

# **British International School and Montessori Education**

## **Communication Policy**

## Introduction and Scope

This policy is for all British International School (BIS) Employees and covers a wide selection of communication-related instructions, guidelines and regulations. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the communication of key information is directed, received and actioned by the appropriate person in the appropriate way, whilst fulfilling contractual and procedural obligations.

## Formal Requests /Communications

Any request that in a professional environment would be considered a 'Formal Request' must be submitted to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – this particularly applies to any guidelines/regulations within any of the school policies that states communication 'must be made in writing'.

Examples of Formal Requests which require written format (hard copy handed in, or soft via email) include:

- A desired exemption from a contractual/policy stipulation
- Resignation from post
- A formal complaint about a colleague
- A proposal to lead a fieldtrip

## Communication with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Knowing which member of the SLT to direct your concerns, queries or requests to will ensure communication is more efficient.

The table below assists Employees in deciphering which member of SLT predominantly deals with or has jurisdiction over different aspects of BIS. Employees should consider whether their concerns, queries or requests demand the attention of the Principal in the first instance.

Principal	Academic Supervisor/SLT/DSL	Principal/HR
Substantial concerns	Student testing and reports	Contracts and job descriptions
Significant complaints	Curriculum, syllabus, planning	Recruitment and induction
Reports of staff bullying	Textbooks and resources	Rules, regulations and policies
Issues with SLT	Online studentslearning	Duties and duty rotas
Issues effecting BIS's reputation	After-school clubs	Targets and Deadlines
Finance; salary, taxes, banking	Additional Learning Needs	Educare modules
Notification of lateness, sickness, absences and leave		Outreach and partnership
Child Protection and Safeguarding (CPS) concerns /issues		CPS queries
Liaising with students' parents and guardians		
Enrolment, class sizes, placement and staff allocation		
Matters regarding student behaviour, performance, welfare		
		Training and continuous professional development
		Issues or concerns with a colleague's professionalism/conduct

If in doubt Employees are encouraged to talk to any member of the SLT about any matters / concerns / issues.

## Communicating Sickness

An Employee who is unable to report for work owing to sickness shall notify the Employer before 0745 on the day in question, and each and every day at 0745 thereafter. If absent for two or more days within a seven-day period, the Employer requires the Employee to produce a medical certificate.

Notification must be via a phone call and not via text / WhatsApp message to the school's official phone. BIS does not accept 'lack of phone credit' as a reasonable excuse.

Failure to follow Sick Leave Procedure will result in the absence being considered Unauthorised Absence and can result in disciplinary action as laid out in the *Disciplinary Policy* which could also include suspension and / or forfeiture of salary.

## Communicating Lateness

The Employer expects the Employee to arrive at school on time each and every day. Whereas the Employer understands that unpredictable delays may occur from time to time, the Employee is expected to notify the Employer when realisation of lateness is apparent.

Notification must be via a phone call and not via text / WhatsApp message to the school's official phone. BIS does not accept 'lack of phone credit' as a reasonable excuse.

Failure to follow Lateness Procedure will result in the lateness being considered Unauthorised Lateness and can result in disciplinary action as laid out in the *Disciplinary Policy*.

## Weekly Meetings

Fulltime Employees are contracted as normal for Wednesday afternoons despite students being collected at 1300. Unless otherwise communicated by SLT, Employees should be on-site and ready to attend / participate in a meeting / training session. The SLT will usually communicate Wednesday meetings by the Monday of the same week, however since Employees are contracted as normal on Wednesdays; meetings called with little notice should not affect attendance of an Employee.

These meetings and training sessions are vital to Employees' Continuous Professional Development (CPD), as well as for effectively communicating information. These meetings and training sessions are not optional.

## Assemblies

Assemblies are scheduled for Monday, Wednesday (class-based) and Fridays for Primary School, and Fridays for High School.

All Employees are required to attend assemblies with their assigned classes in order to understand, participate and reinforce the theme of the week, as well as any other information delivered to the students.

