

Atwood Primary Academy

Home - School Email Policy



Date: October 2021

Review Date: October 2022

(or to meet new legislation and practices)

Signed By: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

The following outlines the school policy with regard to email communication between home and school.

All communication must respect the dignity of the recipient.

1. Within 48 hours - receipt of an email will be acknowledged (during term time but not over a weekend, the school holidays or INSET days).
2. Within 5 working days - provide a response to the email by telephone or in writing (including an email). This may include informing the sender that more time is required to provide a full response. If this is the case staff should indicate a timeframe in which a response should be expected.
3. If a member of staff is not able to deal with the email directly then they will pass it on to the most appropriate person and inform the sender that they have done so.
4. Staff will not be expected to monitor or respond to emails out of their normal working hours (including weekends, published school holidays and INSET days). Whilst parents may compose emails at all sorts of hours to suit their own needs I would ask that emails are not normally sent outside of a member of staff's normal working day (8:00am – 5:00pm). Many of our staff do not work full time and there is no compunction for them to check or respond to emails during their non-working days.
5. Mobile phones and other electronic devices that enable staff to access their school emails when away from school can make it difficult to 'ignore' a message from a parent, leading to unnecessary worry and anxiety on the part of the staff. The school policy is to avoid using personal devices at home for emails. Our expectation is that all staff refrain from having work emails on their personal devices or computers. This is to ease the pressure on staff feeling a constant pressure to reply to emails.
6. Whilst this is rare, if a member of staff receives an email which is of an aggressive tone, sets unreasonable demands or could otherwise be interpreted as harassing, they will refer this to a senior leader in the school, who will decide if consideration needs to be given to dealing with further communication under the school's Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

In recent years communications between home and school have shifted quite dramatically from pen and paper to email; with email becoming the preferred and predominant mode of communication.

Email provides us with a quick, cheap and easy means of communication. As a result it is used for such a wide range of communications, it has also become increasingly difficult to distinguish between formal and informal communications.

The ease of communication via email has many advantages but these are proving to have ever diminishing returns, as the expectation for almost instantaneous reply, in a well-informed, considered and timely manner appears to be on the increase, with complaints following when this has not been the case.

As a school our first priority is to deliver high quality teaching and learning. The ability and ease of email communication directly with your child's teacher is a privilege. Many schools do not make this facility available to parents, as frequent requests for updates and information can distract teachers from their primary focus, teaching.

Teachers cannot and are not expected to monitor and manage their inbox during lessons or at other times in the day, when they should be planning and preparing for lessons, assessing work or carrying out school duties, such as attending training.

The school (and you) expect teachers to be fully prepared, focused and engaged with students and supporting their learning. Whilst administration staff, support staff and senior leaders may be able to access emails more routinely, their primary function is to support teachers and students. In a school it may lead to staff focusing on the immediate task of responding to an email instead of concentrating on delivering and supporting teaching and learning.

Other things to consider

When communicating with the school, please bear in mind that a great many staff are putting their heart and soul, and many, many hours into trying to help our students achieve well. We would never wish to discourage parents from communicating with staff, establishing a relationship and working together. Parental communication is essential, we do not always get it right and we need your feedback to help us to continue to improve.

On occasions staff face criticism over an activity which they may be doing entirely out of goodwill, be it running a trip, or a team, or a concert, or a play and an ill crafted email from an upset parent, even when the point is justified, can result in hurt being caused and a reluctance from staff to continue to go the extra mile, that we so much appreciate of them. Likewise, even when a communication is about a core school responsibility, our communications need to be respectful. Couching a point as being 'direct', 'blunt' or 'honest' does not make it any less destructive to a relationship that should be based on trust and mutual respect. This applies to all communication and as staff we need to be just as careful in how we show we value our students and parents. We do not always get it right but we constantly aim to do so and to improve when this is not the case.

Many of you will be facing the same challenges in your own workplace from an increasing expectation of anytime, anywhere communications. Some readers may be of the view that this is simply the way the world works now. However, Atwood has a duty of care to staff, as it does to students. This includes a responsibility to ensure that the staffs' workload is manageable and does not unreasonably intrude in to their private life.

Finally

There are enough good teachers leaving the profession as a result of not feeling very valued, and there is no need for us to add to this. Indeed the letters and emails of thanks and appreciation that we do receive are very much appreciated. We have an incredibly dedicated team of staff at Atwood and we want to retain them and make them feel valued. It is therefore essential that we respect them and help them to maintain a sustainable workload.