

# Berrylands School

## Home & School Partnership Agreement

At Berrylands School, we recognise that many of our young people have experienced significant challenges in education before reaching us. For some, school has been associated with failure, anxiety, exclusion, conflict or simply feeling that they do not belong.

Our aim is for every young person to rebuild trust in education, experience success and develop the confidence and skills they need for their future.

We cannot achieve this through school alone. It requires a strong and consistent partnership between the young person, their family and the school.

This agreement sets out the expectations that make that partnership work.

## Respect and Communication

We expect all communication between home and school to be respectful.

Our staff will treat parents and carers with courtesy and respect, and we expect the same in return. Staff should not be shouted at, sworn at, threatened or spoken to aggressively, whether in person, by telephone, email or any other form of communication.

There will inevitably be occasions when parents or carers disagree with us. We welcome appropriate challenges and discussion. Disagreement, however, does not remove the expectation of respectful communication.

Parents and carers should read information provided through Arbor and the Daily Tracker before contacting the school about a routine incident or concern. Urgent safeguarding or safety concerns should be reported immediately; parents and carers should not wait for a tracker entry.

## Mobile Phones

Young people are expected to hand in their mobile phones on arrival at school. Phones will be stored securely and returned at the appropriate time.

Parents and carers should not contact their child directly on their mobile phone during the school day as it is locked away.

If a message needs to be passed to a young person, parents and carers should contact the school office 0203 576 0176. We will ensure that appropriate messages are passed on.

This allows young people to engage with school without the distraction or pressure of outside communication during the school day.

## Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance is fundamental to making progress.

Young people are expected to attend school every day that they are required to attend, arrive on time and remain for their agreed timetable unless an absence has been authorised.

We recognise that some of our young people have previously struggled significantly with attendance. Where necessary, we will work with families to rebuild attendance carefully and sustainably.

However, once an attendance programme or timetable has been agreed, we expect home and school to work together to maintain it.

Unauthorised absence will be addressed with families and, where appropriate, the relevant Education Welfare Service and local authority. We will consider the reasons for absence and the support or reasonable adjustments a young person may need.

## Learning

Berrylands is different from many schools our young people have previously experienced, but it is still a school.

We expect every young person to engage with learning at a level appropriate to their needs, ability and stage of development.

For some young people, progress may initially mean sitting with an adult for ten minutes, completing a short task or returning to learning after becoming dysregulated. For others, expectations will include sustained academic work and qualifications.

We will challenge our young people, but we will also remember the educational journey that brought them to us. Small steps are still progress.

Parents and carers are expected to support the school's learning expectations and reinforce the importance of participation, effort and perseverance at home.

## Working in Unison

One of the most important things we can give a young person is consistency.

Young people need to see that home and school are working together, not against each other.

There may be occasions when parents or carers disagree with a decision we have made. We will listen and discuss concerns respectfully. However, disagreements between adults should be dealt with between adults and should not undermine expectations or relationships in front of the young person.

Likewise, the school will listen carefully to parents and carers. You know your child in ways that we do not, and your knowledge is important to us.

Our young people need the adults around them to communicate, share information and present a consistent message.

## Positive Handling and Safety

Our first response is prevention, reassurance and de-escalation. We work to understand each young person's needs and use relationships, space, time and appropriate support to reduce the risk of a situation escalating.

Where a young person poses a risk of injury to themselves or others, or damage to property, staff will use positive handling (physical intervention involving reasonable force) if it is necessary and proportionate to keep people and property safe.

This is a last resort, but it will always remain an available option when lawful, necessary and appropriate to the circumstances. In an emergency, staff may need to act immediately to prevent harm.

Any intervention will use the minimum force necessary for the shortest possible time and will stop as soon as it is safe to do so. Staff will consider the young person's individual needs, vulnerabilities, medical conditions and risk assessment, including whether intervention could increase the risk. Positive handling will never be used as punishment or to cause pain or humiliation.

All of our staff receive regular training in positive handling from Achieving for Children (AfC). Staff use this training alongside professional judgement and the school's behaviour, safeguarding and positive handling procedures.

