



BARHAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Home-School Communication Policy

Kind | Confident | Curious

Our vision. At Barham Church of England Primary School we know, nurture and value everyone in our school. We celebrate everyone's unique character, gifts and talents. As a school family, we take care of ourselves, others and the world God has given us. We are rooted in our local community.

At the heart of our school is a memorable creative curriculum, where children are challenged and inspired to explore, create and learn through a range of enriching opportunities, including academic studies, sport and the arts, outdoor learning and play. Through this we learn and grow to be kind, confident and curious individuals.

Policy information

Policy owner	Headteacher - Mrs Jo Duhig
Version	September 2026
Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	July 2025
Review cycle	Every three years, or sooner if guidance or school systems change
Next review	September 2029

Valley Road, Barham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 6NX | 01227 831312 | office@barham.kent.sch.uk

Home-school communication at a glance

Use the route below so that the right person can respond promptly. The school office is the first point of contact when you are unsure who to approach.

What is the message about?	Best route
Urgent same-day matter	Telephone the school office on 01227 831312. Do not rely on email for an urgent safeguarding, welfare, medical or collection issue.
Pupil absence	Report through Arbor or telephone 01227 831312 before 8.55am on the first day of absence.
Learning or class matter	Contact the class teacher first, normally through office@barham.kent.sch.uk or a staff school email address the teacher has provided.
SEND, inclusion, pastoral or wellbeing	Speak to the class teacher first. If further support is needed, ask the office to refer the matter to Mrs Michelle Anderson, Deputy Headteacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO).
General administration	Contact Mrs Claire Taylor, Office Manager, or Mrs Kirsty Knight, Admin Assistant, through the school office.
Finance, payments or school business	Contact Mrs Bridget King, Business Manager, through finance@barham.kent.sch.uk or the school office.
Unresolved or serious concern	Ask the office to refer the matter to the appropriate senior leader. Formal complaints follow the school's Complaints Policy.
Breakfast or After School Club (Kingfishers)	Contact Mrs Kim Ward via email: kingfisherclub@barham.kent.sch.uk . Or during club hours 07508841215

A simple pathway

- **Start with the person closest to the matter** - usually the class teacher or office team.
- **If it is not resolved**, ask for the relevant senior leader: Mrs Michelle Anderson, Mrs Ilona Morgan or Mrs Nicki Gooderham.
- **If concern remains**, contact the Headteacher, Mrs Jo Duhig.
- **If you wish to make a formal complaint**, follow the Complaints Policy on the school website.

Response standard. The school aims to acknowledge or provide a substantive response within two school working days during term time. If more time is needed, we will explain who is dealing with the matter and when you can expect a further response.

1. Purpose and principles

Clear, timely and respectful communication helps children feel secure, supports learning and strengthens the partnership between home and school. This policy explains how the school communicates with parents and carers, how parents and carers should contact the school, and the standards everyone can expect.

In this policy, 'parents' includes parents, carers and other adults who are recognised as parents under education law or who have day-to-day care of a child, where appropriate.

- **Child-centred** - communication should focus on the child's learning, safety and wellbeing.
- **Kind and respectful** - we listen, assume positive intent and use professional language.
- **Clear and proportionate** - we use plain language, the right level of detail and the most suitable channel.
- **Accessible and inclusive** - we make reasonable adjustments and offer support where needed.
- **Confidential and secure** - we share personal information only with those who need it and use approved systems.
- **Sustainable** - staff are not expected to respond during evenings, weekends, school holidays or outside their normal working hours.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body approves this policy, ensures that suitable communication and complaints arrangements are in place, and holds school leaders to account for their implementation.

2.2 Headteacher

Mrs Jo Duhig is responsible for the overall quality, consistency and monitoring of home-school communication, including ensuring that staff understand this policy and that serious or unresolved matters are handled appropriately.

2.3 Leadership and office team

Role	Named member of staff
Headteacher	Mrs Jo Duhig
Deputy Headteacher and SENCO	Mrs Michelle Anderson
Senior Teacher	Mrs Ilona Morgan
Senior Teacher	Mrs Nicki Gooderham
Business Manager	Mrs Bridget King
Office Manager	Mrs Claire Taylor
Admin Assistant	Mrs Kirsty Knight

Leaders and office staff will route messages to the right person, arrange appropriate cover when a colleague is absent, keep relevant records, and make sure urgent information is passed on promptly.

