



Archdiocese of
Birmingham

St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy

Communication Policy

POLICY

Approval and review

Committee to approve policy	Committee
Date of Board / Academy Committee Approval	
Chair of Board / Academy Representative	Ray Chadwick
Signature	
Principal	Mrs Cooper
Signature	
Policy review period	12 months
Date of policy review	March 2017

MISSION STATEMENT

Achieving Together in Love and Faith

Contents:

Version Control			
March 2017	Date Approved	Changes	Reason for Alterations
Sep 2016			New policy

Communications Policy

The aim of this policy is to secure effective communication between staff, pupils, parents and all other members of the wider community. We aim to ensure that communication between all members of the school community is clear, professional, timely and appropriate, taking into account the rights and dignity of the recipient

Definition of communication

Good communication lays foundations for building positive relationships, corporate and individual trust. Good communication is much more than the exchange of information: It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transparent, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built and confidentiality respected. Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communication and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the school's reputation. Communication includes not only the message, but also *how* that message is communicated; the accuracy of the information and also, how effectively that responsibility has been discharged. Some information is shared confidentially and this must always be maintained: Failure of any member of staff to follow this policy, could put the school into disrepute and this may result in disciplinary action.

The aims of this policy are to ensure communication:

- Is fully compatible with the Catholic mission and ethos of our school, with regard for the 'Code of Conduct for Adults in School.'
- Keeps staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed about all key aspects of the academy.
- Keeps parents informed of any important information involving their child's safety, health, progress or development.
- Is open, honest, ethical and professional and actioned within a reasonable time.
- Is effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.
- Ensures that staff are fully informed of all relevant school activity to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role.
- Complies with school policies, practice and guidelines.
- Is inclusive of all associated stakeholders.

Responsibilities of Staff

Senior leaders

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face- to- face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.
- To respect the 'rights of staff to disconnect.' (*see below*) and be mindful of the impact of sending e-mails, or requests, to colleagues, outside of working hours so that the individual may feel compelled, or pressured to respond.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.
- To communicate appropriately, in line with school policies; for example, e-mails or texts must not be sent to inform senior leaders of staff absence. Staff must follow Staff Attendance policy and procedures.

Academy Committee

The local governing body provides updates to families via the Governor newsletter. This provides a summary of visits and key aspects of governance. Members of the governing body are not authorised to speak, or comment, on behalf of the school and their views are not representative of the school. Academy representatives are expected to communicate full support for the decisions taken by the governing body as a whole, as outlined in the Governors' Code of Conduct. The chair of academy committee will liaise with the executive headteacher before sending any correspondence to parents and families. There may be occasions requiring a response from the governing body and this will be completed following consultation with the executive headteacher, diocese and/or local authority.

Rights of Staff to Disconnect

In recent years means of communication has shifted quite dramatically from pen and paper to email and texts; with email becoming the preferred and predominant mode of communication.

Email provides a quick and easy means of communication, whilst the sophisticated developments and use of mobile phones enables staff to readily access information, including work-related items. This policy aims to preserve the well-being of all staff by respecting the rights of all staff to disconnect from work duties out-of-school hours, weekends and holiday periods. **Employees will not be expected to monitor or respond to e-mails out of their normal working hours (including weekends and published school holidays).** Staff should not expect to receive a response outside normal working hours unless the member of staff has not met a specific work deadline. Inevitably, there may be occasions where communication is an essential priority, eg. staff absence, or unforeseen circumstances, but these are exceptional circumstances.

Senior leaders have additional responsibilities which will necessitate additional meetings beyond the working day, or holiday periods, in preparation for the new term or academic year. These will be agreed, in advance, with all members of the leadership team.

Internal methods of communication

The contribution of every employee is valued and encouraged.

The Staff Handbook provides staff with important information about organisation and procedures within the school

Regularly scheduled meetings facilitate involvement of staff both formal and informal: e.g. staff meetings, teaching assistant meetings, midday supervisor meetings, phase meetings, MAC alliance meetings. All meetings are structured and formally recorded, and members invited to contribute to the agenda.

Directed time by the executive headteacher is planned for structured opportunities and for staff to engage in team-working, contributing to subject leaders' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

For all other meetings notes are recorded, action points progressed and feedback given to staff. Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email, where appropriate.

E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it should not replace face to face meetings where discussion is required. Written communications are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room: it remains the responsibility of each member of staff to check daily. Other information may be handed to staff personally or e-mailed.

Senior leadership team meetings and staff meetings take place every week. Agendas are e-mailed to staff prior to the meeting. The school diary is accessible on line and all members of staff can access it. Events are discussed in advanced at meetings but staff also have the responsibility to check future actions.

Separate staff briefings, with teaching and support staff, are held every Friday morning; the diary for the coming week is communicated and finalised.

Communication with Parents and Carers

A school newsletter is distributed every fortnight. The main points include contribution from the executive headteacher or head of school. Any letters containing information about staffing changes, curriculum changes, school policies or other key information must be authorised by the executive headteacher, or in her absence, the head of school.

Parent notice-boards are stationed outdoors, in the school playground, near to the school entrance areas. These are updated by the Home-school link workers and administration staff. Notices must be kept up-to-date and changed accordingly.

Standard templates of letters regarding uniform, attendance, behaviour, or meetings are sent to parents, though these may be adjusted at the discretion of the executive headteacher or head of school.

Class teachers communicate information for parents via the home-school communication diary. Letters to individual parents are either emailed or sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day.

Responses to External Communication

Communications with Parents/carers

Letters

Staff will respond to parents' letters within 48 hours (2 school days). Any letter of complaint must be referred to the Executive Headteacher immediately. Letters to individual parents must be approved by the EHT before they are sent. Copies of all correspondence to individual parents will be placed in pupil files.

E mail

The school uses ParentPay to communicate general information. Any exceptional communication that needs to be sent to all parents using this system must be approved by the EHT. If a parent communicates with the school using email, a copy should be retained if appropriate. Staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the HT and should always do so if the content is a complaint. A hard copy of any email sent to a parent or received by staff from a parent should be filed and a copy stored in the school office, again if appropriate. The same applies to all internal mail, email transmissions concerning pupil matters. All emails requiring an answer should be responded to within 48 hours (2 school days).

Social Media

The school uses Facebook, Twitter and secure blogs to communicate and share information about school practice and events. Any messages, or requests, for the school will not be managed via social media.

Media

Members of staff are not authorised to speak, or comment, on school matters without authorisation. It remains the responsibility of the executive headteacher, -or chair of academy committee, who will liaise with the executive headteacher – to make public, any response or action, on behalf of the school. Failure of any member of staff to follow policy, could put the school into disrepute and this may result in disciplinary action.

This policy has been produced in line with the following policies:

- Staff Attendance
- Code of Conduct for Adults in School
- Governors' Code of Conduct
- Complaints policy
- Data protection
- Staff Handbook
- Staff induction policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Social Networking policy