

# **Bede Academy**



# **Home School Policy**

**Last review:** May 2021  
**Principal Approval:** June 2021  
**Next review:** June 2022

# Home School Policy

## 1. Introduction

Bede Academy is an all age academy with a fully comprehensive intake. It serves an area of Blyth in which a wide range of socio-economic groups live, often in close geographical proximity but often socially disparate. Bede Academy aims to raise the achievement and aspirations of all its students by implementing a coherent programme of teaching and learning that develops the whole student as an individual in society whilst fully involving parents and the wider community. In this way Bede Academy students can serve the academy community and the wider community around them.

## 2. Purpose of the Policy

This Home School Policy is intended to provide sufficient information to staff to enable effective decision making in the practical construction, review and operation of the system that supports home school procedures. The audience for this document is intended primarily to be teaching and support staff at Bede Academy and separate documents are produced for communication with parents and students regarding procedures.

## 3. Policy Summary

Home School procedures are primarily in place at Bede Academy to support and maximise learning of students and the development of their social, moral and spiritual well-being. This policy outlines guidelines for three aspects of home school procedures. This includes:

- The Home School Agreement
- Communication
- Travel

## 4. Guiding Principles

Principles for Home School procedures are informed by the academy's Christian ethos. The academy practice emphasises the Christian view that each person is infinitely precious, gifted for a purpose and morally responsible, whatever their abilities or limitations. As the academy serves a wide ranging community, we seek to develop home school procedures that meet the needs of all individuals within the community. Bede Academy's home school procedures are based on the understanding that students learn best when partnership and trust are promoted between staff, parents and Governors, when communication between home and the academy is effective, when the aims, values and ethos of the school are clear, when homework is provided, marked and returned and when students are part of a thriving community. Therefore, it is part of the service to the children to establish well thought out home school procedures. As educators, Bede Academy recognises the academy's responsibility for developing the educational principles in its students and understands the unique and key role of being trusted by parents to educate their children. Staff must expect to be held accountable as professional educators. It is a shared responsibility with parents, who are ultimately responsible for encouraging, overseeing, motivating, protecting and caring for their child during the most vulnerable years of their life.

## 5. Procedures

### Home School Agreement

The Home School Agreement is sent to all parents, asking for their support in ensuring their child's best interests are served. It urges parents to take a key responsibility in the education of their child. The exercise is designed to create a formal written bond between the academy and home, which can strengthen everyone's ability to maximise each student's potential. This agreement encapsulates the

belief that parents are a child's first and most important educator. It is designed to help achieve the highest possible standard of outcomes through close communication and effective partnership with parents. The Home School Agreement is disseminated to parents as part of the Parents' Handbook, issued when students join the academy. If a student joins the academy as an in-year transfer, they are also provided with an electronic data collection request, in which policies and procedures are shared, and consents / agreement to adhere to the Home School Agreement obtained. It is also printed in Students' Study Files (KS3 and KS4), and parents are required to sign this at the start of each academic year.

### **Communication**

Bede Academy uses various forms of communication, involving electronic, written, informal and formal meetings, and by telephone when pertinent to a specific student.

### **Electronic communication**

In the interests of efficiency and to reduce environmental impact, electronic communication is the preferred method of communication which involves the use of e-mail or text messaging for direct communication, and use of the academy website for wider information sharing. Information is also shared via Twitter, and electronic learning platforms (namely Google Classroom) are used to engage with students who are working from home, and to set and respond to homework.

Parents are given an opportunity to comment on aspects of the academy in an annual electronic questionnaire. Questionnaires may also be used to capture opinion as part of a consultation process, for example in order to implement a significant change to uniform or school day routines. Student views are also routinely captured via surveys set by subject teachers or at an academy-wide level.

### **Written communication**

Procedures for written communication from the academy involve the dissemination of a comprehensive weekly newsletter by email, as well as printed letters / information leaflets which are periodically disseminated to students through their form tutor / class teacher. In the case of hard copies being sent and a student is absent the letter will be named by the class teacher / tutor and handed to the student on return. Letters for visits will be sent giving adequate notice and any relevant information (eg packed lunch requirements /clothing). Individual emails or letters will be sent home when the academy is responding to the requirements of the behaviour policy or the SEN policy, to notify parents of a payment due or as a response to an email or letter from home asking a specific question or raising a concern. The importance of this will be judged and responded to by letter, phone or meeting within an appropriate time frame. Staff may also make a comment in the Student Study File / Diary. Older students may write a reminder note of an event in Study File / Diary. The Study File is a key mechanism for sharing information between home and the academy, and must be carried by all students daily and put out on their desk in every lesson. Parents and form tutors are expected to sign this weekly.

Letters received from parents to a class teacher, Form Tutor or the Principal will be responded to by making an appointment to see the relevant person, with a phone call or by seeing the parent at the end of the day or a letter home. Comments may be written by parents in the students' Study File / Diary if appropriate. On several occasions during the year, parents have an opportunity to write a comment about their child's report.

