



# **BROWNEDGE ST MARY'S**

## **CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

*'Let your light shine'*

### Parental Communications Policy

Signature of Head Teacher/ Chair of Governors	
Policy devised by: Mrs N Oddie	February 2025
Review Date:	February 2027

## MISSION STATEMENT

### Let your Light Shine

*If we love others, we live in the light. 1 John 2:10*

Inspired by our Gospel Values we have a shared responsibility to:-

- create an environment of welcome, love and respect for each member of our learning family.
- develop the unique gifts and talents of all, striving for excellence in everything we do.
- live out our commitment to love, service and justice in the local and global community.
- nurture the journey of faith and discovery for all.
- celebrate and reflect on the love of God, which is at the heart of all we are.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THE POLICY

This policy aims to promote the essential partnership between the school, parents/carers, staff, students and the wider community through efficient and effective communication. Good communication should allow and encourage all stakeholders to participate in the development of the school and support our overarching aim of letting our young people's 'Light Shine'.

The school believes that engaging and working with all stakeholders, particularly our parents/carers, is vital in our role to provide children with an excellent education and a safe learning environment, as well as helping our students become well rounded citizens with a strong set of values. We firmly believe that good communication builds trust between home and school, which helps our school better support each child's educational and pastoral needs

We remain committed to being an open and approachable school that engages with our community and puts children at the heart of our decision making. As a school, we also greatly value your support in enabling us to do this in an effective, timely and sustainable manner.

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

- Explaining how the school communicates with parents/carers
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of school 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 OUR COMMUNICATION STATEMENT

*This statement is displayed in our main reception area*

We strive to be an open and approachable school that remains committed to engaging with all stakeholders. We would like to thank the overwhelming majority of visitors and parents/carers who are consistently pleasant and polite in all their communications with the school. However, it is important to note that we have a duty of care to our staff as well as to our students and we remain wholeheartedly committed to both.

All staff at the school are expected to show respect for everyone that they come into contact with during the course of their duties by being polite and courteous at all times. They will endeavour to deal effectively with any reasonable request they receive from visitors and callers to the school. The school also expects all those who visit or contact our school to treat our staff respectfully and courteously at all times. The same level of courtesy is expected with email communication. We strongly encourage all those who may wish to communicate with our school to do so in a manner that does not discriminate against any member of our diverse community and consistently adheres to our Communications Policy. In particular, any correspondence should have due regard of the **Brownedge St Mary's**

**Commitment to Communication** statement (Appendix 1) and the **What do I do if I have a concern?** document (Appendix 2).

Parents/carers and visitors should be aware that a request for an appointment must be made in advance if they wish to see a particular member of staff. We greatly value the support of parents/carers and the wider school community and thank you for adhering to this notice.

We take any aggressive behaviour or threatening language towards any member of our staff seriously, whether this is during a telephone conversation, email or during a visit to the school. If a caller or visitor's behaviour is deemed discriminatory, rude, abusive, aggressive or raises their voice to any member of our community, they will be advised to stop their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, we will terminate the call or ask the visitor to leave the premises.

As a school, we work in close partnership with South Ribble schools and follow the **South Ribble Co-operative Parental Interaction Policy**. This can be found in Appendix 3 and will be followed in conjunction with this policy.

### 3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 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

#### Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents in line with this policy and the school'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 school hours 8am to 3.45pm, 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.

#### Parents

Parents are responsible for:

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

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our **Parental Cooperative Communication Policy** (Appendix 2). Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of core school hours 8am to 3.45pm, or during school holidays.

### 4 HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS/CARERS

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

## **Firefly**

Brownedge St Mary's uses Firefly as a communication tool between parents/carers and students, allowing access to a range of information including:

- Upcoming school events/trips
- School closures (for example bad weather / strike action)
- School surveys or consultations
- End of term letters from the Headteacher
- Timetables
- Attendance
- Homework

*Why it helps:*

*We believe it provides parents with access to a wide range of information relating to their child in a clear and effective manner. It reduces the number of phone calls and emails being sent and also allows parents the opportunity to provide or update vital information such as contact details and attendance information.*

## **Email**

Email has the ability to serve as a quick and effective way of communicating. The school will use email to distribute non-urgent notices, updates and formal school reports. Parents/carers are encouraged to provide an email address for correspondence, ensuring to keep us informed should details change.

