

Appendix to the Charter: Parental Expectations of the College

The purpose of this briefing note is to set out the relationship BHASVIC hopes to have with you as the parent or guardian of a BHASVIC student. The documents referred to in the course of it are available on the College website (www.bhasvic.ac.uk) under 'Parents & Carers'. Alternatively, you may obtain a hard copy by emailing Susanne Bonney at s.bonney@bhasvic.ac.uk.

This relationship is very much conditioned by the relationship we strive for with our students. As a Sixth Form College, BHASVIC is neither a school in which pupils must be closely supervised, nor a university or workplace where fully adult standards of responsibility exist. In their time with us we expect all our young people to grow in their consideration for themselves and for others and to grow towards full adult responsibility.

We believe that in order to grow in consideration and responsibility, we must offer our students freedom, opportunity and support. Freedom is immediately apparent to BHASVIC students as they discover they have free time on their timetables and may be on first-name terms with their teachers and tutor. As time goes on, students realise that there are wider opportunities offered by the College – from field trips to Student Union activities in which they can engage and they also realise that important life decisions regarding Higher Education or embarking on a career have to be made.

We recognise that such freedoms and opportunities can in fact be huge challenges which is why we ensure every one of our students has a personal tutor whose role is to supervise and assist with their progress. This supervision is very much conducted in the spirit of our 'Education for Life' philosophy. Its emphasis falls on encouraging the student to take responsibility and to grow in consideration of themselves and others. Of course we recognise that sometimes parents' help or external expertise – for example that of the College Counsellor – will be needed but we try to begin by supporting students to take responsibility for, and to deal with difficulties themselves.

Our relationship with our students is also conditioned by Government legislation. Under the terms of the Data Protection Act, for example, students are 'data subjects' and have rights regarding the sharing of data relating to them. On the other hand the freedom of staff to maintain the confidentiality of what a student may tell them is also restricted by law. In some circumstances we are obliged to report to other authorities what we have been told. We are also obliged to ensure students' behaviour is compliant with Equality and Diversity legislation.

This brief outline is hopefully sufficient to explain the origins of the following characteristics which hopefully typify our relationship with parents:

To help your son or daughter:

- i. We would encourage you to inform yourself of the dates of **coursework deadlines** on courses your son or daughter is following. These are very strictly enforced and if they are missed without compelling reason, exam marks are likely to be lost.
- ii. Please check to see what **College charges** may be due in respect of courses your daughter or son is following. Payment of charges is a condition of remaining on the course. You may also wish to consult the Student Charging and Financial Policy.
- iii. We have effective systems in place to help students with the *process* of **Higher Education and career applications**. Although we can help, what we cannot do is make the key *decisions* that are involved which students frequently (and

- understandably) find stressful. Please encourage your son or daughter to seek the advice which you and family friends and relations may also be able to give.
- iv. We hope you will wish to assist the work we do for our students by making a voluntary contribution to the **Parents' Fund**. Money which is generously donated in this way is put into resources from which students directly benefit.

In Communicating with the College:

- v. If you wish to speak with the College about your son or daughter' please ring **College Reception (01273 552200)** and you will be connected to your son or daughter's tutor. Please do not come in to College to meet with a member of staff unless you have an appointment.
- vi. Sometimes parents wish to contact us but do not wish their son or daughter to know. We always do our best to respond to such communication within the requested confidentiality constraint. In such circumstances we ask for your understanding that the constraint can make effective or swift action more difficult.
- vii. We would encourage you to contribute your views on how the College is run via the **Parents' Survey**. The results of this survey are used to develop the College: the production of this briefing note itself arose from the Parents' Survey.
- viii. If you wish to make a **complaint** about some aspect of the College's provision, please contact College Reception (01273 552200) rather than raise the matter directly with a member of College staff.
- ix. College staff will treat parents politely and courteously at all times and will expect that this standard is reciprocated.

Regarding BHASVIC's communication with you:

- x. Please do look at the **Parents' Calendar** on the BHASVIC website. You will find useful information there, for example about parents' evenings and updates on College events.
- xi. Should College staff believe that we may not be able to resolve concerns about your daughter or son's progress with her or his involvement alone, we will contact you straight away. As an exception, we inform parents of unauthorised student absence immediately and without student consultation because attendance is so critical to success.
- xii. We aim to respond to all parental communication within 48 hours. In many cases it will be possible only to acknowledge receipt within this timescale but we will keep you updated if a fuller response takes longer. You should not expect that staff will be able to reply to email or phone calls outside normal working hours.
- xiii. Under the **Data Protection Act**, we need your daughter or son's permission to pass information about them to you, even regarding whether or not they are enrolled at the College. If this causes a delay in responding to your enquiry or means we cannot respond at all, we understand the frustration and anxiety this may cause but would nonetheless ask for your tolerance.