

St Benedict's Catholic College



Communications Policy

Date reviewed	July 2024
Approved by Governors	September 2024
Date of next review	July 2027

Introduction and aims

St Benedict's Catholic College believes that clear, open communication between the College and parents/carers has a positive impact on students' learning, as it:

- Provides parents/carers with the information that they need to support their child's education;
- Helps St Benedict's Catholic College to improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers;
- Builds trust between home and College, which helps the College to better support every child's educational and pastoral needs

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

- Explaining how St Benedict's Catholic College communicates with parents/carers;
- Setting clear standards and expectations for the College's response to communication from parents/carers;
- Helping parents/carers to reach the member of St Benedict's Catholic College staff, who is best placed to address their specific query or concern, meaning that they receive a response as quickly as possible.

Roles and responsibilities

Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with parents/carers are effective, timely and appropriate;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware and understand this Policy;
- Monitoring the implementation of this Policy;
- Regularly reviewing this Policy.

IT Systems Manager

The IT Systems Manager is responsible for:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of communications software and ensuring that these are updated and fit-for-purpose;
- Updating the St Benedict's Catholic College website on a timely basis, as appropriate, and as requested.

Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents/carers in line with this Policy, the Acceptable Use Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct
- Working with other members of staff to ensure that parents/carers receive timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves).

Staff aim to respond to communication during their core working hours. In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping all staff to 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/carers

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all communication with St Benedict's Catholic College is respectful;
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff, in the first instance;

- Responding to communications from St Benedict's Catholic College, for example, requests for meetings, in a timely manner;
- Reading all communications from St Benedict's Catholic College in a timely manner;
- Contacting the College for clarification if they are unclear about any communication they have received.
- Parents/carers should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of normal College hours or during College holidays.

How St Benedict's Catholic College communicates with parents/carers

The sections below explain how St Benedict's Catholic College keeps parents/carers up-to-date with their child's education, and what is happening in College.

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

Please note that, in the event of any local and national crisis, or St Benedict's Catholic College closure, the method of communicating with the College will be subject to amendment. Online and virtual platforms will be utilised, and person-to-person engagement may be limited according to local and national Government guidance.

Email

St Benedict's Catholic College uses email to keep parents/carers informed about the following:

- Upcoming College events;
- Scheduled College closures, for example, for staff training days;
- College surveys or consultations;
- Class activities or teacher requests.

Text messages

St Benedict's Catholic College text parents/carers about:

- Emergency College closures, for example, due to bad weather.

College Calendar

The St Benedict's Catholic College website includes a calendar

<https://www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk/Parents/Carers-and-carers/calendar-and-term-dates/>

Where possible, St Benedict's Catholic College tries to provide parents/carers with, at least, two weeks' notice of any events or special occasions (including special assemblies or key visitors). Any such event is included in the College Calendar.

Phone Calls

Staff may contact parents/carers by telephone to discuss a range of matters. Staff use the primary contact provided by the parent on enrolment to the College in the first instance, but may then use alternative contacts, as advised on the student's admission form.

Letters

St Benedict's Catholic College regularly sends the following correspondence via email:

- Letters about educational visits and trips;
- Requests for consent forms to be completed;
- The St Benedict's Catholic College weekly newsletter

Homework

Homework is logged and communicated to students and parents/carers via the ClassCharts platform.

Reports

Parents/carers receive reports from St Benedict's Catholic College about their child's learning, including:

- Twice yearly progress reports covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance;
- A report on the results of mock examinations

Meetings

St Benedict's Catholic College holds one Parents/carers' evening for each year group in the academic year. During these meetings, parents/carers can talk with teachers about their child's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their child's wellbeing, or any other areas of concern. These meetings are currently undertaken remotely using a system called "Parents Evening Booking System".

St Benedict's Catholic College may also contact parents/carers to arrange meetings between parents/carers' evenings if there are concerns about their child's achievement, progress, or wellbeing.

Parents/carers of students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), or who have other additional needs, may also be asked to attend further meetings to discuss these additional needs.

College Website

The St Benedict's Catholic College website complies with the DfE guidance 'What maintained schools must publish online.'

St Benedict's Catholic College has a number of social media accounts:

Facebook	stbenedictscatholiccollege
Instagram	stbensofficial
Twitter	@st_Benedicts

These accounts are for information only, and direct messages are not responded to. Parents/carers should always contact St Benedict's Catholic College through the communication pathways referenced in this policy.

Key information about the College is posted on its website, including:

- The timings of the College day and term dates;
- Important events and announcements;
- Curriculum information;
- Important policies and procedures;
- Important contact information;
- Information about before- and after-college provision;
- All communications in letter form can be found at:
<https://www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk/parents-and-carers/letters-to-parents/>
- All weekly newsletters can be found at:
<https://www.stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk/parents-and-carers/newsletters/>

Parents/Carers should always check the website before contacting the College directly.

Home-College Communications App

St Benedict's Catholic College uses the communications application "ClassCharts", which allows parents/carers to track their child's attendance, detentions, achievement points and homework set.

EduLink is used to send communications to parents/carers.

