academy via the Academy General Office. All telephone enquires will be answered by staff on the main Academy reception. It is our policy that office staff do not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency. Parent/carers are asked to email the relevant staff member and/or messages are taken and forwarded to the relevant person.

If the call requires a response from a member of staff, we aim to do this within 4 working days. If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone

call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 4 days of your request.

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues
- Personal crises

### 4.3 Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, the first point of contact should be the child's Personal Tutor (PT). They should email the PT to book an appointment. We try to schedule all meetings within 7 working days of the request.

While teachers may be available at the beginning or end of the Academy day if parents need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their child's learning
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing

Parents/carers should not arrive at the Academy without a pre-arranged appointment with a member of Academy staff. When a meeting has been arranged the Academy Gatehouse and General Office will be notified.

## 5. Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the Academy. We currently make whole-Academy announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in the following languages:

- English

Parents who need help communicating with the Academy can request the following support:

- Academy announcements and communications translated into additional languages
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the Academy General Office to discuss these.

## 6. Monitoring and Review

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every year.

## 7. Links with other policies

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

- ICT and internet acceptable use
- Parent code of conduct
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Home-Academy agreement
- Staff wellbeing

## Appendix 1: Academy contact list

### Who should I contact?

If you have questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address
- Include your child's full name in the subject line

We try to respond to all emails within 4 days.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Your child's Personal Tutor (in the first instance) All staff emails can be found on the Meet the Staff page on the Academy website <a href="http://www.sandwellAcademy.com/page/meet-the-staff">http://www.sandwellAcademy.com/page/meet-the-staff</a>
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Your child's Personal Tutor – as above.  Your child's Head of Year: <b>Year 7:</b> Miss Parker <a href="mailto:aparker@sandwellAcademy.com">aparker@sandwellAcademy.com</a> <b>Year 8:</b> Miss Hubble <a href="mailto:lhubble@sandwellAcademy.com">lhubble@sandwellAcademy.com</a> <b>Year 9:</b> Mrs Sharif <a href="mailto:hsharif@sandwellAcademy.com">hsharif@sandwellAcademy.com</a> <b>Year 10:</b> Mr Smith <a href="mailto:rsmith@sandwellAcademy.com">rsmith@sandwellAcademy.com</a> <b>Year 11:</b> Mr Denker <a href="mailto:ddenker@sandwellAcademy.com">ddenker@sandwellAcademy.com</a> <b>Director of Sixth Form:</b> Mrs Gill <a href="mailto:sgill@sandwellAcademy.com">sgill@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Safeguarding	Designated Safeguarding Lead: Miss Pincher Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs Adams Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Miss Breen <a href="mailto:safeguarding@sandwellacademy.com">safeguarding@sandwellacademy.com</a>
Medical Issues	Academy Nurse Mrs Hutchinson-Nash <a href="mailto:phutchinson-nash@sandwellAcademy.com">phutchinson-nash@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report your child's absence or request approval for term-time absence contact the Academy's attendance Manager Miss Zanib <a href="mailto:hzanib@sandwellAcademy.com">hzanib@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Special educational needs (SEN)	Assistant Head – Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equality Mr Byrne <a href="mailto:tbyrne@sandwellAcademy.com">tbyrne@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Bullying and behaviour	Deputy Head – Behaviour

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
	Mrs Chapman <a href="mailto:jchapman@sandwellAcademy.com">jchapman@sandwellAcademy.com</a>  Senior Deputy Head – Student Welfare Mrs Povey <a href="mailto:mpovey@sandwellAcademy.com">mpovey@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
ICT Support	IT team <a href="mailto:Support@sandwellAcademy.com">Support@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Payments/ParentPay	Finance office – Miss Bayley <a href="mailto:kbayley@sandwellAcademy.com">kbayley@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Financial support	Student Support Officer Miss Baker <a href="mailto:wbaker@sandwellAcademy.com">wbaker@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Academy trips	Deputy Head overseeing trips – Miss Bladen <a href="mailto:kbladen@sandwellAcademy.com">kbladen@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Uniform/lost and found	Academy Housekeeper Mrs Portman <a href="mailto:jportman@sandwellAcademy.com">jportman@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Academy events/the Academy calendar	Heads PA Miss Melissa Brookes <a href="mailto:mbrookes@sandwellAcademy.com">mbrookes@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Session 3	Assistant Head – Extended Curriculum Mr Smith <a href="mailto:rsmith@sandwellAcademy.com">rsmith@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Parents Advisory Group	Initial enquiries should be made to the following email address: <a href="mailto:pag@sandwellAcademy.com">pag@sandwellAcademy.com</a>
Governing board	Academy General Office <a href="mailto:info@sandwellacademy.com">info@sandwellacademy.com</a>

### Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our **Concerns and Complaints policy**. This can be found on the Academy website:

<http://www.sandwellAcademy.com/page/useful-documents>