2.4 All staff

- Use school-approved communication systems and professional school accounts.
- Respond within the standards in this policy or arrange for a colleague to acknowledge the message.
- Keep communication factual, courteous, child-centred and confidential.
- Record significant conversations, decisions and agreed actions on the appropriate school system.
- Pass safeguarding information immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and record it in line with the Child Protection Policy.
- Ask a senior leader for support if a message is complex, sensitive, abusive or may become a formal complaint.

2.5 Parents and carers

- Keep contact, emergency, medical and family information up to date on Arbor and notify the office promptly of changes.
- Check Arbor, school emails, the newsletter and the website regularly.
- Use the most appropriate contact route and give enough information for the school to understand the matter.
- Communicate respectfully and allow staff reasonable time to respond.
- Attend meetings or respond to requests for information in a timely way.
- Tell the school if communication support, translation, interpretation or another reasonable adjustment is needed.

3. How the school communicates with families

3.1 Arbor

Arbor is the school's main platform for whole-school and targeted messages. It may be used for letters, notices, forms and consent, bookings, payments, surveys, reminders and urgent updates. Parents should keep notifications switched on and make sure their contact details are current.

3.2 Email

Email is used for routine individual and group communication. The main address is office@barham.kent.sch.uk. Finance queries may be sent to finance@barham.kent.sch.uk. Staff-specific school email addresses may be used when a member of staff has invited this.

3.3 Telephone and text messages

The school may telephone when information is urgent, sensitive or better discussed in conversation. Text messages sent through the school's system may be used for urgent reminders, short-notice changes or emergency closure information. Voicemail is available when the office is closed.

3.4 Weekly newsletter, website and calendar

The weekly newsletter and school website provide dates, school news, policies and general information. The school aims to give at least two weeks' notice of planned events where possible, although changes and short-notice opportunities sometimes occur.

3.5 Class information and Seesaw

Class overviews and learning information may be shared through the website, Arbor, email or Seesaw, where used. Seesaw is not monitored as a parent messaging or correspondence service. Parents must use the official routes in this policy to contact staff.

3.6 Reports and meetings

Parents receive an annual written report about their child's learning, progress and attendance, together with information about relevant statutory assessments. The school holds two parent consultation meetings each year and may arrange additional meetings when learning, attendance, SEND, behaviour, safety or wellbeing needs to be discussed.

3.7 Paper copies

A paper copy of a letter, policy or other communication can be requested from the school office. No parent will be disadvantaged because they cannot access a digital system.

4. How parents and carers should contact the school

4.1 Urgent matters

Telephone for urgent matters. Call 01227 831312 for a same-day safeguarding, welfare, medical, family emergency or collection issue. Do not rely on email, Seesaw or social media for a message that needs immediate action. If a child or adult is in immediate danger, call 999.

4.2 Absence

Report absence through Arbor or telephone the school before 8.55am on the first day of absence, giving the reason. If the school has not received a reason, staff will make contact as part of the school's safeguarding and attendance procedures.

4.3 Routine questions and concerns

Email office@barham.kent.sch.uk or telephone the office. Include your child's name and class, a clear subject line, the relevant facts and what response or outcome you are seeking. The office will answer directly or forward the message to the appropriate person.

4.4 Speaking with a teacher

For learning, friendship, behaviour or class concerns, contact the class teacher first. Teachers' priority at the start and end of the school day is the safe supervision and handover of pupils, so longer or sensitive discussions must be arranged as an appointment. Please do not discuss confidential matters at the classroom door in front of children or other families.

4.5 Meetings

Meetings should be requested through the office or the relevant staff school email address. The school will acknowledge the request and arrange a mutually suitable time. A parent may ask to bring a supportive companion; this should be agreed in advance. Meetings may be in person, by telephone or online where appropriate.