*Why it helps:*

*If used correctly, emails allow for information to be shared in a timely manner and to a wide audience. We predominantly use this for sharing letters from members of staff in school.*

## **Text Message**

Text messages are used where there is a short message that is quite often time sensitive.

*Why it helps:*

*Text messages give us greater flexibility and allow the school to contact at short notice, particularly for unforeseen circumstances such as the weather or as a reminder of a previous communication.*

## **Social Media**

The school uses Facebook and Instagram as a positive tool to celebrate school life, events or student achievements. Subscription to these is not expected and therefore key messages will be relayed primarily through formal school communication channels e.g. email/school website.

*Why it helps:*

*We are aware that social media has the power to reach a broader audience and it remains a privilege of our role to celebrate students' success. Whilst there are always risks posed with engaging with social media, provided we continue to use it as a one-way method of communication we believe it adds additional value to school life.*

## **School website**

The school website provides a range of information about the school. In the first instance, parents/carers should check the website for answers to general queries. The website includes information on the following areas:

- School times and term dates
- School aims
- Admissions
- Uniform
- Policies
- Homework
- Pupil Premium information
- Staff vacancies
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information

We invest significant time in keeping our website up to date. It is designed to provide relevant information regarding all aspects of school life. The school calendar is housed within our website, alongside other features that are

regularly visited throughout the course of any academic year. It is the primary source of information for all parents/carers or those with an interest in the school.

*Why it helps:*

*We hope that it allows all stakeholders to gain valuable information without having to contact the school on an individual basis, creating a more efficient and more manageable experience for all. We use the website to advertise upcoming events, share our holiday dates and promote the schools' commitment to 'Letting our Light Shine'.*

### **Phone calls**

Our school staff regularly communicate with parents and carers to discuss individual information relating to their child. We also hope to increase their use in celebrating achievements and positive behaviours. All telephone calls may be recorded for the purposes set out in our Call Recording Policy. All reasonable effort will be made to communicate that calls may be monitored and recorded.

*Why it helps:*

*We know that some communications are better dealt with verbally due to their nature. A telephone conversation allows for all points to be raised and considered and often leads to a positive resolution.*

### **Reports**

Each academic year, parents and carers receive an interim report and two full reports which provide information on Attitude to Learning (ATL) and progress. These will be emailed directly to both parents/carers and students.

*Why it helps:*

*This provides specific and up to date information in relation to progress and attitude to learning.*

### **Meetings**

Parents and carers are able to attend yearly parents' evenings. During these meetings, parents can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of learning, their child's wellbeing, or any other area of concern. The school may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents' evenings if there are concerns about a child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents of students with special educational needs (SEND), those who are looked after, or who have other specific requirements may also be asked to attend further meetings to address these additional needs.

*Why it helps:*

*Meetings in school can be an effective tool to discuss complex issues or needs, serving to provide clarity whilst also preventing extensive email exchanges that may or may not sensitively communicate messages.*

## **5 HOW PARENTS/CARERS CAN COMMUNICATE WITH SCHOOL**

The following communication methods are available to all parents/carers and the advice offered below is designed to support efficient and effective communication for all. Parents should use the list in appendix 1 to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue, including the school office number and email address.

### **Contact us form**

If parents/carers need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should use the 'Contact Us' form on the school website. This should be the primary method in which to make contact with the school. Parents/carers should use the list in **appendix 1** to identify the most appropriate person to contact.

### **Email/letters**

Parents/carers should aim to, where possible, use the 'Contact Us' form on the website for non-urgent issues in the first instance. We know that an email may be the most appropriate method where there are attachments to be shared. Staff will endeavour to reply to emails/letters within 3 working days. This response may be via letter, email, telephone or in person.

