COMMUNICATIONS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Version	1.5
Name of Policy Owner	J Newson
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Record of Alterations

Version 1.0	Original
Version 1.1	Internal and external communications updated
Version 1.4	2.3 updated to include expectations in relation to parent conduct at meetings. Section 6 – communication between trustees updated to reflect current operations and to include the role and pivotal link of the Governance Professional.
Version 1.5	Minor amendments to reflect changes to the MIS and ways of communicating with parents.

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Section 1 Aims and Objectives

SHARE Multi Academy Trust is committed to promoting effective communication between pupils, members of staff, parents/carers, members/directors/governors ('trustees') and all other stakeholders of SHARE Multi Academy Trust ('the trust') community and beyond.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this policy & procedure are to:

- Engage effectively with stakeholders, ensuring we listen and consult
- Demonstrate the success of our work
- Ensure people understand what we do
- Change behaviour and perceptions where necessary.

1.2 Objectives

Our objectives are to:

- Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which will help the trust to keep parents/carers well-informed about their child's educational progress and any other matters related to their child's overall well-being.
- Make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible, seeking to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional, using jargon-free, plain language which can be easily understood by everyone.
- Ensure that there is a robust process in place for consultation between our academies, parents/carers, staff members and pupils on key areas.
- Ensure that the systems in place are fully aligned to the trust's mission and vision statements.
- Recognise that monitoring and evaluation of communication issues through regular meetings and discussion with pupils, staff, parents/carers, directors and governors is an on-going consideration.

In the context of a growing organisation, it is particularly important to review systems and facilitate the best possible communication at all stages of the trust's development.

Efficient and effective communication is essential at all levels of the organisation:

- Between SHARE academies and their whole school community
- Between staff
- Between pupils

- Between trustees
- Between SHARE academies
- Between all SHARE academy trust stakeholders
- Beyond SHARE academy trust.

Section 2 Responsibilities

2.1 Academy responsibilities

- To publish key policies, documents, procedures and key pieces of information on the school website and in other areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community, in-line with the trust's Marketing and Communication Plan.
- To publish on the school website key information about the composition and remit of the governing body, including a list of members, their record of attendance at meetings during the previous 12 months, and a register of their business interests.
- To inform parents/carers of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- To keep parents/carers informed of the progress of their child at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- To consult with and work in partnership with parents/carers on the well-being and education of their child.
- To seek the views of the parents/carers and children on their education and learning environment and ensure that their ideas and feedback are always treated with respect and built into planning and development e.g. via circulation of parent and pupil questionnaires.
- To seek creative ways of making news messages relevant to the communities which are served by each academy.

2.2 Staff members' responsibilities

- To ensure that the principles and procedures of this policy are followed.
- To communicate proactively with parents/cares about pupil progress and to support parents/carers to help their child's learning.

2.3 Parent/carer's responsibilities

- To read key communications circulated by the school (e.g. homework tasks, website information, newsletters).
- To respond/act on communications from the school (e.g. sign consent forms, attend meetings).
- To keep the school office up to date with any changes to contact details (address, phone
- numbers, email addresses).
- To inform the school of any medical conditions along with medical documentation.
- To inform the school of any child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with
- appropriate documentation.
- To raise any issues or concerns with the relevant student manager/class teacher in the first instance.
- If meetings with our members of staff/governors are recorded, including telephone calls, please note that it is an offence to sell those recorded conversations to third parties or make such conversations public without the participants' consent.

Section 3 General Principles

3.1 Marketing plan/brand guidelines

A trust Marketing and Communication Plan exists which outlines the frequency/type of general communications to be shared by the trust/each individual academy. Brand guidelines also exist which should be followed for all forms of communication.

3.2 Best practice

Staff should be mindful of the following best practices when communicating on behalf of their academy/the trust:

- Never express personal opinion; state facts.
- Confirm important information and decisions in writing for the record and/or so that the information can be referred to from time to time.
- When taking messages:
  - repeat the information to make sure it is correct
  - note the time, the message details, the caller's name, phone number, position, email or address as appropriate
  - provide or forward the message to the recipient as soon as possible.
- When sending emails relating to a pupil, do not include the full name of the pupil in the subject of the email.
- When sending emails internally, using the full name of the pupil in the body of the email is permitted, but the content should be professional, based on facts and written with a calm and measured approach (bear in mind that any email sent which includes a pupil's name or details may be viewed by parents or outside agencies).
- Full names or details **should never** be included in an email which is sent externally. Initials and date of birth should be used instead (in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018).
- Telephone calls should be answered within 3 rings, wherever possible.
- Emails should be responded to within one working day of receipt. Where this is not possible, a holding email should be sent with a date for a full response being provided.
- When regular checking of emails is not possible due to meetings/non-working days, the 'Out of Office' facility should be used to notify the sender that there may be a delay in their email being read.
- Staff working on reception should be mindful that they are the first point of contact for the school and therefore should smile and portray a friendly, positive attitude when greeting visitors. No personal or confidential discussions, especially those including pupil or staff names, should be held in reception by any member of staff.