5. Response standards

- **Routine communication:** we aim to acknowledge or give a substantive response within two school working days during term time.
- **Complex matters:** if investigation or consultation is required, we will acknowledge the message, identify who is dealing with it and give a realistic date for a further response.
- **Urgent matters:** these will be prioritised according to risk and need, but parents must telephone rather than rely on email.
- **Formal complaints, subject access requests and Freedom of Information requests:** the timescales in the relevant policy or law apply instead of the routine response standard.
- **Part-time staff, absence and holidays:** another colleague may acknowledge a message, or the response time may begin on the next day that the relevant member of staff is working. There is no expectation that staff respond outside their normal working hours.

A school working day is a day when the school is open to pupils. Messages received after the office has closed will normally be treated as received on the next school working day.

6. Respectful and appropriate communication

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity. Communication should be calm, factual and focused on resolving the matter in the best interests of the child.

- Abusive, discriminatory, threatening or intimidating language or behaviour will not be accepted.
- Staff will not discuss another child, family or employee's confidential information.
- Repeated messages to multiple staff do not speed up a response and may make it harder to coordinate the matter.
- Parents should not record meetings or calls without the prior agreement of everyone taking part.
- Class WhatsApp groups and other parent-run social media groups are independent of the school and are not official communication channels. Concerns about the school must be raised directly with the school.
- The school may manage unreasonable or persistent contact in line with its Parent Code of Conduct and Complaints Policy, while continuing to meet its legal and safeguarding duties.

7. Safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection

The school handles personal information in line with data protection law, its privacy notices and its Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy. Children's best interests and safety guide decisions about what information is shared, with whom and by which method.

- Use official school systems and check recipients carefully before sending personal information.
- Share only the information needed for the purpose and avoid including sensitive details in group messages.
- Verify identity before disclosing information about a pupil.
- Store significant communication and decisions on the appropriate secure school record.
- Do not use personal messaging accounts, parent WhatsApp groups or public social media to discuss individual pupils or school concerns.

Safeguarding information. Any message suggesting that a child may be at risk must be passed immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff must not wait for the routine response period.

8. Inclusion and accessibility

The school wants every family to be able to understand and take part in communication. Parents can ask the office for reasonable support, including:

- a paper copy, large-print version or a simpler explanation;
- translation or interpretation, subject to availability;
- a telephone call or face-to-face meeting instead of written communication;
- support to use Arbor or another school system;
- adjustments related to disability, communication need or literacy.

Staff will choose communication methods sensitively, particularly for families of pupils with SEND, families experiencing difficult circumstances and matters involving attendance or safeguarding.

9. Separated families and parental responsibility

The school will act in the child's best interests and in line with education law, data protection law and any relevant court order.

- The school will keep contact details for parents and carers as required and will provide school information to those entitled to receive it.
- Parents should provide the school with current contact information and a copy of any court order or legal restriction that affects communication, collection, consent or access to information.
- Where school systems allow, a parent who is entitled to information may ask to receive general communication directly.
- The school will not mediate family disputes or act as a messenger between parents. Parents are expected to share information and reach agreement about their child wherever possible.
- Information may be withheld or shared differently when a court order, safeguarding concern or the child's best interests require this. The school may seek legal or safeguarding advice.

10. Concerns and formal complaints

Most concerns are resolved quickly when they are raised with the person closest to the matter. A concern is an expression of worry or doubt for which reassurance or action is sought. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken, or a lack of action.

Parents may try informal resolution first, but they are not prevented from making a formal complaint. Formal complaints must follow the school's published Complaints Policy, which sets out the stages, roles and timescales.

- A complaint about a member of staff should be sent to the Headteacher and should not be raised directly with the employee concerned.
- A complaint about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, care of the school office.
- A complaint about a governor or the Governing Body should follow the route set out in the Complaints Policy.

11. Monitoring, records and review

The Headteacher will monitor the operation of this policy, identify recurring communication issues and use feedback to improve systems. Significant communications will be retained in line with the school's records management and data protection arrangements.

The Governing Body will review this policy every three years. It may be reviewed sooner if guidance, legislation, staffing or the school's communication systems change.