### **Phone calls**

We recognise that there may be occasions where a phone call is the most appropriate channel of communication. As our Call Recording Policy highlights, telephone calls may be recorded if deemed appropriate by the member of staff. Where possible, queries will be forwarded to the relevant colleagues in school but it is important to note that many colleagues will have existing commitments that may prevent them from taking the call. If it is not possible to speak to the relevant member of staff (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone

call at a mutually convenient time. We aim to make sure parents/carers have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 3 working days of the initial request.

Parents/carers are encouraged to report absences by contacting our Attendance Team. This should be done as soon as possible on the morning of the absence to avoid a First Day Absence Call being made.

### **Meetings**

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff to discuss their child's progress or wellbeing, they should use the 'Contact Us' form feature (see **appendix 1**).

## **6 ACCESSIBILITY**

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the school. Parents who need help communicating with the school are invited to discuss any additional support they may need. We will try to identify a family member, a member of staff or where possible, an external agency, to provide the following:

- School announcements and communications being translated into additional languages
- Organising an interpreter for a meeting or phone call

We will endeavour to make any additional arrangements as necessary. Please contact the school reception to discuss these or use the 'Contact Us' form.

## **7 COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL DAY**

It is important to note that students are asked to not contact their parents/carers directly during the school day. Similarly, we ask parents to contact the school rather than their child throughout the course of the day. This is because we want to avoid any unnecessary worry (a common issue being a child contacting home to say that they are unwell, without having notified school and this prevents us being able to support your child effectively). There are over 40 phones in school and we remind students that these are available should they wish to contact home.

In line with the school's mobile phone policy, phones should not be seen or heard anywhere on the school site. Provision will be made, where appropriate, for students to contact home.

## **8 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The headteacher monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every two years. The policy will be approved by the governing board.

### **Links with other policies**

The policy should be read alongside our policies on:

ICT and internet acceptable use

Staff code of conduct

Complaints Policy

Home-school agreement

Staff wellbeing

## **Brownedge St Mary's Commitment to Communication**

Communication is a fundamental aspect of school life and we recognise the importance it plays in creating a positive and safe environment for the 800 pupils, 1600 parents, 150 staff and governors and the many external agencies that make up our wonderful Brownedge community. We believe that working together to ensure communication is effective is in the best interests of our pupils. Through regular, positive interactions, we can continue to support your child throughout their time in school.

### **School Hours - Our business hours are 8.00am - 3.45pm**

Staff are not expected to be available in the evenings or weekends. We recommend using the schedule send function outside of these hours to stop staff being prevented from marking and planning, or spending time with their families.

#### **Why do we say this?**

*External communications can be overwhelming and receiving emails outside of working hours inevitably reduces staff members time away from work and for many colleagues, limits the time available for marking, planning, attending school functions and crucially, for many, significantly impacts on the time spent with their families. We recognise that we cannot control emails sent but ask that all stakeholders use the schedule send function so that the email arrives when staff members are in work. Staff are strongly advised to take emails off their personal devices and refrain from reading them outside of business hours and this advice remains in place. However, emails can be difficult to ignore and we would greatly appreciate your continued support in protecting staffs' personal time.*

### **Response Time – We will respond with 3 working days**

We want our communication to be timely as this is in the best interests of our pupils. The greatest challenge we face is the high volume of communications we receive. We will prioritise communications based on need, but must stress that we cannot operate as an emergency service.

#### **Why do we say this?**

*There are occasions when external agencies and parents/carers share frustrations when we have not replied on the same day as their email or phone call was made. Given the high volumes of communications and the time needed to formulate an appropriate response, 3 working days is a realistic timescale to expect a reply. If parents/carers have an urgent concern where their child is at risk of immediate harm, we would review this carefully but also ask that consideration is given as to whether another service is better placed to deal with the emergency.*

### **Language - There is no place for aggressive behaviour or threatening language**

Those who adopt this manner, or are rude to staff, will not receive a response. Any visitor to school who adopts an aggressive tone will be asked to leave the premises.