### **Informal Meetings**

In the Primary Years, each teacher accompanies their students to the playground at the end of the day. This is an opportunity to discuss matters of the day with parents if necessary. Parents may at this time approach the teacher to discuss something. The teacher assesses whether they can deal with it instantly or whether they need to book an appointment at another time. Parents may request by phone, letter or in person, to make an appointment to see the class teacher, a member of the Senior Team or Principal.

### **Formal Meetings**

In the Primary Years, there are Parents' evenings in the Autumn Term (informal drop in), Spring Term and summer term (following annual report). This is a time for a general discussion. If there is a concern that the parent or teacher has with a child, meetings should have been instigated before this meeting.

In the Secondary Years, there are annual Parents' Consultation evenings for all year groups, and additional new starter parents' evenings with form tutors for Year 7 students in the autumn term. In 2020-21, many of these consultation moments took place electronically via School Cloud, and there is current discussion regarding a longer term move to such platforms for Parents' Evenings. These meetings are arranged in line with the assessments, recording and reporting timetable. Parents can also expect to receive data regarding the progress of their child once per term, with one of these data sharing moments being a full report, with written comments from Form Tutors and Senior Staff.

Parents of children on the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) register in the "SEN support" or "EHC Plan" categories will be invited to attend meetings where their child's support plan is discussed and written. Parents of children with EHC plans of special needs and disability are also invited to attend annual reviews.

Parental meetings are always held in response to the issue of a Fixed Term Exclusion, and indeed are a pre-requisite of readmission to the academy. Parental meetings are also held for all applications to join the academy as an in-year transfer, or as part of a Managed Move from the Pupil Placement Panel.

### **Telephone Calls**

Parents must contact the academy by phone before 8.30am if their child is unwell where they can speak to Reception Staff or leave a voicemail message for the attendance officer. Parents may phone the academy and request to speak to staff before and after the academy day. If a member of staff is not available to take the call, arrangements will be made for another time. They are welcome to phone and request to speak to the Principal at any time they are available. When unavailable there may be another person who can help or the details will be taken and passed to the Principal at an appropriate time. The academy will phone parents if a child is unwell, and also will phone or text parents if a student is absent, and notification from parents hasn't been received. A teacher or the Principal may phone the parents to discuss a concern if they have been unable to see the parent at the end of the day.

### **Formal complaints**

The academy will work hard to resolve any problems informally and hope that parents will support this approach. The complaints policy outlines procedures for formal complaints.

### **Absence**

If a student is absent, parents contact the academy before 8.30am. If contact is not made by parents the academy will contact home on the first day of a student's absence. On the student's return, parents are asked to write a letter explaining reasons for the absence. This is also necessary when a student arrives late to the academy, after 9am.

Holidays during term time should be avoided. Term time holidays will not be authorised (unless extreme circumstances). Requests for leave during the academy term must be made in writing and addressed to the Principal. A written response will always be given to requests for leave, and will be emailed to parents in advance of the dates of the requested leave. The letter will outline arrangements for managing unauthorised absence, and for students catching up with missed work due to absence. If a student is required to attend an appointment during the academy day, they will need to bring in their appointment card or letter and request an EXEAT card from their form tutor. Further details are outlined in the academy's attendance policy. Older students will be permitted to leave the site to attend appointments independently, but only on the written request of a parent / guardian.

### **Travel Recommendations**

Students arrive at the academy no later than 15 minutes before the start of the academy day. The academy day starts at 8.25am in Secondary Years and 8.55am in Primary Years. The attendance and lunch registers are taken promptly and any students arriving late will be recorded on the official attendance register as late. Students who are persistently late, without good reason, will be given a lateness detention by the Attendance Officer.

Bede Academy co-operates with parents to ensure safety, avoid accidents and promote positive steps towards improved travel arrangements. The aim is to steer parents away from the use of private cars for journeys to and from the academy and towards alternative forms of travel such as walking, cycling, use of public transport and car sharing. Should it be essential that parents use a car to transport children, parents are encouraged to park outside a five minute walking zone and walk the remainder of the way (see travel plan). In cases where it is impossible to avoid bringing a car to the academy, for example to collect a sick child, the academy car park may be used. Parking Permits are available through Reception in the event of longer term access being needed, for example to drop off and pick up a student with a disability or injury. Parents are to note that there is a one way system in operation, to ensure safe access and exit from Bede North site. Students travelling by bike or scooter are required to wear a safety helmet.

The academy is actively seeking to address the particular travel and transport needs through the Bede Academy travel plan. Please refer to the travel plan for further details.

### **Transporting children offsite**

Occasionally, students will leave the academy site for various educational reasons. This may involve transporting students in coaches. Parents will be asked permission for such arrangements as part of the admissions data collection form. For visits involving travel further afield, or outside of the usual times of the academy day, consent will be sought in advance as part of the Educational Visits procedures.

## **6. Communication and review of the Policy**

This policy will be communicated to staff initially through induction training. Appropriate content will be communicated to parents through appropriate media (student Study Files, Parental Handbook, Parents' Newsletters, Clarion call text messages, twitter, letters, and via the academy website).

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

The Vice Principal (Pastoral) is accountable for all aspects of implementing this Policy, supported by the Assistant Vice Principals (Pastoral) – North and South sites.