3.3 Logging of behaviour for learning incidents

- When logging an incident in school, professional language should always be used which is based on facts and not opinions.
- Names of other students involved in the incident should not be recorded on the entry.
- Ensure that the record is accurate and not based on hearsay.

Section 4 Internal Communications within SHARE Academies

4.1 Communication with members of staff

- We recognise and value the input from our staff and are committed to active listening and consultation regarding key changes, initiatives and ways of working etc.
- The school calendar is made available to staff, which outlines weekly activities across the school.
- In addition, updates are given through regular briefings, noticeboards and email etc.
- Policies and procedures are available to staff as follows:
  - individual school websites for school policies
  - the SHARE Trust website for trust policies
  - Every Compliance system for trust policies
- Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff (outside of their line management chain) without their consent.
- A regular CEO Update email from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is circulated to members, trustees, chairs of local governing bodies, headteachers and other senior leaders to keep all members of the trust community fully informed of current events, developments and news updates from each academy. The CEO aims to send updates three times per week on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

4.2 Email Communication for members of staff

- All members of staff have their own school or trust email account and must ensure they use the official school or trust signature strip on all internal and external emails.
- Staff must consider the best way to communicate according to each situation, recognising that in school, email should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication.
- Staff must be mindful of the tone and propriety of their email communications and ensure that their written correspondence is always appropriate and professional.
- The trust encourages staff to have an appropriate work/life balance and staff are not expected to write and respond to emails outside of their working hours. However, it is expected that emails are read within one working day and are responded to within two school working days.
- To ensure effective management of emails, please be mindful of who is "cc'ed" into an email. It is helpful to use the cc function if the information will be directly useful to your colleague.
- It would be inappropriate to discuss issues of a sensitive nature by email. Although not exhaustive, sensitive issues may include addressing staff performance or pupil performance and behaviour. Issues of this nature should be conducted in a face-to-face manner, with notes taken as necessary.
- Communication between parents/carers and staff members must be carried out via the school email address and not via a personal email address.
- Engaging in personal correspondence with pupils is not allowed.
- Sending of chain emails is not allowed.
- Embedding of adverts within emails is not allowed.

4.3 Social networking sites/blogs etc. for members of staff

In accordance with the SHARE MAT Code of Conduct:

- Staff will not communicate with pupils or parents/carers via social networking sites/personal accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.
- Staff will not accept personal 'friend' requests from pupils or parents/carers.
- School/class blogs may be set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning and will be carefully managed and monitored. Only official designated users may use social media on behalf of the school.
- Staff will not use their personal or work devices to access personal social media at any time on school premises during working hours, however it is expected that the management of corporate social media will take place during the working day.
- When using social media outside school for personal use, all employees must remember that they are personally responsible. Employees must take care to ensure that they always act responsibly and follow the law and the trust's policies and standards of conduct outside school as well as in school. It is recommended that employees use a pseudonym for social media purposes in order to protect their identity.
- Staff personal social media accounts will be made private in order to protect their personal data.

4.4 Communication with pupils/accessing 'the pupil voice'

- Pupils' views are sought via lessons, discussion and pupil questionnaires.
- Each school has a developed School Council in order to obtain and support pupil voice.

Section 5 Communication between SHARE Academies

Close collaboration between SHARE Academies is an expectation of the trust. SHARE Academy Executive Principals/Principals/Headteachers work closely with colleagues to ensure that expertise is effectively shared across the trust.

The trust encourages staff to form and to attend existing network meetings with departments/roles similar to their own across the trust schools. Such meetings aid the sharing of information and expertise across the trust.

SHARE Academies are also encouraged to celebrate the successes of other trust members, publicising "good news" stories from across the trust. Methods of communication include:

- Email
- Academy newsletters
- Academy websites
- SHARE newsletters and bulletins
- The SHARE trust website
- CEO update
- Authorised academy social media e.g. Twitter.

Section 6 Communication between trustees

6.1 Expectations

To ensure efficient and effective communication between trustees, there are key expectations of the board of directors and local governing bodies as follows:

- To regularly attend board of directors'/local governing body meetings. To prepare well for meetings by reading all communications and papers in advance and making any requests for printing of papers (not including policies) to the Governance Professional no later than five days in advance of a meeting.
- To notify the Chair and Governance Professional as soon as possible if you are unable to attend a meeting.
- To ensure that any planned absences for any length of time are communicated to the Chair and Governance Professional as soon as possible.
- To respond in a timely manner to email correspondence from fellow trustees or staff (within a maximum of 5 working days).
- To access relevant school/trust information on the designated IT systems.
- To seek support from the Governance Professional immediately regarding any access issues to emails or designated IT systems.
- To immediately advise the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Directors of any issue which might affect the interests of SHARE Multi Academy Trust.