#### **Why do we say this?**

*We believe that school staff's emotional wellbeing can be negatively impacted due to poor experiences of external communications. Whilst we remain thankful for the wonderful manner in which the overwhelming majority of stakeholders liaise with the school, we have this rule in place to protect colleagues.*

### **Appointments – Book an appointment**

This is to avoid disappointment. Our staff will be teaching during the school day, and may be in meetings or supervising pupils after school. Anyone arriving to reception unannounced will be advised to request a meeting via the [Contact Us](#) page on the school website.

#### **Why do we say this?**

*On a typical day, all colleagues will be engaged in a wide range of activities, many of which are planned in advance. It is unrealistic and unmanageable to deal with unannounced visits and we politely ask that all stakeholders contact the school in advance to agree a mutually convenient time to meet. We do recognise that there may be occasions where there is a genuine emergency that may prevent this taking place.*

### **Social Media – Used to celebrate success and not for a communication tool for parents**

It is important to note that our social media platforms are used to celebrate achievements and publicise school events, and should not be used to contact us with any concerns or queries. Any comments made must adhere to the guidance within our communication policy.

#### **Why do we say this?**

*We believe that social media has the power to reach a broader audience and it remains a privilege of our role to celebrate students' success. Whilst there are always risks posed with engaging with social media, provided we continue to use it as a one-way method of communication we believe it adds additional value to school life. We would appreciate the support of parents/carers in not raising issues on social media before contacting school and giving us an appropriate amount of time to reach a resolution. Taking problems to social media rarely results in beneficial outcomes for anyone, and can often make it more difficult to solve the issue.*



## What do I do if I have a concern?

The school has updated its '**Contact Us**' form and would encourage all parents to use this as their primary method of contact unless there is a more time sensitive issue, such as ringing to sort out forgotten PE kit for that day or an instance where an attachment needs to be included or forwarded.

The guide below provides a helpful list of the options available to you via the 'contact us' form. In all communications, we ask that you share your child's name, their form and the reason for your contact with the school.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO & INFORMATION TO PROVIDE
A safeguarding concern	Designated Safeguarding Lead – <b>Miss Mellor</b>
Curriculum or subject related concern	Curriculum leader
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support	Form tutor and/or Head of House
Payments / ParentPay	Assistant School Business Manager – <b>Mrs Henderson Shepherd</b>
School trips	Trip leader
Uniform/lost and found	School reception
IT (iPads/accounts)	IT department – <b>Mr Wardell</b>
Attendance and absence requests	Attendance Officer – <b>Mrs Carerra</b>
Special educational needs (SEN)	SENCO – <b>Miss Oldham</b>
Before and after-school clubs	School Office
Hiring the school premises	Assistant School Business Manager – <b>Mrs Henderson Shepherd</b>
School events/the school calendar	We would ask that you check the school website in the first instance
Request a phone call/meeting	Name to be provided by parent/carer
General (something other than the above)	The school reception team will direct this to the most appropriate person
Exams and exam results	Exams Officer – <b>Mr Banks</b>
Careers, work experience and teacher training	<b>Mr Richardson</b>
Admissions	Admissions Officer - <b>Mrs Chester</b>