## Office-door Noticeboard

As well as being shared with Employees via electronic means, some information is additionally displayed on the office-door noticeboard. This is usually information that's good to have to hand such as the morning duty rota, lunch / afterschool duty rota, and the school calendar.

## Electronic Devices

BIS understands the importance electronic devices play in everyday life and Employees should feel free to bring electronic devices to school – at their own risk.

BIS however will impose the following regulations and guidelines on all Employees:

- Electronic devices should never be used in class for messaging, social media, taking calls ETC, in fact, BIS strongly encourages Employees to keep electronic devices out of sight altogether
- Personal electronic devices should never be used whilst Employees are on duty
- Personal electronic devices should never be used to process and/or store personal and/or sensitive information of BIS staff /or students

BIS wishes to ask Employees to consider the following: ***If you're on duty on your phone, how much attention can you really be paying the students? How approachable do you look to a student? What would a parent think if they see you standing there with your attention on your phone and not on their child?***

### Photography, Videoing, Voice Recordings and Other

Nobody (Employees, parents, contractors, visitors, volunteers ETC) is permitted to capture footage of students of any kind on personal devices without prior authorisation from SLT. Staff who wish to capture footage for record purposes are encouraged to collect the school phone / camera from SLT.

Employees have a duty to enforce this rule and report any breaches to SLT.

Under no circumstances is any captured footage allowed to be circulated/shared on any platforms without authorisation from SLT.

The only exception to the above rule is on a student's birthday when parents/guardians hold a classroom- based party and are allowed to capture footage of the event. The Classroom Teacher is to be present during and remains in charge of all students. If a parent/guardian/other accompanying adult attempts to override a Classroom Teacher's authority/instruction, or if the footage being captured is of any concern to the Classroom Teacher, a member of the SLT should be called immediately.

### WhatsApp Communications

Whereas BIS would prefer to communicate solely via email, WhatsApp is more accessible to more of BIS's Employees than email. BIS therefore will often share important information and notifications via WhatsApp.

If an Employee has no access to/can no longer access the BIS WhatsApp group, they are to immediately bring this to the attention of the SLT.

Employees who have no access to the BIS WhatsApp group are wholly responsible for regularly checking its content with a colleague who does.

In a world that's becoming more heavily reliant on communicating electronically, BIS does not accept 'I haven't been on WhatsApp' as a reasonable excuse for not receiving information. Employees who do not have a phone / WhatsApp, do have the ability to talk to an Employee who does, daily.

Employees are expected to treat the BIS WhatsApp group as a professional communication tool and refrain from the follow types of interaction:

- Selling/promoting products or events
- Discussing/organising non-school events
- Sharing jokes or media that may cause offence
- Religious preaching or preaching of any kind
- Other content considered unacceptable, unprofessional and/or unnecessary in a forum used for professional communications

**BIS Employees are not permitted to communicate with BIS students, parents and / or guardians via WhatsApp or any other unofficial means, unless authorised by SLT.**

### **Email Communications**

BIS requires all Employees to have an accessible email account which is regularly checked (via school computers in an Employee's own time if need be).

Despite BIS predominantly communicating with Employees via WhatsApp there are times when email is required, such as for sending documents.

Additionally, BIS requires all Employees to enrol on its online learning platform(s) which also requires Employees to have an accessible email account.

### **BIS Wi-Fi and Electronic Devices**

The use of BIS Wi-Fi and BIS electronic devices on-site is permitted under the instruction and authorisation of SLT and / or the I.C.T. Teacher. Employees are not permitted to take BIS's electronic devices offsite without written request and authorisation from SLT.

Students' Wi-Fi / electronic needs will always take precedence over an individual or Employee's. BIS Employees are not permitted to search or access non-professional sites using BIS Wi-Fi and / or BIS electronic devices.

