



Birches Academy of Academics and Arts
School & Family Communication Policy
2014-15 School Year

Purpose

The communication policy and guidelines articulate the process for effective communications among and between family, school and other stakeholders. The acceptable protocols outlined in this policy provide consistency in practice for communication within the Birches Academy of Academics and Arts community.

Communications Goals

- Enrich the Birches Academy educational experience
- Inform parents of student progress in a timely manner and to implement strategies to address concerns/issues
- Distribute important information regarding testing, school visits, school closure and other emergency information as necessary
- Inform parents, families and community members of various upcoming activities, fundraisers, award ceremonies, achievements and volunteer opportunities
- Respond to parental requests and concerns effectively and in a timely manner
- Family Contact Information
- Family contact information is solely for school use and school related communications. Confidential contact information will not be released to third parties without formal request and written permission from the individual(s).

Communications Guidelines

Acceptable	Not Acceptable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming student events • School activities • Parent-teacher communication • Parent communication with, to and from the administration • Volunteer requests or needs, including those from Room Parents • Notification of upcoming important dates, i.e. school closings, early releases, professional days, field trips, guest speakers, career day, etc. • Birches Academy website for school policies, calendar of events, bulletins and fliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising solicitations unless approved by the School Board • For-profit activities including marketing, advertising of products or services or any activity for personal profit or interest – whether via email or posting on school social media pages (i.e. Facebook) • Promotion of a political or personal view through the communication network at Birches Academy • Email message to large groups: All messages intended for a larger audience must go through the office



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributing "junk" or "spam" emails such as chain letters, advertisements or unauthorized solicitations • Release of confidential contact information: Names, address, email address or telephone numbers • Distributing data and information without authorization • Prohibited activities as defined by federal, state and local laws or regulations (see below)
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Prohibited activities relating to internet and email access include but are not limited to:

- Violating the privacy of individual users by reading their e-mail communications unless specifically authorized to do so
- Transmission of threatening, offensive or harassing messages or images
- Violating Federal and State laws dealing with copyrighted materials, including articles and software
- Activity causing the loss or corruption of data, the abnormal use of computing resources (degradation of network performance), or the introduction of computer worms or viruses

Modes of Communication

- **Office Emails:** Broadcast messages generated and disseminated from the Front Office
- **"Reverse 911" calling system:** To keep families informed of time-sensitive situations
- **Teacher Emails:** Direct messages between teacher and parent(s)
- **Teacher Updates:** Group messages intended as student updates to parents on a predetermined frequency
 - Teachers communicate by various means including newsletters and web sites to provide information about the on-goings within the classroom; each teacher will do this in their own way
- **The Birches Bulletin:** Weekly email messages from the Head of School outlining current issues, events and links to items on the website
- **The Leaflet:** Bi-monthly newsletter that serves as an overview of news and information for the month



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- **Birches Academy website** <http://www.birchesacademy.org>: a public electronic site posting school policies, calendar of events, fliers and general information about activities and upcoming events
 - **The Foundation of the Birches Academy Facebook page** www.facebook.com/groups/317866028311601/: invitation-only social media site where the Birches community comes together; provides official announcements on upcoming events and snow days but also allows the school community to share information, ask questions or seek help
 - **The Birches Academy Facebook page** www.facebook.com/BirchesAcademy: public social media site to share information about the school and prospective student- related information with interested parties

What parents can expect from employees of Birches Academy

- Response to parent communication (phone or email message) including requests for conferences within two full school days
- Notification of events or situations in a time-appropriate manner depending upon the severity of the situation or event. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, the individual at risk will be assisted and medical care administered prior to or simultaneous to emergency contact. The contact or notification will be initiated through the Front Office. Issues necessitating notification of parents include: very inappropriate use of language, insults and slander, harassment, physical threat to another individual, serious altercations, injury, accident and medical conditions. *Realizing that in some cases the severity or emergency nature of a situation or circumstance is subjective, every effort is made to make home contact as soon as possible.*
- Regular updates (daily/weekly, as determined) regarding on-going student issue(s)
- One scheduled formal fall conference per year and one per teacher or parent request as needed in the spring.
- “Reverse 911” calls regarding snow days, emergencies or important announcements

What parents should not expect from employees of Birches Academy

- Immediate responses to calls or requests while school is in session
- Calls returned after 4:00 p.m.
- Email responses in the evening or on the weekend



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When/how you should contact your child's teacher

Preferred communication method to the teacher is via email

- Unable to keep a scheduled appointment
- Safety issues or change in behavior at home
- Family emergencies and/or problems, sleepless nights, play dates or appointments
- When homework takes more time than expected, if a student cannot complete work at home or if the work presents undue stress to your child
- Concerns about the teacher and or the teacher's classroom policy, process or a grade

Please realize that teachers do not always have information regarding things that may have happened outside of school or to the degree to which a situation in school has affected a child. If you find that your child is upset about a situation, whether it is about school or if the situation may impact your child or children during school time and on school property, please reach out to us. We are here to be of assistance and for purposes of mediating or defusing a potential situation that may arise.

When/how you should contact the Office

Unless noted, preferred mode of communication is email to information@birchesacademy.com

- Changes in bus transportation, before or after care schedule change or after school enrichment schedule changes (phone or email)
- Tardiness to school
- Absence from school
- If your child forgets his or her lunch, homework or instrument
- Illness lasting longer than 3 days
- Medical issues that arise or change
- Changes in family situation: divorce, new baby or a move

When you should contact the Head of School

- Unresolved concerns or issues that you have already discussed with a teacher
- Issues with a teacher that you feel uncomfortable discussing and need assistance in resolving
- Issues that arose outside of the classroom
- School policies or problems



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Communications that interfere with the classroom and school

While we encourage a culture of openness, we ask that parents please consider the following

- Coming to the school without an appointment for the expressed desire to meet with your child's teacher before, after or during the school day
- Discussing an issue with a teacher outside school during drop off or pick up times
- Speaking to the teacher or any school staff disrespectfully or angrily at any time
- Engaging in conversation about a teacher, staff member or class with another parent or staff member
- Excessive emails to staff members
- Circulating negative or derogatory comments about Birches Academy based on the outcome of a situation, issue or unfavorable resolution. Please address situations, issues or problems directly with those involved.

Nurturing your child's independence and responsibility

- Encourage your child to talk with his/her teacher about problems, i.e. homework or other issues at school
 - It is suggested that the parent contact the teacher to apprise the teacher of the situation so that he/she may encourage a conversation with the student
- Leave your child at the drop-off line for teacher pick up and entrance into school rather than accompanying him or her into the school
- If your child forgets lunch, homework, or an instrument, please call to inform the school that you will be dropping the item off. Consider having your child develop his/her own sense of responsibility when deciding to drop off items.
- Support your child in becoming a responsible young citizen