## South Ribble Co-operative Parental Interaction Policy



### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Dealing with a concern or a complaint is a straightforward process, but in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints or concerns in ways that can either impede the investigation of their complaint or concern or can present significant resource implications for the school. This can happen either while their complaint or concern is being investigated, or once the school has finished dealing with it.
- 1.2 We are committed to dealing with all complaints or concerns equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner. (In accordance with the school's complaint procedure).
- 1.3 We will not normally limit the contact which complainants have with school staff.
- 1.4 We do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants or by members of both the school and wider community. Unacceptable behaviour includes behaviour, which is abusive, offensive, threatening or timewasting and may include:
  - **Using abusive or foul language on the telephone**
  - **Using abusive or foul language face to face**
  - **Sending multiple emails**
  - **Leaving multiple voicemails**
  - **Using all media, especially social media sites maliciously to discredit the school or members of staff employed by the school, pupil/s attending the school or parents of pupils who are attending the school**
- 1.5 We will take action to protect staff from such behaviour. If a complainant behaves in a way that is abusive, unreasonably persistent, timewasting or vexatious, we will follow this policy.
- 1.6 Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of a complaints procedure as it progresses, for example if agreed timescales are not met, should not in itself lead to someone being regarded as a vexatious or an unreasonably persistent complainant.
- 1.7 If, after following the school's complaints procedure a complainant raises the complaint again without significant new information, this will be deemed a vexatious action.

### 2. AIM OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to contribute to our overall aim of dealing with all complainants in ways which are demonstrably consistent, fair and reasonable.

- 2.2** It sets out how we will decide which complainants will be treated as vexatious or unreasonably persistent, and what we will do in those circumstances. The policy is for the information of staff as well as other stakeholders, including parents and the Governing Body.
- 2.3** This policy is based on the most recent DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints procedures Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1** We have adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints".
- 3.2** We define abusive, unreasonably persistent, timewasting and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their, or other people's, complaints. The terms 'abusive', 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may be applied separately or jointly to describe a particular complainant and similarly actions that are timewasting that prevent staff fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
- 3.3** Examples include the way or frequency that complainants raise their complaint or concern with staff, or how complainants respond when informed of our decision about the complaint or concern.
- 3.4** Features of an unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complainant include the following (the list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the person will be considered as being in this category).

#### **An unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complainant may:**

- Refuse to accept that issues are not within the remit of the complaints policy and procedure despite having been provided with information about the scope of the policy and procedure.
- Insist on the concern or complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice (insisting, for instance, that there must not be any written record of the concern or complaint).
- Make what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints or concern and seek to have them dismissed or replaced.
- Make an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means in relation to a specific concern or complaint.
- Make persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, faxes, telephone calls or emails).
- Introduce trivial or irrelevant new information whilst the concern or complaint is being investigated and expect this to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Change the substance or basis of the concern or complaint without reasonable justification whilst the concern or complaint is being addressed.
- Refuse to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.

- Make the same concern or complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaint's procedure has been concluded, and insist that the minor differences make these 'new' concerns or complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure.
- Persistently approach the school through different routes about the same issue.
- Persist in seeking an outcome which we have explained is unrealistic for legal, policy (or other valid) reasons.
- Refuse to accept documented evidence as factual.
- Use social media sites maliciously to discredit the school or member of staff employed by the school, pupil/s attending the school or parents of pupils who are attending the school.
- Persistently contact school, via email, phone or in person at school demanding to see staff immediately and / or demanding to withdraw their child / children from school immediately.

A complaint may also be considered abusive or unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- **Maliciously.**
- **Aggressively.**
- **Using threats, intimidation or violence.**
- **Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.**
- **Knowing the information to be false; or using unreliable information.**
- **Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media including social media websites and newspapers.**

#### **4. IMPOSING RESTRICTIONS**

- 4.1** We will ensure that the concern or complaint is being, or has been, investigated properly according to the school's complaints procedure.
- 4.2** In the first instance the headteacher will issue a warning to the complainant. They will contact the complainant either by phone, in writing or by email to explain why this behaviour is causing concern and ask them to change this behaviour. The headteacher will explain the actions that the school may take if the behaviour does not change.
- 4.3** If the disruptive behaviour continues, the headteacher will issue a reminder letter to the complainant advising them that the way in which they will be allowed to contact us in the future will be restricted. The headteacher will make this decision and inform the complainant in writing of what procedures have been put in place and for what period.
- 4.4** Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with us will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time the restriction will be in place. In most cases restrictions will apply for between 3 and 6 months but in exceptional cases may be extended. In such cases the restrictions would be reviewed on a termly basis.
- 4.5** Restrictions will be tailored to deal with the individual circumstances of the complainant and may include:
- Banning the complainant from making contact by telephone except through a third party e.g. solicitor / councillor / friend acting on their behalf.
  - Banning the complainant from sending emails to individual and/or all school employees or Governors and insisting they only correspond by letter.
  - Banning the complainant from using the school premises.

