BREWOOD C.E. *(C)* MIDDLE SCHOOL

POLICY STATEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

1   Introduction

In our school we pride ourselves on maintaining good communication between all stakeholders. We encourage mutual respect between all staff, pupils and visitors who are asked to listen to the views of others, express their views in a courteous, polite manner and work together for the benefit of the school and its community.

1.1   Effective communication is important to our school. We communicate with a diverse range of people both inside and outside of the school and across a wide range of ages and abilities. Good communication between the school and the home is essential, and children achieve more when schools and parents/carers know what the school is trying to achieve and work with the school to achieve this.

2   Aims and objectives

2.1   In our school, we aim to have clear and effective communication with all pupils, colleagues, governors, parents/carers and the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping every stakeholder well informed about school life.

2.2   We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We use an easy-to-read font, coloured or enlarged text and add pictures or colour photographs wherever appropriate.

2.3   We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination recognising and celebrating the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our school. (See Equality Act).

2.4   We also aim to communicate respectfully whether verbally or in written form and avoid language which may be misconstrued - particularly when given in written form.

3   Communicating within school

Good staff relationships are essential at Brewood and we pride ourselves on the way we welcome each other on a daily basis, by a polite or friendly greeting. Experienced staff are always willing to help and support **new** staff in terms of sharing pupil information, school routines, subject experience and best practice etc.

3.1 (i) So that we all know what is going on, there is a weekly bulletin produced following a Friday morning 5LT diary meeting which is then forwarded to all staff. There is a daily diary meeting between the Headteacher and Key Stage Co-ordinators and other stakeholders. 5LT meet weekly to discuss current priorities and any issues raised. There is a briefing

meeting held at 8:30am each Monday morning and a weekly staff meeting, minutes of which are published.

3.1 (ii) 5LT and Subject Leaders produce additional detailed information regarding subject / task specific procedures and timescales.

3.2 *A* Staffroom whiteboard contains information about the forthcoming day and staff are encouraged to read it and add relevant information to be shared with others.

3.3 All our procedures are detailed in the Staff Handbook.

3.4 Written communications are delivered through pigeonholes, e-mail or may be hand delivered by one of the administrative team.

3.5 Staff should discuss any specific issues promptly with their line manager or relevant staff member so that these can be resolved quickly and issues do not build up.

3.6 Visiting teachers or Cover Supervisors are given a welcome pack on arrival which contains essential information about what is expected of them and other useful information.

3.7 Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff. The exception to this is an optional database of staff contact numbers for emergency reasons eg. School closure, visits off-site, residential visits, foreign visits or other essential communication.

3.8 There are Staff and Pupil Suggestion Boxes, opened weekly, available for comments which are discussed by SLT.

3.9 A reflective self-review activity or SWOT (Strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats) analysis is conducted on the first INSET day which proceeds the start of the new academic year. This gives staff a chance to contribute their views on the school. Responses are collated to produce an overview which feeds into the SDP priorities for the year and the basis for SLT agendas.

3.10 If Teaching or TA staff are unwell and cannot attend school they should ring the Assistant Headteacher as early as possible but no later than 8:00am on the day of absence.Members of the Admin Team should contact *SC.* This will enable a conversation to take place to ascertain the staff member's illness, likely period of absence and any further support which may be necessary. It will enable the Assistant Headteacher to sort cover for the appropriate groups or classes. It will be helpful if the absent teacher can phone the office no later than 3pm that day to inform us of the likely attendance next day.

On returning to school the member of staff should meet with the Headteacher, (if the Headteacher is unavailable or absent this will be conducted by the Deputy Headteacher) at 9:00am for a short return to work / re-entry meeting for an appropriate discussion, the Headteacher will ascertain if further support is needed. The Self-Certification form (AB200) should also be completed at that meeting.

Appropriate sick notes issued by GPs should be given to the School Bursar on return to work to ensure the school's absence systems are kept up to date and to pass on to the County Council for processing.

At the end of each term the Bursar will send staff an update on their Bradford Score which is a County Council agreed format to calculate absence, and to monitor whether ongoing absences due to illness require further support.

3.11   Professional Development and Training of Staff

The school prides itself in developing the skills and experiences of staff. Requests for training should be made to the Assistant Headteacher. Once training is completed an Evaluation Form should be completed within three working days of the completion of the training day and returned to the Assistant Headteacher. *A* summary of these forms is presented termly to Governors with an analysis of the impact of this training on staff development, and pupil outcomes.

