



The Bridge School Acceptable Use Policy

September 2017

Halton Borough Council, and The Bridge School, is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and staff, and as such expects all staff and volunteers within The Bridge School to share that commitment.

Introduction

The guidance contained within this document refers to contact between school staff and students or their parent(s)/carer(s) by telephone, letter, e-mail, text message or social media.

1. This document has been created with the intention:

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- To guide staff in identified preferred practice, so that they are aware of issues and expectations.
- To reduce the likelihood of allegations against staff or of offences under the Sex Offences Act 2003 of grooming a child or children.

2. Rationale

2.1 Children can be and are subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any and every setting. Therefore schools and other educational establishments need to be aware, open and accountable in their interactions with our young people.

2.2 All staff should be made aware that even well intentioned contact and communication, can be misconstrued by the child, an observer or by anyone to whom this action is described.

2.3 It is extremely important that the Management Committee, the Head Teacher and senior management have developed clear policies and procedures, which incorporate safe communication.

2.4 It is necessary to recognise the extent to which the school workforce is changing and to take account of the additional vulnerability of pastoral staff (i.e. the Student Welfare Team) and the wider staff team (Teacher Assistants, Administrators, etc.). Our staff are often working outside the traditional role of a school teacher and may be involved in building trusting and befriending relationships with young people.

2.5 It is vital that the work of all staff is embedded into the school behaviour and attendance policies, ensuring that their work is genuinely inclusive with procedures designed to support children and young people.

For Example: The involvement of pastoral staff with an individual or group of students should be in accordance with Students Passport, Individual Support or other documented individual plan, which clearly agrees between school the family and the young person the manner in which the student will be contacted, by whom and for what purpose.

3. Action

3.1 The following tables set out the minimum requirements for safe working practice. Examples in the attached lists are not exhaustive but indicate acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and activities.

3.2 All permanent, temporary and supply staff should be provided with a copy of the guidance and sign to state that they have received it and that they understand that a breach of safe practice could result in disciplinary action.

3.3 The disciplinary process can involve action up to and including dismissal.

Letters:

OK	Not OK	Rules to follow
<p>Matters relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School activities/events. • Behaviour (e.g. attendance, punctuality, bullying, exclusions etc.). • Performance (e.g. academic progress etc.). • Welfare (e.g. accidents, general concerns etc.). • Responding to notes from parents over single, simple issues. 	<p>Letters or notes designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange personal social contact with a student. • Pursue or strengthen a relationship with a student. • Discuss any non-school related or personal issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other than in exceptional circumstances, agreed by the Head Teacher, letters must be sent to parents and not to the student. • A copy must be held on the school file. • Letters must be signed only by a person having authority commensurate with the nature of the letter (e.g. exclusion letter signed by the Head Teacher). • Letters must normally be sent through the school’s mailing out system. Although ‘general circulars’ can be given to students. • Simple responses to single queries in note form from parents can be given to students. However, the original note from the parent should be kept on the school file together with an annotation recording the date of the response. • Letters and notes must not contain home addresses or personal telephone numbers of school staff.

Telephone Conversations:

OK	Not OK	Rules to follow
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency contact (e.g. the child has an accident or becomes ill in school).• Part of agreed procedure (e.g. First Day Contact on attendance).• Contact with parents to pursue concerns regarding the child's welfare.• Reminding students about an imminent examination as part of an agreed school policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange personal social contact with a student.• Pursue or strengthen a relationship with a student.• Discuss any non-school related or personal issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other than in 'exceptional circumstances', agreed by the Head Teacher, telephone calls must be made to parents and not to the student. (Exceptional circumstances may include contact during educational visits, prompting for exams, following up a safeguarding concern).• Calls must normally be made using a landline telephone located with a school office or classroom.• There are circumstances agreed by the Head Teacher or Head of Student Welfare when working offsite, telephone calls can be made using a mobile telephone provided by the school.• A written record must be kept of all phone calls made.• Staff must not use personal telephones to contact students.• Staff must not disclose personal telephone numbers to students.• Student telephone numbers must not be held on staff's personal telephones or IT equipment.

Text Messages:

OK	Not OK	Rules to follow
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of agreed procedure (e.g. First Day Contact on attendance).• Reminding students about an imminent examination as part of an agreed school policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange personal social contact with a student.• Pursue or strengthen a relationship with a student.• Discuss any non-school related or personal issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text messages must only be sent using equipment provided by the school and authorised for such use.• A record must be kept of all text messages sent. (This can be stored on a works mobile.)• Staff must not use personal equipment to send text messages to students.• Staff must not disclose personal telephone numbers to students.• Student telephone numbers must not be held on staff's personal telephones or IT equipment.

Emails:

OK	Not OK	Rules to follow
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of agreed procedure (e.g. returning marked work that has been submitted electronically).• Reminding students about an imminent examination as part of an agreed school policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange personal social contact with a student.• Pursue or strengthen a relationship with a student.• Discuss any non-school related or personal issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emails must only be sent using equipment provided by the school and authorised for such use.• Emails must only be sent from a school email account.• A copy of all emails must be kept.• Staff must not use personal equipment or email accounts to send emails to students.• Staff must not disclose personal email addresses to students.• Student email addresses must not be held on staff's personal IT equipment.

Social Media/ Apps/ Chat-rooms:

OK	Not OK	Rules to follow
Never	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is never ok to have contact with students via social media/the internet	

Staff Record of Communication and Agreement

I understand and agree with **The Bridge School Acceptable Use Policy:**

Staff name:

Signed:

Date: