



Scammonden Road, Barkisland, Halifax, W. Yorkshire, HX4 0BD

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www.barkislandcofeschool.org.uk

**THIS LETTER CONTAINS IMPORTANT MESSAGES FOR ALL FAMILIES
PLEASE ENSURE THAT IT IS READ CAREFULLY**

Dear Parents and Carers,

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR CHILDREN

It has been wonderful to welcome everyone back to school, and we have had a lovely first day. Seeing all the children settle in so happily, reconnect with friends, and engage enthusiastically in their learning has been a real joy. We are excited for the term ahead and look forward to all the positive experiences, growth, and achievements that lie ahead for our school community.

We are writing to you during what remains to be a time of change, challenge, and reflection for us all — both within school and across wider society. At Barkisland, we continue to prioritise the safety, wellbeing and education of every child, and we deeply value the support of our families in helping us to do so.

As you know, our children face increasing challenges — not only in school, but also at home, in the community, and through wider societal pressures. It is more important than ever that we equip them with the resilience, self-esteem and self-awareness they need to meet those challenges head-on. We strongly believe that the more effectively home and school work together, the better prepared our children will be.

As many services—particularly face-to-face support—have become increasingly limited, schools are often one of the few places where parents feel they can turn for additional help or guidance. We value these conversations greatly and want to reassure parents that we are always here to listen, to offer support where we can, and to guide families towards other services that may be able to provide more specialised help. We see these interactions as an important part of our role in supporting not just children, but the wider school community.

Because we are available each day and have regular, direct contact with families, it is natural that parents may bring their worries and frustrations to us. We completely understand how challenging family life can be at times, and we recognise that seeking support can sometimes come at a point of high stress. At the same time, it is important that parents have a clear and realistic understanding of the support schools are able to provide. While we are committed to helping wherever possible, there are limits to what a school can reasonably offer, and in many situations other agencies are better placed to provide the specialist expertise and longer-term support that families may need.

By working together in a spirit of partnership and with shared expectations, we can ensure that families receive the most appropriate help at the right time. Our priority will always be the wellbeing, safety, and success of every child, and we believe this is best achieved when schools, parents, and external services all work side by side in a supportive and respectful way.

We want to reassure you that we are working hard to build a strong and supportive partnership with you — even when there are pressures on both sides. Your understanding and cooperation make a genuine difference.

*Working with the Diocese of Leeds and the Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale
May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed Psalm 20:4*



In order for school systems to work effectively, we rely on parental support in upholding expectations and routines. **The rules and policies we implement are never arbitrary. They are thoughtfully decided to:**

- Ensure the **safety and wellbeing** of all pupils.
- Promote a **calm and respectful** learning environment.
- Maximise the time and attention we can devote to **high-quality teaching** and support.
- **Minimise the distractions** for children, enabling them to focus on their learning.

How Parents Can Help:

1. Support our rules consistently

Children need to know that rules apply equally at home and at school. When any one rule is dismissed or overlooked, for example, putting juice in water bottles, wearing nail varnish or not wearing appropriate school shoes, it sends a message that others may be too. It is particularly important to support the school when in front of children to develop the respect and effective support needed.

2. Minimise distractions from personal belongings

We ask that children do not bring expensive or unnecessary items such as branded water bottles, keyrings, watches, or heavily branded PE kit. These items can lead to distractions and unhelpful comparisons among peers. Please stick to the agreed uniform policy and leave bracelets, necklaces, costume or large headbands and accessories, hair braids, etc. for home times. The school uniform, equipment and PE list can be found here: <https://www.barkislandcofeschool.org.uk/page/school-uniform-and-equipment/160591>

3. Gaming

We are increasingly aware of the significant role that gaming and social media play in the lives of our children today. As a school, we recognise the challenges parents face in navigating this landscape, particularly when it comes to adhering to national guidelines around age-appropriate content. We appreciate that gaming is a popular and often positive part of many children's lives, offering opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and enjoyment.

However, we are seeing a growing impact on children's wellbeing, attention, and readiness to learn—particularly when children arrive at school having spent long periods engaged in fast-paced or violent games, often late into the evening or even earlier that morning. This can affect not only their ability to concentrate and participate in lessons, but also the way they interact socially with their peers, as behaviours from online play sometimes influence real-life interactions.

Our intention is not to criticise or place blame, but to work in partnership with you to ensure that all children are supported to start each day in the best possible frame of mind for learning and developing. We encourage open conversations at home about healthy gaming habits, appropriate boundaries, and the importance of a bedtime routine where screens are not used to promote rest and sleep.

4. Social Media

This is another area that increasingly influences our children's relationships and emotional wellbeing. While we explicitly teach online safety and responsible digital behaviour as part of the curriculum, we know that much of children's online communication happens outside of school hours.

We respectfully remind families that many social media platforms have age restrictions (typically 13+), and while it is ultimately a parental decision whether to allow a child access, we urge you to establish clear expectations and regularly monitor usage. Many friendship issues that arise in school are rooted in online interactions, which staff are not able to oversee or mediate.



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We believe that by working together—home and school—we can help children navigate the digital world safely, positively, and age-appropriately. An important part of this is the example set at home: children learn a great deal by observing how adults use technology. When parents model constructive, respectful, and kind communication online, children are far more likely to mirror these behaviours, making their own online experiences healthier, safer, and more enjoyable.

5. **Mobile phones, smart watches and tracking devices**

These items should not be brought into school. Please read our new policy regarding this, which can be found here: https://www.barkislandcofeschool.org.uk/serve_file/39378151

6. **Managing behaviour**

In any school, children will occasionally make poor choices — this does not mean they are bad children, that you are bad parents, or that this is a bad school. We take all behaviour incidents seriously, but it is not always possible for staff to witness every event. Please continue to encourage your child to report concerns, and trust that we will follow these up appropriately and fairly.

It can often be more difficult to resolve incidents if they are only reported at home after the event, or if parents have already attempted to address the matter directly with other families. Understandably, these conversations can carry strong emotions, which may make situations more complicated. By bringing concerns to school staff promptly, issues can be addressed in an impartial and fair manner, helping all children involved to move forward positively.

7. **SEND and Increasing Needs**

One of the most significant challenges across schools nationally has been the rapid increase in the number of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and this is also very much the case at our school. We are committed to supporting every child and work hard to do so despite limited funding to support this. Our Inclusion Manager dedicates half a day each week to coordinating SEND provision, while also fulfilling class teaching responsibilities. Despite these pressures, we are extremely proud of our staff team, who go above and beyond to meet individual needs through inclusive teaching, thoughtful adaptations, and additional support.

We understand that parents often seek guidance and reassurance around SEND, and we truly value your patience and understanding as we respond as thoroughly and thoughtfully as possible. To ensure the best support for your child, your first point of contact for significant concerns is always your child's class teacher, who can be reached via the school office email. By working together, home and school can ensure that each child receives the care and guidance they need to thrive.

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In Closing

It is a privilege to work alongside you in raising children in an ever-changing and often overwhelming world. We do not underestimate the challenges many families face, and we want to be a source of support, not stress.

We kindly ask parents to follow our communication policy https://www.barkislandcofeschool.org.uk/serve_file/26059629 to help us support you and your child as effectively as possible.

If an issue is urgent and needs an immediate response, please call the school office. For less urgent matters, an email to the office is the best approach — there's no need to do both. Staff will respond as soon as they can, alongside their other school duties. While we always want to listen to concerns, please be mindful that staff may not be able to meet immediately at the start of the day, and meetings will be arranged at the earliest convenient opportunity. The school office is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm each day.

We also ask families to remember that school staff have commitments and responsibilities outside of school, including their own families. Teachers and support staff often give up their time to run clubs, lead events, and support a wide range of activities for children, but they also need downtime to rest and recharge. Ensuring this balance helps staff to be fully equipped—mentally, physically, and emotionally—to provide the best possible education and care for your child.

Staff are available at classroom entrances and exits at the start and end of the school day for quick messages or brief questions. I am personally almost always outside at these times as well and happy to address short queries. By working together, respecting these boundaries, and communicating thoughtfully, we can maintain a positive, supportive environment for both children and staff alike.

Like many schools, we face increasing challenges — less funding, rising need, and greater accountability. At Barkisland, we remain committed to putting our funding where it matters most: into the high-quality staff who support, teach, and care for your children every day.

The wellbeing of our pupils is always our top priority — whether that's safeguarding, supporting children through anxiety, or helping families facing difficult times. Thank you for the many ways you already support us in this shared goal.

With appreciation,



Mrs Becky Schofield and the staff of Barkisland School