6.2 Email communication for trustees

The same expectations apply to trustees for use of email as those for staff (as detailed under 4.2).

6.3 Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc. for trustees

The same expectations apply to trustees for use of social media as those for staff (as detailed under 4.3).

6.4 Communication between the CEO/Headteachers, key trust officers and trustees

A detailed set of expectations for the process and timescale for setting of agendas, writing of minutes and approval of draft minutes has been produced and is set out within the governance handbook.

6.5 Communication between the board of directors and local governing bodies

Effective communication between the board of directors and the local governing bodies is vital to ensure that:

- The board of directors has an accurate, up-to-date picture of provision across the trust and is able to take this into account in its strategic decision-making.
- The views of the local governing bodies are appropriately represented at board of director level.
- Local governing bodies are able to implement policies and decisions agreed by the Board of Trustees.

In order to facilitate communication, the following systems are in place:

- The Governance Professional role; providing a pivotal link for communication.
- A standard item is included on each full local governing body meeting agenda to receive communication from directors.
- A regular CEO Update email from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is circulated to members, trustees, chairs of local governing bodies, headteachers and other senior leaders to keep all members of the trust community fully informed of current events, developments and news updates from each academy. The CEO aims to send updates three times per week on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- A redacted version of the CEO report to directors is shared with chairs of governors.
- A termly meeting of directors and chairs of local governing bodies.
- All governing body meeting minutes are available in the directors' MS Teams folder.
- On occasions it may be necessary for the chair of directors or a chair of a local governing body to take a chair's action outside the meeting cycle. In these circumstances it is important to ensure that chair's actions are reported and ratified at the next available meeting. The Governance Professional is therefore to be copied into any email correspondence around such issues, to enable the addition of ratification of any chair's action to the next agenda.

Section 7 External Communication

7.1 Communication with parents/carers

The trust communicates with parents/carers through:

- The school app
- Arbor
- ClassDojo
- Class Charts
- Social media platforms
- Letters home
- School posters
- Office 365 Forms
- Text messages
- The academy websites
- The SHARE trust website
- Regular academy newsletters
- Parent/carer meetings
- Informal communications between teachers/pastoral staff and parents/carers.

7.2 Communication of SHARE's moral purpose

Communication of SHARE's moral purpose is achieved through:

- Ensuring the trust's mission statement of "valuing people, supporting personal best", is constantly referenced.
- Maintaining frequently updated trust and academy websites.
- Featuring in regular local and national press articles.
- Networking and facilitating visits to SHARE academies.
- Members of staff and trustees attending local and national seminars, conferences and network groups.

7.3 Communication with the media and wider public

- When press coverage takes place, all parties who may be interested such as parents, staff, trustees and the community, will be informed via email, social media, the newsletter and the academy/trust websites.
- All publications and press releases which include pictures of pupils will be checked before release/publication to ensure that they do not include any children whose parents/carers have informed the academy that they do not wish their child to be photographed.

- All publications and prospectuses will be mindful of the Equality & Diversity Policy & Procedure, reflecting and celebrating the diversity of our SHARE community.
- Headteachers are authorised to provide press releases to the local press on 'good news' items relating to their academy, however the content should be shared with the Executive PA to the CEO prior to submission.
- Any other contact with the press, local or national, relating to the academy or SHARE more generally, should always be made via CEO. No members of staff are authorised to speak to the press without first having agreed this with the CEO.

7.4 Communication of recruitment opportunities

The trust is committed to equality of opportunity in all recruitment exercises, both internal and external. Recruitment opportunities will always be advertised and open for all suitable applicants to be considered (subject to restrictions relating to internal restructuring exercises).

7.5 Responding to negative comments on a public platform

Heads of School and Administration Managers have received training on how to respond to negative comments posted on social media and should use the guidelines at all times. A polite and positive response should always be given; without personal opinion and stating factual information only. All responses must follow GDPR regulations. The Executive PA to the CEO should be contacted if comments attract the attention of the press, parents or members of the local community.

Section 8 Evaluating Success

Success will be evaluated at regular intervals and methods to measure success are set out below:

- Surveys – electronic surveys will be used to ascertain people's opinion and to collect quantitative information.
- Counters will be used on the website and social media platforms to measure the number of hits.
- Interaction with parents/carers and the wider community will be monitored on all communication platforms.
- Interpersonal contact – informal word of mouth surveys will be conducted to gauge the level of effectiveness of our Communications Policy & Procedure.
- Local governors will actively seek opinions in their community.