





8a. School Communication Policy

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Aims

At BIST, we expect all members of our community: parents, pupils and staff, and any other visitors to communicate and interact in a supportive and reasonable way towards others. All communications at BIST should:

- Keep staff, pupils, parents and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use clear and concise English, avoiding jargon to be easily understood by all.
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, method and audience.
- Be in accordance with the relevant school policies.
- Avoid expressing political views or anything critical of our host country of Tunisia.
- Be technically accurate and promote high standards of literacy.

Parental dialogue is one element of this, but perhaps the most vital for the effective education of the children in our care, and feedback, both written and verbal, is to maintain an open and informative dialogue between colleagues, pupils and their families.

Internal School Communications

Meetings

An annual program of meetings will be agreed and shared with staff and the timetable designed to facilitate informal meeting and planning/support time for teaching staff. All formal meetings will be minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that these are focused on developmental, not administrative, matters and time is set aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in collaborative work and to contribute to the School's priorities, activities and plans.

Staff Meetings take place on Wednesdays. These deal with a variety of matters, predominantly focused on development and school improvement, but opportunities are provided for any other issues to be raised. The Executive Principal (EP) meets with Britus Group at 14:00 every Wednesday and has regular meetings with leaders, both academic and administrative teams.

For all formal meetings, an agenda should be shared, notes taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff. Minutes of meetings should be copied to relevant line managers, senior leaders and the EP by email.

E-mail

The school gives all staff their own email account to use for all school business. Email can be an efficient way of communicating with colleagues and passing on information. However, it should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face contact and staff must consider whether it is the best way to communicate in each situation and understand that there is a permanent record of any communication.

External Communication with parents and other important stakeholders

Clear, effective communications with all parents and the wider community is essential for any good school and is required at BIST. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values by keeping our parents well informed about operations and activities at the School. This reinforces the vital role that parents play in supporting education and the

School. Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents, it is essential that relationships are professional, and parents are addressed in a formal manner in all communication, whatever the format.

Home-school Communication (Also refer to the Parent Communication Policy)

We encourage parents to contact the school if issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. For everyday issues parents should contact their child's class teacher. If there are specific subject problems, parents should contact their child's subject teacher. For persistent or serious issues, parents should follow the advice below:

Communication Channels

To respond effectively and streamline communication, parents are advised that the following process should be followed:

Primary contact teacher via-

- Direct message to class teacher via class dojo.
- Email class teacher.

Secondary: Microsoft Teams is the designated platform for communication between teachers and pupils regarding homework, assignments, and academic support.

School Front Office:

- Scheduling an appointment with a teacher.
- Attendance, punctuality and registration.
- Transportation Issues.
- Attention to medical conditions, vaccinations and dietary requirements.
- Communicating any special instructions concerning a sick child for the day.

Class Teacher:

- The academic programme, pupil progress, and reports.
- Performance in classwork and home learning.
- Behaviour/attire at school.
- Peer issues in class and school.
- Curriculum matters in class and textbooks.
- School events, class events, fund raising and field trips.

Leadership Team:

- Escalating and/or unresolved issues from class teachers.
- Teacher related issues.
- Class and exam timetables.
- Curriculum and assessment matters at year level.

Head of 6th Form:

- Applications to the School and the entrance process.
- Transcripts and official documentation.
- University applications and procedures.

Executive Principal:

- General operations of the school.
- Policies, rules and regulations.
- Comments, concerns, issues about the operation of the school, staff, etc.
- Escalating and/or unresolved issues from teachers and /or the Leadership Team.

- Health, safety, security, environment and wellbeing matters.

If parents wish to arrange a meeting with a member of staff, they may contact the School Front Office between 08:00 to 16:00, following which the front office will assist in making an appointment. Parents who may have difficulty with English may request the help of a school assigned translator.

Face to Face interactions and meetings

BIST believes that pupils benefit when the relationship between home and school is a positive one. The vast majority of parents, carers and others visiting our school are keen to work with us and are supportive of the school, and the vast majority of interactions between staff, parents and any other adult visitors to the campus are positive and constructive. Discussions in and around the common parts of the School Campus such as reception are likely to be routine pleasantries and/or uncontentious matters.

Parents' Evenings are held regularly to discuss current issues of importance to parents. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents of planning, content and arrangements. Any parent wishing to meet with a member of staff individually should contact the school in advance and request a meeting with the member of staff. This request should be responded to within two working days of request and the meeting should be fixed at the earliest available time slot unless any specific preparations are required. Parents should not come to the school to talk to a member of staff without an appointment unless in an emergency. If a parent comes to the school without a prior appointment, the member of staff may still choose to meet with them, but there is no requirement set by the School to do so if he or she is otherwise engaged.

Parents (like all visitors) should report to security prior to meeting with a member of staff. If the meeting is due to take place outside office hours, separate arrangements can be made. A member of staff may ask for another member of staff to accompany them and should always do so when the meeting may be contentious in any way. The key discussion points, actions and decisions should be recorded.

There will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary. Colleagues should be aware that private meetings with an individual parent may place both parties at risk of allegation of misconduct. Such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or an area which is likely to be frequented by other people. Another member of staff should be present or nearby. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult, preferably that colleague's line manager, is aware that the interview is taking place. If a meeting with a parent is taking place outside normal working hours, the member of staff should try, where possible, to ensure that another colleague is nearby. It is perfectly acceptable to call a meeting to a close to allow time for further investigation. Meetings with parents held away from the School premises should not take place unless in extraordinary circumstances and thus only be arranged with the specific knowledge and approval of the Executive Principal.