Following an incident, we will check the welfare of everyone involved, provide appropriate support, record the intervention and inform parents and carers promptly in line with our statutory duties and safeguarding procedures. We will listen to the young person's account and review the incident to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.

## Our Commitment

In return, Berrylands School commits to:

- treat every young person and family with dignity and respect;
- provide a safe, relational and supportive environment;
- communicate openly and honestly with parents and carers;
- recognise individual needs and circumstances;
- celebrate progress, including the small steps;
- challenge young people appropriately while recognising their previous experiences of education;
- listen when things are not working and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate; and
- continue to believe in a young person's potential, including when things are difficult.

## Our Shared Commitment

Many of our young people arrive at Berrylands because previous educational experiences have not worked for them.

We have an opportunity to change that story, together.

Breaking the cycle will take patience, consistency, boundaries, trust and sometimes difficult conversations. There will be good days and difficult days. What matters is that the adults remain united around the young person.

School, home and the young person each have a part to play. When we work together, we give them the best possible opportunity to succeed.

By signing below, we confirm that we have read and understood this agreement and agree to support the expectations and principles within it.

Young Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

School Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Supporting Conversations at Home

## A Practical Guide for Parents and Carers

Young people will naturally tell parents and carers about their school day from their own perspective. We want them to do this. They need to know that the adults at home will listen when something has upset, worried or angered them.

Listening, however, does not mean immediately reaching a conclusion about what has happened.

Our young people are developing the skills to understand situations, recognise their own part in events and see things from another person's perspective. Home and school need to help them develop these skills together.

We ask parents and carers to listen first, check the Daily Tracker where appropriate, understand the wider picture and respond calmly. Any disclosure of harm, abuse or immediate danger must be taken seriously and reported promptly, without waiting for the tracker.

### **“Someone hit me today.”**

Young person: “Someone hit me today.”

Parent/Carer: “Thank you for telling me. Are you hurt, and do you feel safe? Tell me what happened. I will contact school if you need help and check the tracker so we can understand the situation together.”

### **“The staff were horrible to me.”**

Young person: “The staff were horrible to me today.”

Parent/Carer: “I’m sorry you had a difficult day. Tell me what happened. I’ll also read what school has recorded so we can understand the whole situation.”

### **“A member of staff shouted at me for no reason.”**

Parent/Carer: “Okay. I want to hear your side. There may also be more to what happened, so let’s look at the tracker together before we decide what we think.”

### **“I don't want to go in tomorrow. I'm staying at home.”**

Parent/Carer: “I hear that you don’t want to go, and we can talk about why. But staying at home isn’t the solution. School is expecting you tomorrow and I am expecting you to attend. If something needs sorting out, we will sort it out with school together.”

### **“The work is stupid. I'm not doing it.”**

Parent/Carer: “You don’t have to enjoy every piece of work, but you do have to try. School will support you, and I expect you to work with them.”

**“They took my phone off me.”**

Parent/Carer: “That's the school rule and we support it. If I need you during the day, I'll contact the office.”

**“I got sent home and it wasn't my fault.”**

Parent/Carer: “I'll listen to what you have to say and I'll read the school's account as well. Then we can talk about what happened and what needs to be different tomorrow.”

**“Everyone at school is against me.”**

Parent/Carer: “It might feel like that right now, but the adults at school are there to help you succeed. Let's work out what happened rather than deciding everyone is against you.”

**“Tell them they can't make me do that.”**

Parent/Carer: “If I disagree with something, I'll speak to the school about it. You don't need to fight that battle. Your job is to work with the adults and make good choices.”

**“Can you ring school and tell them off?”**

Parent/Carer: “If there's something I need to discuss with school, I will. But first I'm going to read the tracker and understand what happened. We're going to deal with this calmly.”

**Listen. Check. Understand. Respond.**

We can acknowledge how something felt to a young person without immediately assuming that their understanding of everything that happened is complete.

This does not mean dismissing a young person's concerns. It means taking them seriously enough to establish what happened before reaching conclusions.

Listen to your child. Check the information. Understand the wider picture. Then respond.

Most importantly, let your child see that home and school are working together, not against each other.