- Banning the complainant from accessing any school building except by appointment.
- Requiring contact to take place with one named member of staff only.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days / times / duration.
- Requiring any personal contact to take place in the presence of an appropriate witness.
- Letting the complainant know that we will not reply or acknowledge any further contact from them on the specific topic of that complaint (in this case, a designated member of staff should be identified who will read future correspondence).

**4.6** When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, the headteacher will contact the complainant in writing to explain:

- Why the decision has been taken
- What action is being taken
- The duration of that action
- The review process of this policy

**4.7** The headteacher will enclose a copy of this policy in the letter to the complainant.

**4.8** Where a complainant continues to behave in a way that is unacceptable, the headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and stop any investigation into his or her complaint.

**4.9** Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the LA School Advisor, LA LADO, police and / or take legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

## **5. NEW COMPLAINTS FROM COMPLAINANTS WHO ARE TREATED AS ABUSIVE, VEXATIOUS OR PERSISTENT**

**5.1** New concerns or complaints from people who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. The headteacher will decide whether any restrictions which have been applied before are still appropriate and necessary in relation to the new concern or complaint. We do not support a “blanket policy” of ignoring genuine requests or complaints or concerns where they are founded.

**5.2** The fact that a complainant is judged to be abusive, unreasonably persistent or vexatious, and any restrictions imposed on our contact with him or her, will be recorded and notified to those who need to know within the school.

## **6. REVIEW**

**6.1** The status of a complainant judged to be abusive, unreasonably persistent, timewasting or vexatious will be reviewed by the headteacher after three months and at the end of every subsequent three months within the period during which the policy is to apply.

**6.2** The complainant will be informed of the result of this review if the decision to apply this policy has been changed or extended.

## **7. REFERRING ABUSIVE, UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

**7.1** In some cases, relations between organisations and abusive, unreasonably persistent, timewasting or vexatious complainants break down completely while complaints are under investigation and there is little prospect of achieving a satisfactory outcome. In such circumstances, there may be little

purpose in following all the stages of the complaints procedure. Where this occurs the Department for Education may be prepared to consider a complaint before the procedure has run its course.

## **8. RECORD KEEPING, GOVERNORS AND OTHER AGENCIES**

**8.1** Adequate records will be retained by the Headteacher's PA of the details of the case and the action that has been taken. The Headteacher will retain a record of:

- **The name and address of each complainant who is treated as abusive, vexatious or persistent**
- **When the restriction came into force and ends**
- **What the restrictions are**
- **When the complainant and departments were advised**

**8.2** The Governing Body will be provided with information about complainants who have been treated as abusive, persistent, timewasting or vexatious as defined by this policy at the termly full governing body meeting and termly meeting with the LA School Advisor.

**8.3** Barring from the school premises.

## **9.0 SUMMARY STATEMENT**

**Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. We will therefore act to ensure our school remains a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of the community. To maintain a peaceful and safe school environment the school cannot tolerate parents, carers and visitors who demonstrate the following behaviours. This is not a definitive list but gives clear examples of the types of behaviours we will not tolerate as a school community:**

- Behave in a disruptive manner which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employer's office, office area or any other area of the school grounds including team matches at home or away.
- Use loud / or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying temper.
- Threaten to do actual bodily harm to a member of school staff, Governor, visitor, fellow parent / carer or pupil regardless of whether or not the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence.
- Damage to or destroying school property.
- Transmit abusive or threatening messages to a member of school staff / Governor / fellow parent / carer or pupil via e-mails or text / voicemail / phone messages or any other form of written communication.
- Make defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments regarding the school or any of the pupils / parents / staff at the school via social media. Any concerns you may have about the school must be made in accordance with the school's complaints policy, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.
- Smoke on the school premises or consume alcohol or take drugs whilst on school property.
- Act in a manner, which is deemed inappropriate, as a result of inebriation or intoxication.
- Arrive at school and demand to withdraw their children with immediate effect due to informal contact being made directly with their child/children via mobile device about an incident in school. We will contact parents at all times with any concerns about their child/children and ask parents to collect them if appropriate.