Discussions between a teacher and a parent or parents over concerns or problems with their child can lead to emotional distress. Touching others, including well-intentioned gestures such as putting a hand on a shoulder, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle, the School requires that any adult member of the community does not make gratuitous physical contact with another adult or child. Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer for cultural or other factors, and must be avoided.

Staff should call any meeting to a close in the event of the parent becoming angry or abusive. The member of staff should report such an incident to their line manager and seek

further advice. The line manager should either accompany the member of staff to a further meeting with the parent or hold it without the original member of staff present.

When a pupil is accompanying a parent for a meeting, it is perfectly acceptable to ask them to remain out of the meeting for part of it, particularly when a parent is criticising a teacher or any aspect of the school. It is damaging to the relationship with the pupil for them to witness.

Written and Other Communications

BIST aims to make our written communication as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination and will ensure that all our parents can access any communication, making alternative arrangements where there may be EAL, SEN, IT access or literacy issues. We wish to celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the groups represented in our school and this should be evident in all our communication.

Letters

Staff will endeavour to reply to parents' letters/e-mails as quickly as possible. They will be acknowledged in 1 working day and a reply sent within 2 working days, unless the sender has been given a legitimate reason for the delay, such as consultation or investigation. Letters must be approved by the Executive Principal before posting/handing over. Copies of correspondence with parents will be placed in pupil files on iSAMs.

E-Mail

E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information. However, it does not replace face-to-face meetings where some discussion is required, and staff have the benefit of observing non-verbal cues, with the opportunity to adjust an approach.

All e-mail should be written as formally as a letter and should be checked carefully for technical errors and tone. Staff should acknowledge e-mail within 1 working day and send a full reply within 2 working days, unless the sender has been given a legitimate reason for the delay, such as consultation or investigation. Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses. Care must be taken when copying in other parties to ensure privacy of data/ information.

Colleagues should ensure that:

- They do not engage in private /personal correspondence with a pupil. This includes email but also includes, by extension, texting and use of social media.
- Under no circumstances should they contact pupils or parents, or conduct any school business, using personal email accounts.
- Chain letters, viruses or other unsolicited information are not embedded in any communication.
- Any political views are neutral or balanced.

Written reports

One full end-of-year report and two tick-box reports are distributed to parents on their child's progress. The report identifies areas of strength and areas for further development. Pupils are also given the opportunity to comment on their own progress and parents are invited to make a comment. Grades for attitude to learning and progress are included in all reports.

In addition, parents meet their child's teachers at least twice per year, at pupil led conferences and parents' consultation sessions. When pupils have special educational needs, or if they are making less than expected progress or experiencing behavioural or disciplinary difficulties, parents will be invited to meet with appropriate colleagues more regularly.

Telephone calls

Staff should take notes about the content of telephone calls, as they would with meetings with parents. Notes and records taken from telephone calls, including main points of discussion and action required/taken should be logged on iSAMS.

Telephone calls are appropriate to notify the school that the child will be absent from school or for parents to communicate brief information about the child that the school needs to know or in an emergency. If the call requires a response, this should be completed during the same working day, if possible, but no later than the end of the following working day.

Social Media

Staff will not communicate with parents or students via social networking sites nor accept them as their "friends". The exception is networks or blogs set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning.

School Website

The School website provides information about the school and an opportunity to promote the school to a wider audience and provide guidance on admissions for prospective parents and students. It also has a regularly updated area for information for current parents.

Visits from External Agencies

As part of the timetabled curriculum and extra-curricular programme, BIST will invite guest speakers, experts and representatives from a range of organisations and institutions to the school to speak to and engage with our pupils on a regular basis. Prior to these visits, the terms and content of their presentation is agreed in advance to ensure that it is in accordance with our policies.

Aggression and Abuse

On the rare occasions when a negative attitude towards the School is expressed, we are aware that this could result in distress, aggression, verbal and or physical abuse towards and from members of the wider school community. Both the Board of Directors and Executive Principal expect and require employees of BIST to behave professionally should such a difficult situation arise. BIST staff must not be the instigator of such situations, and should they arise, staff are tasked to attempt to defuse the situation wherever possible, seeking the involvement of other colleagues as appropriate. However, all members of staff have the right to work without fear of violence and abuse, and the right, in an extreme case, of appropriate self-defense. Types of behaviour that are considered serious and unacceptable and will not be tolerated:

- Shouting at members of the School staff, parents or children either in person or over the telephone.

- Physically intimidating a member of staff, parent or child e.g., standing close to her/him.
- The use of aggressive hand gestures.
- Threatening behaviour.
- Shaking or holding a fist towards another person.
- Swearing.
- Using abusive/ offensive language.
- Pushing.
- Hitting, e.g., slapping, punching and kicking.
- Spitting.
- Discriminatory behavior including racist comments.
- Breaching the School's security procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list but is intended to provide illustrations of such behaviour. Such unacceptable behaviour may result in the police being informed of the incident.

If any adult behaves in an unacceptable way towards another member of the school community, the Principal, Security Team or an appropriate senior staff member should be contacted and ask all involved to meet in their office or other appropriate location. Once there, they will seek to resolve the situation through discussion and mediation, and if the unacceptable behaviour continues, terminate the meeting and ask the aggressor to leave the premises. If necessary, the school's complaints procedures should be followed. Where all procedures have been exhausted, and aggression or intimidation continue, or where there is an extreme act of violence, a member of the School staff will be suspended and subject to an investigation, whilst a parent or carer may be banned from entry to the School Campus for a period of time, subject to review by the Board of Directors after taking the advice of the Principal into consideration. The School reserves the right to take further action, including legal, should this be deemed necessary after the event.