4   Communicating the school's values to pupils

This is done through:

4.1   modelling respectful and supportive relationships between all adults in the school community;

4.2   treating all children with respect and warmth;

4.3   using positive language to emphasise and praise desired behaviour rather than focus on negative behaviour;

4.4   teaching an emotional vocabulary so that children develop the language skills to help them recognise and understand their own and others' feelings;

4.5   teaching social skills of sharing, turn-taking, listening, giving and receiving compliments, *giving* and receiving criticism;

4.6   using social problem-solving structures such as circle time to give a framework for resolving difficulties constructively;

4.7   using playtimes, clubs and educational visits as opportunities to extend social skills and develop independence and responsibility.

4.8   giving pupils leadership opportunities ie. Prefects, form captains, monitors, receptionists, reading champions, librarians, House Captains, Personal Assistants etc or at special events, in Church, Old Boys' Dinners, Concerts, Open Days / Evenings etc.

4.9   It is essential that all staff follow the school's Marking and Feedback Policy so that pupils know what they are doing well, and how they can improve further and what they need to do next. Time should be given for pupils to respond to teacher's verbal or written comments. Staff should check these improvements have been completed accurately by pupils.

5   Home-school communication

5.1   We send a weekly Headteacher's newsletter to parents and carers. It contains general details of school events and activities. Parents and carers expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact. We send other letters of a general nature when necessary. All letters are posted on our website to keep all stakeholders informed.

5.2   At the beginning of each academic year parents or carers receive a curriculum summary which provides details of the work to be covered during the forthcoming year. They also receive an annual calendar with key dates for the forthcoming year. We invite parents and carers to support their child's work through a range of suggested activities to be shared with the child at home and there are other meetings and workshops on a range of educational issues.

5.3   Children in all classes have a Student Planner / Personal Organiser. This enables parents and carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teacher. Pupils use this to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for

communication with parents and carers. See 7.1. The organiser also contains a tear out informative Absence Note for parents to complete.

5.4 The school encourages parents and carers to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. Teachers *see* parents/carers immediately, if at all possible. Where this is not possible, the parent makes an appointment.

5.5 We arrange curriculum meetings for parents and carers. These are evening meetings to explain areas of our curriculum and opportunities we have at Brewood. We hold a meeting for new parents/carers each June, and a meeting for Year 6 parents/carers annually, concerning the national tests. The residential visits for each year group are preceded with information meetings with parents and carers regarding the planning and content of the visit, and a post-visit review.

5.6 If a child is absent from school, and we have had no indication of the reason, we contact a parent (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

6. Home-school agreement

6.1 Our home-school agreement has been in place since September 1999. It is a requirement of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. It explains the school's aims and values, the school's responsibilities towards the children, the responsibilities of parents and carers, and the school's expectations of the children. We ask parents and carers to sign this agreement when their child starts at our school, and to renew it each year.

6.2 The agreement covers the standard of education in our school, the ethos of the school, and our expectations regarding attendance, behaviour, and homework. Staff review this annually before it is included in the Student Planner / Personal Organiser.

7 Contacting and meeting with Parents or other stakeholders

It is vital that we remember that all visitors to school are made very welcome on entering the building, at reception and around school. Visitors will be asked to give their name and reason for their visit when arriving at our car park barrier or at the entry buzzer to the main reception. They will then be asked to sign-in and wear a 'visitor's badge', before entering school and sign out and hand in their badge before leaving the building.

Visitors are asked to follow and respect our agreed procedures whilst in school and in being equally courteous and polite at all times with all stakeholders.

When parents or others telephone the school a sympathetic manner and a willingness to listen will often make an anxious caller feel more at ease.

7.1 It is mainly the form teacher's responsibility to contact parents when the need arises. Subject teachers should tell the form teacher if any problems occur in order for a pupil profile to be built. Any contact with parents should be made only after consulting with the form teacher. Comments made to parents should be based on *evidence.* Heads of Key Stage should be kept updated of contact with parents and may contact parents themselves or initiate meetings with parents when specific concerns arise.

7.2   Minutes of **any** meetings with parents should be kept and put in the respective **child's file** in the school office. It is essential that any letters from parents, copies of letters to parents and notes from parents are dated and kept in the pupil's record file.

7.3   Lunchtime Supervisors will contact parents in the event of a pupil sustaining an injury at lunchtime. If after all attempts to contact a parent or pupil nominated contact have proved unsuccessful, a voice mail message will be left and the office team informed of the details (Photocopy of the relevant page in the Accident Book) for when the parents return the call. If there is not a facility to leave a voice mail message then this **must** be conveyed to the office team. If appropriate the Office Team may be requested to send a text message.