How parents/carers can communicate with St Benedict's Catholic College

Parents/carers should use the contact details on our website to identify the most appropriate person to contact about a query or issue

[Contact Us - St Benedict's Catholic College - Respect \(stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk\)](http://stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk)

Email

Parents/carers should always email the College, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues, in the first instance. All members of the St Benedict's Catholic College community are required to follow email etiquette.

St Benedict's Catholic College aims to answer all emails in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call, if appropriate) within two College days.

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

The use of personal email addresses by staff for any official St Benedict's Catholic College business is not permitted. All members of staff are provided with a St Benedict's Catholic College email address, which they use for all official communication.

Members of staff are encouraged to have an appropriate work/life balance when responding to emails, and guidance is that communication is only sent during their working hours. Staff are not expected to reply to emails in the College holidays.

Student Email

- Students must use their St Benedict's Catholic College email and MS Teams accounts for educational purposes only.
- Students are made aware of the expectations and the 'responsible internet and network usage' policy through the Home-College Agreement signed by the parent/student on joining St Benedict's Catholic College, and receive education regarding safe and appropriate email/MS Teams etiquette throughout their time in College.

Phone Calls

Parents/carers should only telephone the College Office for urgent issues. Urgent issues might include such matters as:

- Family emergencies;
- Safeguarding or welfare issues.

For more general enquiries, parents/carers should email the College Office on admin@stbenedicts.essex.sch.uk

Meetings

If parents/carers would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address, or email the College Office to book an appointment.

St Benedict's Catholic College tries to schedule all meetings within two College days of receipt of the request. Parents/carers may book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns that they have about their child's learning;
- Updates related to pastoral support, their child's home environment, or their wellbeing.

Expectations of conduct during meetings

St Benedict's Catholic College expects all meetings to be conducted in cordial terms, even if a parent/carer is unhappy with the College. The College listens to parental concerns and attempts to resolve them. Parents/carers are expected to use a cordial and low tone, and not to raise their voice when talking to staff. Recordings of the meetings are not permitted as the College does not consent to any recording of any meeting with parents/carers.

If a parent/carer records a meeting covertly, the College does not allow a parent/carer to use any such recordings as evidence in any complaint that may be raised subsequently.

In accordance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), it is not a criminal offence for a private citizen to make a recording in secret provided it is for personal use only. However, if the recording is then shared without the consent of the participants, sold to a third party, or released in the public domain without the consent of the participants, this might then become a criminal offence.

If the member of staff cannot immediately resolve a parental concern, they should provide a timeframe for when they will revert. Brief notes are kept of the meeting. A copy of these notes can be sent to parents/carers on request.

Ground rules that support a conducive and productive environment are based on:

- Allowing all parties to participate;
- Listening with an open mind;
- Thinking before speaking;
- Attacking the problem and not the person.

Social Media Expectations

In accordance with our Online Safety Policy, the expectations regarding safe and responsible use of social media applies to all members of the St Benedict's Catholic College community.

The term social media may include, but is not limited to: social networking sites, blogs, wikis, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and instant messenger.

All members of St Benedict's Catholic College are expected to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner.

Inclusion

It is important to St Benedict's Catholic College that everyone in its community can communicate easily with the College.

The College website can be translated into many other languages in order that parents/carers and students can opt to read College information in their first language.

Parents/carers who have difficulty accessing the internet should speak to the College office.

Appendix 1: Staff email etiquette

The St Benedict's Catholic College community should carefully consider the email etiquette below before sending emails.

- Use a meaningful and professional subject line.
- Ensure that an email starts with a salutation even if it is informal, i.e. "Hi". This is far more professional and courteous than an email without any salutation.
- Always sign off appropriately to the recipients.
- Always add a full St Benedict's Catholic College signature to all external emails.
- If a full St Benedict's Catholic College signature is not used on an internal mail, ensure that, at a minimum, a phone number is on the bottom of every email.
- If writing about something that relates to previous correspondence, keep all messages on the same chain and do not start a new chain.
- Ensure that the email is addressed to those from whom action/response is required, and that those copied are not required to action/respond.
- If a recipient should reply to all, state that in the email.
- If action is required by a certain deadline, state that in the subject line. For example:
Action - Pupil Premium Strategy Statement - Deadline DATE.
- Ensure that an Out of Office message is always switched appropriately and that the message includes details of an alternative contact point.
- If appropriate, add detail to email signature regarding any part-time working arrangements.
For example:
My usual working pattern is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, or
Please note that my normal non-working day is Friday. As a result, my response to emails arriving on a Friday may be delayed.
- If appropriate, add detail around expectations for others to respond. For example:
Please note – I sometimes send emails at times that suit my own commitments, there is no expectation that you will respond out of usual office hours.
- Ensure that spell check is switched on.
- Proof read every email before sending.
- Do not use all UPPER CASE letters in any email.
- All language and content should follow professional etiquette and standards at all times;
- If you are unsure about the tone/content/spelling/grammar of any communication, be it to an internal or an external audience, you should ask your line manager for support and guidance before sending;
- Follow all safeguarding and professional standards at all times in the language and content of their communication;
- If you are concerned about any aspect of correspondence with any student, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be contacted immediately;
- If a student fails to follow the agreed protocols, staff MUST stop all correspondence and report the incident to the DSL