

## D.16 Communication Policy

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### Introduction and aims

We believe that clear, open communication between the College and parents/carers, guardians and agents has a positive impact on students’ learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers, guardians and agents the information they need to support their child’s education
- Helps the college improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers, guardians and agents
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school 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 college communicates with parents/carers, guardians and agents
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents/carers, guardians and agents
- Helping parents/carers, guardians and agents reach the member of college staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

In recognition of the fact that all our students are international, and that most of their parents may not be fluent in English, we anticipate that parents may require a 3<sup>rd</sup> party for translation. In practice this is usually their agent or educational guardian. As such, we require that parents complete the Contact with the College section on the Acceptance Form carefully to communicate to the College who we can contact about your student. We will not contact anyone who is not named on the form and will only contact those named on the form about the subjects that parents indicate we can contact them about. We use this form to build a set of contacts in our management information system based on this information.

Parents who need help communicating with the College can also request support from their International Recruitment Officer (IRO).

**In the following sections, we will use ‘parents’ to refer to both parents, carers, guardians and agents or anyone identified as a contact for a student on the College’s Acceptance Form.**

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This policy is for parents and contacts of student who have joined the College. Any questions or queries for students who have not yet joined the College should be directed to the College's Admissions team: [admissions@bishopstrow.com](mailto:admissions@bishopstrow.com)

## Roles and responsibilities

### Principal

The Principal 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 College's internet acceptable use policy, staff handbook and staff code of conduct
- 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 within 24 working hours. 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. Staff will use Automatic Replies when they are not in the office. Details of an alternative contact will be included in the message.

### Office Manager

The office manager is responsible for:

- Maintaining the contact details for all students on the College's management information system (MIS) includes entering contact information for new student and amending contact for students as directed by parents
- Managing the Parent Portal on the College's MIS, which includes creating new accounts, sending account information and uploading document onto the portal

### Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the College's Acceptance Form is completed before a student's arrival to confirm the correct contacts for each student
- Ensuring the College is kept up to date of any changes to contact or contact details

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- Ensuring that communication with the College is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance, see Appendix 1 below
- Responding to communications from the College (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the College, whether this be by email, phone or via the Parent Portal

Any communication that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be treated in line with our parent code of conduct as stated on the Acceptance Form.

Parents should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication outside of their working hours, or during school holidays.

## How we communicate with parents

The sections below explain how we keep parents up to date with their child's education and what is happening in College.

Parents should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their child.

The College will communicate certain categories of information as specified on the Acceptance Form.

### Email

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

- Upcoming College events
- Start of Term or End of Term travel
- General pastoral or boarding queries
- General academic matters
- Medical matters
- Destination Schools
- Financial matters such as invoices, final statements etc.
- Boarding matters – the houseparent for each student will email the student contacts to introduce themselves shortly after the student's arrival

### College calendar

Our parent portal on iSAMS includes a full school calendar for the term.

The calendar will list all term dates weekend trips and activities as well as any special assemblies or theme days.

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## Phone calls

In recognition of the fact that most parents live outside of the UK we recommend that parents contact the College by email.

However, there are occasions where the College may call parents (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

Where the college has not received important, or time sensitive information about a student e.g. medical information or travel information

- In an emergency
- To verify a refund from a final statement
- Where we have been unable to contact the parent by email

## Letters

We send the following letters electronically:

- Offer Letter
- Visa application support letter (available by request)
- Confirmation of attendance at the college (available by request)
- Refence letter for a school (available by request)

## Reports

Parents receive reports from the College about their child’s learning, including:

- An Initial Individual Learning Plan – sent in a student’s first term of attendance at the College. This report is published about 2 weeks after a student’s arrival.
- A Mid Term Individual Learning Plan – sent half way through every term that a student attends the College.
- An End of Term Individual Learning Plan - sent at the end of every term that a student attends the College.

If a student arrives after the start of term, or leaves the College before the end of term they may arrive or leave outside of a reporting cycle and therefore miss a report in that term.

## Meetings

From 2025 we will hold a parents’ evening online once per term. During these meetings, parents can talk with the Director of Studies and their Houseparent about their child’s achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child’s wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The College may also contact parents to arrange meetings between parents’ evenings if there are concerns about a child’s achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

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

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## School website

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

- School times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Course overview
- Boarding Information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information

Parents should check the website before contacting the College.

## Parent Portal

The Parent Portal is used as a hub for general information about the College and about a student specifically.

Access to the portal for each student is given to those named on the Acceptance Form as someone who should have access to the portal.

On the Portal parents can find the following information:

- Individual Learning Plans
- College Calendar
- Request for Absence form
- Travel Information Form
- Academic Timetable for their student
- Documents such as the Parent Handbooks and College Rules
- Rewards and Sanctions for their student

## Social Media

We regularly update our social media with news, photos and College events. We currently use the following social media sites:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Little Red Book
- WeChat

## When we cannot communicate with parents

On occasion there may times when we cannot communicate with parents, this may include:

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- Medical issues - where a student is deemed Gillick competent and does not want the college to communicate these issues
- Safeguarding issues
- Mental Health matters such as counselling
- An instance where a student says we cannot contact their parent

## How parents and carers can communicate with the college

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.

### Email

Parents should always email the College, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 24 hours, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 2 working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents need a response sooner than this, they should call the College.

### Phone calls

If parents need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the member of staff according to the list in appendix 1 and the relevant member of staff will contact them within 24 hours.

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 2 working days of your request.

If the issue is urgent, parents should call the school office (+441985 219210). Or out of hours +447951 481912

Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues
- Travel issues on arrivals or departures day

### Meetings

If parents would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address (see appendix 1).

We try to schedule all meetings within 2 working days of the request.

While staff members are available at the beginning or end of the school 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

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## Monitoring and review

The Principal monitors the implementation of this policy and will review the policy every 3 years.

### Appendix 1: 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

**Remember:** check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
<b>Safeguarding/serious welfare issues</b>	Karen Westlake (Head of Boarding) <a href="mailto:karenw@bishopstrow.com">karenw@bishopstrow.com</a> Office Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 9:00am to 5:00pm
<b>Academic</b>	
My child's learning/class activities/lessons/homework	Gregory Jackson (Director of Studies) <a href="mailto:gregoryj@bishopstrow.com">gregoryj@bishopstrow.com</a>
Special educational needs (SEN)	Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm
<b>Boarding</b>	
My child's wellbeing/pastoral support/ medical matters	Houseparent – the student's houseparent will contact you shortly after the student arrival. They should be your first contact for any day to day boarding matters thereafter.
Trips/Weekend Activities	Vernon Dando (Deputy Head of Boarding) <a href="mailto:vernond@bishopstrow.com">vernond@bishopstrow.com</a> Office Hours: Saturday to Wednesday 8:30am – 4:30pm
Uniform	Julie Heron (Houseparent) <a href="mailto:julieh@bishopstrow.com">julieh@bishopstrow.com</a>

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I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT...	WHO YOU NEED TO TALK TO
<b>Admin/ General Enquiries</b>	
Payments/ Invoices/ Final Statements	Beverley Mundy <a href="mailto:finance@bishopstrow.com">finance@bishopstrow.com</a> Office Hours: Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 4:30pm
Attendance and absence requests	If you want to request approval for term-time absence please submit this via the Parent Portal
Travel	Grace Edwardes (Office Manager) <a href="mailto:gracee@bishopstrow.com">gracee@bishopstrow.com</a> Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm
Parent Portal	
Student administration including updating contact details/ Guardianship details	

## Complaints

If you would like to raise a complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy.

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