When communicating with parents it is important that we:

(I)   consider having a discussion with a parent on the telephone first or at a meeting, which usually resolves most issues;

(ii)   try to avoid sending long letters or emails in reply to a parent. Be careful of tone / words used in any letter or email. If an email is sent please send it via the school office so that it is received from the school email address;

(iii)   are polite, calm and respectful at all times and that parents will also be the same;

(iv)   do not weaken our professional position by responding with what the parents may feel they want to hear rather than with what we know to be right;

(v)   do not pass comments on matters which do not relate to us but instead refer the parent to the appropriate colleague;

(vi)   do not unwittingly complicate an issue by attempting to resolve it on an informal basis, e.g. by talking with a parent in a local shop;

(vii)   do not leave classes unsupervised to talk to parents;

(viii) are sure of the information we give out regarding pupils' events and procedures. It is better to return the call later when clearer information is available, if we are unsure.

The positive approach must be:

(i)   to ask the school office to arrange a more convenient time to discuss matters with a parent if the parent arrives whilst we are teaching;

(ii)   to contact parents the same day if this is possible to say that an issue will be investigated promptly the next day;

(iii)   to refer matters when in doubt to a senior member of staff or a member of the Senior Leadership Team;

(iv)   to clarify in our own mind what school policy is in a given area before entering into discussions with a parent;

(v)   to arrange a meeting for a quiet venue ie. 5LT office, Executive Headteacher's room, Deputy or Assistant Headteachers' offices, work room etc. **NOT** an open area where interruptions may take place or comments may be overheard. Choose a location as near to the front of school as possible and make sure a colleague / colleagues can be contacted if support is needed. Try to make parents as welcome as possible and give them an opportunity to raise concerns or ask questions. If necessary arrange a follow-up meeting in order to make sure any action is making an impact.

(vi)   consider having a colleague or SLT member present and ensure meetings are minuted and any follow up communication with parents is carried out. Don't have too many staff in the meeting - unless essential - as this can be inappropriate and overpowering for parents.

7.4   School Celebration Assemblies provide an excellent form of communication in sharing pupils' successes with parents and a range of stakeholders. Assemblies also offer an opportunity for staff notices to be shared with all school stakeholders so that everyone is aware of forthcoming events and successes and helps to contribute to a shared school ethos.

7.5   Each year Open Mornings and Open Evenings take place to provide information for prospective and existing parents and family members.

8   Annual written report to parents and carers: children's achievements

8.1   Every year, we provide an interim report (Spring term) and a written report (Summer term)to each child's parents/carers outlining progress in the various National Curriculum subjects. This final report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. In our school, we ask the children to comment on their own progress, and we ask parents and carers to make a similar comment. We also outline progress in terms of a national curriculum level and sub-level for each subject. Children in Year 6 will be sent details of their performance in the national tests/assessments, and details of national comparisons when this is available and may be sent out separately to the annual report. Other End of Term test levels or Teacher Assessment levels are also included.

8.2   *As* well as receiving the interim and annual written report, parents and carers have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers in the Autumn term to share any pastoral, social or other concerns. In the Spring term parents can follow up the receipt of the interim report with a visit on a Consultation Evening to meet with their child's teachers and to look at pupil work books. This *gives* them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes, and to support their child in areas where there is a particular *need* for improvement. We encourage parents and carers to contact the school if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being. In the Summer term parents can request a meeting with staff to discuss any major concerns which they have following the distribution of the school report.

8.3   When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we may request a meeting with parents and carers or outside agency.

8.4   We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to a school meeting to act as interpreter or support. We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our school, or to receive and understand a communication.

9   School prospectus and marketing opportunities

9.1   The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents and carers a full picture of provision at our school. This is updated periodically.

9.2   The school seeks every opportunity to publicise its work and regularly markets itself in local newspapers ie. Express and Star. Community notice boards are used to publicise school news and community events organised by the school.

10   Public access to documents

10.1 The school makes a range of documentation available to parents and carers. We keep a master set in the school office or Headteacher's *P.A.'s* Office, and we make a copy of this available on request. It contains minutes of governors' meetings, and all school policies, including those that the governing body are required to draw up in relation to the following

matters: charging and remissions, sex education, health and safety, curriculum, performance management, admissions, and action planning following an inspection. It also contains a range of national and LA documentation.

11   Communication with other schools and outside agencies

11.1   Toward the end of their final term in Year 8, we pass on information about the children to their intended High schools. We try to give a view of the whole child, and we include their expected national test results, their strengths and development areas, their interests and responsibilities (e.g. library monitor, football captain, school council representative, school newspaper editor, etc.). There is also an electronic transfer of further information about the child, organised by the government. We may also send on several items of work.