12. Related school policies

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy and privacy notices
- Home-School Agreement
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use policies
- Parent Code of Conduct
- SEND and Inclusion Policy and SEN Information Report
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Wellbeing Policy

13. Guidance considered in this review

- [Department for Education - Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020](#)
- [Department for Education - Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility](#)
- [Department for Education - Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Department for Education - A guide for schools on communicating with parents about attendance](#)
- [Information Commissioner's Office - Children and the UK GDPR](#)

Appendix A: contact directory

If you are unsure who should receive your message, use the school office. The office team will route it to the right person.

Contact area	Named person	What they can help with	Contact route
School office	Mrs Claire Taylor, Office Manager Mrs Kirsty Knight, Admin Assistant	General enquiries, attendance, appointments, forms, messages and signposting	office@barham.kent.sch.uk 01227 831312
Business	Mrs Bridget King, Business Manager	Finance, payments, invoices and school business matters	finance@barham.kent.sch.uk or school office
Class concern	Your child's class teacher	Learning, homework, friendships, class routines and first-stage pastoral concerns	Use the school office or a staff school email address provided by the teacher

Contact area	Named person	What they can help with	Contact route
Inclusion and SEND	Mrs Michelle Anderson, Deputy Headteacher and SENCO	SEND, inclusion, pastoral support, wellbeing and concerns not resolved with the class teacher	Ask the school office to refer your message
Senior leadership	Mrs Ilona Morgan, Senior Teacher Mrs Nicki Gooderham, Senior Teacher	Leadership matters referred after the first contact stage	Ask the school office to refer your message
Headteacher	Mrs Jo Duhig	Serious or unresolved concerns, whole-school matters and complaints about staff	headteacher@barham.kent.sch.uk or school office
Chair of Governors	Chair of Governors	Complaints about the Headteacher, in line with the Complaints Policy	Confidential, care of the school office

Appendix B: how parents and carers contact the school

Choose your reason for contacting school, then follow the route shown. The office team will help if you are unsure.

PARENTS AND CARERS: START HERE



DO YOU NEED THE SCHOOL TO ACT TODAY?

YES - URGENT

Call 01227 831312 now

Tell the office about any safeguarding, welfare, medical, family emergency or collection issue. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

NO - ROUTINE

Choose why you are contacting us

Use the contact method shown below. We normally reply within two school working days during term time.



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO TELL OR ASK THE SCHOOL?

YOU NEED TO CONTACT US ABOUT		WHAT YOU SHOULD DO		WHO WILL HELP / NEXT STEP
Your child's learning, homework or class experience	>	Email office@barham.kent.sch.uk and ask for the class teacher, or use a staff school email they provided.	>	Class teacher first. Then Mrs Ilona Morgan or Mrs Nicki Gooderham, Senior Teachers, and Mrs Jo Duhig, Headteacher, if needed.
Your child's SEND, inclusion, pastoral support or wellbeing	>	Contact the class teacher first through office@barham.kent.sch.uk .	>	Then Mrs Michelle Anderson, Deputy Headteacher and SENCO, and Mrs Jo Duhig if needed.
Absence, an appointment, changed details or an admin question	>	Report absence through Arbor or call before 8.55am. For other admin, email or phone the office.	>	Mrs Claire Taylor, Office Manager, or Mrs Kirsty Knight, Admin Assistant. office@barham.kent.sch.uk
A payment, finance question or school business	>	Email finance@barham.kent.sch.uk or contact the school office.	>	Mrs Bridget King, Business Manager.
Breakfast or After School Club (Kingfishers)	>	Email kingfisherclub@barham.kent.sch.uk or call 07508 841215 during club hours.	>	Mrs Kim Ward.
Concern about a member of staff	>	Email headteacher@barham.kent.sch.uk or send a confidential message through the school office.	>	Mrs Jo Duhig, Headteacher.
Formal complaint or concern about the Headteacher	>	Follow the Complaints Policy. Contact the Chair of Governors confidentially, care of the school office.	>	The Chair of Governors will respond in line with the Complaints Policy.

STILL UNSURE? Contact the school office: office@barham.kent.sch.uk | 01227 831312

Seesaw, parent WhatsApp groups and social media are not official routes for contacting the school.