Examples of professional / permitted websites:

- Teaching resource website such as EDUCARE/TES
- Educational websites as Literacy Planet, Learning Ladders, Clasdojo etc
- Email accounts

Examples of non-professional / unpermitted websites:

- Social media sites such as Facebook
- Adult-only sites such as gambling or pornography
- Gaming sites

**Employees are not expected to use any electronic devices (BIS or personal) during class, whilst on any other duty or whilst in the vicinity of students /parents who cannot tell when an Employee is 'on-duty'.**

## Social Media

For the purpose of this policy, 'social media' refers to blogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

Employees should be aware that BIS holds Employees wholly responsible for managing their social media presence including commentary, content, images and other, and Employees are expected to take all necessary precautions in limiting access to their shared content on all platforms.

Employees are urged to remember that given their role working with minors in a professional environment, they're expected to show utmost integrity with regards to their shared content including their language. Shared content that directly or indirectly stands in contradiction to the school's ethos surrounding multi-culturalism tolerance and open-mindedness will be investigated. Good judgement is expected by all Employees.

Employees are also urged to remember that content may be observed by BIS, students, parents and community members.

Employees are not permitted to post or comment on social media on behalf of BIS without authorisation of the SLT, nor publish, post or release any information that is considered sensitive, confidential or not public. Social media should never interfere with an Employee's responsibilities,

**BIS Employees are not permitted to interact with BIS students, parents and/or guardians via social media, WhatsApp, Text, phone calls or any other unofficial means, unless authorised by the SLT in writing.** As for official means of communication such as 'classdojo' or using 'Learning Ladders', Employees are reminded to keep communications professional, to-the-point and on-task at all times. Students are encouraged to do the same.

## Communicating with Students

Professional judgment is key whilst communicating with students and should BIS Employees have any issues or concerns regarding communicating with students, they should speak to the management or a member of the SLT immediately.

**BIS Employees are not permitted to interact with BIS students via social media, WhatsApp, Text, phone calls or any other unofficial means.**

## Communicating with Parents/Guardians

BIS Employees are expected to be professional and respectful with parents / guardians at all times.

If an Employee has any concerns or issues with a parent, they're advised to communicate the concerns to the management or a member of the SLT.

Employees who receive a meeting request from a parent / guardian should attempt to fulfil the request within 2 school days. Employees needn't fulfil an immediate meeting request if the parent / guardian has given no prior notice and / or it interferes with an Employee's duties – unless the meeting is regarding a serious and immediate concern / issue. Employees should bring meeting requests (formal and informal) to the attention of the school's management or a member of the SLT.

BIS Employees are urged to remember that the Freetown community is relatively small and well-connected, and that their actions whilst both on and off duty could have repercussions.

### **School Reports and Parent-Teacher Meetings**

School reports are a vital communication tool. BIS requires its Employees to complete school reports with utmost integrity, due diligence and commitment. Reports must be completed electronically and in a timely manner, individualised to each student.

Parent-teacher meetings are equally vital to communicating a student's performance to parents/guardians. A student's teacher is required to be well-prepared for these meetings including having examples of students' work and a record of development.

### **Sensitive Information**

Sensitive and confidential information should not be processed, input and / or stored on personal electronic devices, and whilst using BIS electronic devices; Employees must ensure sensitive / confidential information is stored safely and securely.

Employees are reminded that most BIS electronic devices that they access to are also accessed by other Employees, and BIS students too. Employees are required to immediately report to SLT any such occurrence where sensitive/ confidential information has not been secured.

It is considered Gross Misconduct for Employees to access, alter and/or share any official information in any form that is clearly sensitive and/or confidential, and which they have no authority to access, alter and/or share.

### **Further Information, Guidelines and Regulations**

Employees are directed to the following sources for further information, guidelines and regulations:

*Employee's Contract*

*Employee's Job Description*

*School Handbook*

*School Policies incl. Information Communications Technology and Digital Learning Resources*

*Policy Code of Conduct*

*School's Website*

*Office-door Noticeboard*

## Effective /Review Dates

This policy is effective from: 1st September 2023 and supersedes all previous communication policies.

This policy is due for review and republication on 1st September 2025