11.2   We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed on better ways to meet these needs, so that children may participate more fully. Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from child development centres, from local doctors and specialists, and from school nurses. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare, Social Services and Behaviour Intervention units.

11.3   We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school should provide a safe and secure environment. We are the people most in contact with the children, and we are therefore in a unique position to identify and help abused children. So when any member of staff has concerns about a child, these will be passed on to a School Child Protection Officer, who may share this information with the Safeguarding Team.

11.4   We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Details have been sent to parents and carers about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This *is* a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents and carers have a right to *view* the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

11.5 In April 2011 Brewood CE Middle School federated with St Mary's CE First School Wheaton Aston; The Brewood and Wheaton Aston Federation. This has led to increased opportunities for joint training, enhanced communication and improved transition for pupils. During the 2012 / 2013 academic year Brewood agreed to a collaboration with our feeder High School, partner Middle School and all the first schools in the Brewood and Penkridge cluster. This has led to improved sharing of best practice between all stakeholders and celebration of subject successes exhibited at the annual 'showcase' event at the High School. It has led to improved transition for all pupils within the collaboration.

11.6 In October 2011 Brewood established its own 'Major Minor' Music School. Regular meetings take place between all tutors, the Leader of Music and a member of the Administration Team to discuss uptake of lessons and to share best practice and to update procedures. Tutors communicate with parents via pupils' green note books. Music tutors complete an annual progress report for each of the pupils they teach. There is an annual 'Meet the Tutors' evening at the beginning of each academic year.

12   Electronic communication

12.1 We use the Internet and e-mail, and we have a school website. Children must not have staff email addresses. Drop boxes to be used where appropriate.

12.2 All school members may communicate with others through the Internet. There are many benefits, but also a number of possible dangers. Rules for the use of the Internet are contained in our E-Safety policy. Staff should be cautious of using Social Networking sites such as Facebook etc. where information is widely available to the school's community. Safeguards in our school include constant adult supervision, sites being filtered by our service provider, controlled links, and the use of child-friendly search engines. Pupil use is monitored daily by the Assistant Headteacher using 'Securus' software.

12.3 The Internet may be used in lessons 'live' for lesson content and for interactive teaching programs.

12.4 Our school website provides information about the school, and an opportunity to celebrate children's work with the worldwide learning community.

12.5 Members of staff, classes as a whole, and individual children will all have their own school-provided e-mail accounts.

12.6 Parents and carers are required to *sign* permission slips for their child to use the Internet in school.

12.7 ICT technical support is provided by Concero. There is a link on each school computer to report any faults or to order any IT consumable replacements electronically.

13   *Use* of photographs and names

13.1 Photographs are used in and around the school for many purposes including displays, recording practical work (e.g. art or technology projects), and are a visual record of school events displayed on our TV monitor in the Internet Cafe and corridors.

13.2 We may use photographs of children or their work when communicating with parents/carers and the wider community, in newsletters, in the school prospectus, on the school website. The local or national press may on occasion publish photographs of children participating in events at school.

13.3 Parental permission must be obtained via a signature in the personal organiser before using photographs of children or their work as detailed in 13.2 above. Parents and carers will want to know the policy of the press about name disclosure before giving permission for a photo to be used. Lists of those children for whom permission has NOT been given will be held by each class teacher, and by the school office.

13.4 Photographs will be checked to ensure that they are suitable (eg. photos of children in swimwear would be unsuitable).

13.5 Photographs used will not be captioned with children's names unless they are part of a publicity article published officially ie. Newspaper article or included in a celebratory newsletter.

14   Governors

14.1 Each subject / aspect of school has a nominated Link Governor. Meetings are arranged annually and key development points and outcomes are a regular agenda item to provide a vehicle for feedback.

14.2 Each form has a link governor with whom they communicate termly via individual letters. Governors' responses are optional.

14.3 Ratified full governing body termly meeting minutes are published and displayed.

14.4 Governors are welcome to visit the school by prior arrangement with the Headteacher.

15   Monitoring and review

15.1   This policy will be regularly monitored, and will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required. **Linked documents**

- Home School Agreement
- School Marking Policy
- Student Planner / Personal Organiser
- School Reporting System
- School Prospectus
- Curriculum Summary
- School Calendar
- E-Safety Policy
- Equality Act

Signed: .... **Review bate: July 2014 Chair of Governors**

Policy to be reviewed annually in the Summer Term   22 July **2016**