Should any of the above behaviour occur on school premises parents, carers or visitors will be asked to leave the premises. In serious cases, the headteacher or the local authority will notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. The school will always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will be then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the appellant, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining venue of appeal is through the courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

### **Inappropriate use of Social Network Site**

Social media websites are being used increasingly to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools, Headteachers, school staff, and in some cases other parents / pupils. The Governors consider the use of social media websites in this way as unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. Any concerns you may have must be made through the appropriate channels by speaking to the class teacher, Pastoral Leader or Assistant Pastoral Leader, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, so they can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned.

In the event that any pupil or parent / carer of a child being educated in the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the website. All social network sites have clear rules about the content, which can be posted, on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity, which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent / carer or pupil removes such comments immediately.

In serious cases the school will also consider its legal options with any such misuse of social networking and other sites. If we feel it is appropriate to involve outside agencies, we will report issues to the LA School Advisor, LA LADO and legal teams. Additionally, and importantly, is the issue of cyberbullying and its 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.



## BROWNDGE ST MARY'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION

Communication is a fundamental aspect of school life and we recognise the importance it plays in creating a positive and safe environment for the 760 pupils, 1500 parents, 150 staff and governors and the many external agencies that make up our wonderful Brownedge community.

We believe that working together to ensure communication is effective is in the best interests of our pupils. Through regular, positive interactions, we can continue to support your child throughout their time in school.

### School Hours

Our business hours are 8.30 – 3.45. Staff are not expected to be available in the evenings or weekends. We recommend using the schedule send function outside of these hours to stop staff being prevented from marking and planning, or spending time with their families.

### Response Time

We want our communication to be timely as this is in the best interests of our pupils and will aim to respond to parents/carers in 3 working days. The greatest challenge we face is the high volume of communications we receive. We will prioritise communications based on need, but must stress that we cannot operate as an emergency service.

### Language

There is no place for aggressive behaviour or threatening language. Those who adopt this manner, or are rude to staff, will not receive a response. Any visitor to school who adopts an aggressive tone will be asked to leave the premises.

### Appointments

This is to avoid disappointment. Our staff will be teaching during the school day, and may be in meetings or supervising pupils after school. Anyone arriving to reception unannounced will be advised to request a meeting via the [Contact Us](#) page on the school website.

[www.st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk](http://www.st-maryshigh.lancs.sch.uk)

## PARENTS/CARERS, HOW CAN YOU HELP?

### Which communication method is best?

Some conversations are best face-to-face, whilst others, given their nature, may be quickly resolved over the phone or via email. Telephone calls may be recorded if deemed appropriate by a member of staff.

We encourage all parents/carers to use the Contact Us form wherever possible – this can be found on our website. This will allow us to monitor and manage all communications.

### Social Media

It is important to note that our social media platforms are used to celebrate achievements and publicise school events, and should not be used to contact us with any concerns or queries. Any comments made must adhere to the guidance within our communication policy.

### Talk first

We would appreciate the support of parents/carers in not raising issues on social media before contacting school and giving us an appropriate amount of time to reach a resolution. Taking problems to social media rarely results in beneficial outcomes for anyone, and can often make it more difficult to solve the issue.

### You make all the difference

We greatly value the role you play in our school community. Support with home learning, revision and school events are massively appreciated by all staff. However, most importantly, your listening ear, knowledge of your children and desire to work with us are invaluable.

Sometimes, it can be easy to forget to celebrate the positives. We lead busy lives and simply put, there often isn't time. However, if you have a few moments to spare, our staff always love to hear about what is going well in school!

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