



# Communications Policy

## Esher High School



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Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.0	Lucy Owen, Trust Manager	Jan.22	New policy
2.0	Lucy Owen, Trust Manager	Mar.25	Inclusion of trust aims definition of communication, principles and appendix for Priory (internal policy only). Part A&B rewritten using AI to make more accessible and tweaks to Appendix on How to communicate, when

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## **Part A – (External)**

### **ELT Communications Policy**

#### **1. Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure effective communication and consultation between our schools, parents, carers, pupils, and other stakeholders, with robust processes to facilitate this.

#### **2. Definition of communication**

Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications, recognizing that the quality of their communication is fundamental to enabling this and contributes to our schools' reputation. Parents, carers, trustees, and pupils also play a part. We strive to ensure that communications are clear, professional, timely, and effective.

#### **3. Principles**

Our communication will be clear and succinct, avoiding education-specific jargon where possible, and considering the understanding of our audience. ELT Schools use various methods to maintain effective communication with parents, carers, other schools, the wider community, and outside agencies.

ELT Schools use a variety of different methods to maintain effective communication with parents and carers, other schools, the wider community and outside agencies. Depending on the nature of the communication, the school will use the most practicable means to contact the recipient.

Communication on issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of a pupil will be treated as a priority. The school holds emergency contact details for all pupils and families are asked to alert the school immediately if contact information needs to be revised.

Staff will always seek to establish purposeful relationships with parents and carers and will ensure relationships are professional. Staff are to avoid developing close relationships with parents and carers.

The Communications Policy embraces the principles of our schools' Equality Statement and Online Safety Policy (copies available on the [policy page](#) of the Trust website).

#### **4. Introduction**

ELT recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors and trustees as well as the wider community, outside agencies etc, and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in our school.

The key stakeholders for our schools are parents, carers, pupils, staff and governors and this policy addresses the main ways in which the school will ensure there is effective 2-way communication between home and school.

## 5. The Purpose of the policy

Our schools recognise that engaging and working with parents and carers is key in providing their child with an excellent education. Parents and carers are offered opportunities throughout the year to convey to us what they expect from and think of the school. Our wish is to involve as many parents and carers in their child's education as possible.

We will do this by;

- Ensuring communication to the whole parent community will be clear and accessible to all.
- Making our schools as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- All signage will be clear, informative and positive.
- Written and telephone enquiries will be dealt with promptly and parents and carers can expect an acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- Using a variety of forms of communication with parents and carers are used for example, telephone contact, e-mail, messages via School Apps, post and text.
- Contacting parents and carers for both positive as well as negative reasons.
- Giving information to parents and carers on what pupils will be taught and tips for helping their child will be provided.
- Encouraging parents and carers to help or support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable this support to be effective.

## 6. Communication with parents and carers

### i. Choosing the correct member of staff to address a query

Please see individual School Appendices which details who to contact and how to progress any query that is not successfully resolved.

### ii. E-mail (and other written communication)

E-mail is the school's preferred method of communication. Unless specified, emails received will be acknowledged within 2 working days and responded to within 5 working days. Emails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter.

Parents and carers may wish to contact the school via email for a general enquiry as an alternative to telephone or letter. The school email addresses for each school can be found in the Appendices and school reception will provide this via phone when required.

Under no circumstances should staff contact pupils or parents and carers using their own personal email address.

**iii. Letters home**

Group or whole school letters/emails must be processed through the school administration team and approved by a member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting/emailing. Copies will be kept by the school administration team.

**iv. Telephone Calls**

In a non-emergency, a return call will be made within 2 working days, with follow-up action within 5 working days. Staff will make a record of telephone conversations with parents/carers on the school's MIS system.

**v. Texts**

Automated texts from School Apps are sometimes sent to parents/carers but are not used for general communications from staff. Staff should respond using alternative means such as email or telephone if appropriate.

**7. Absence**

Parents and carers are asked to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of their child's absence. Refer to the Attendance Policy for full details.

**8. Meeting with Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff must make an appointment with the school. This request should be responded to within 2 working days. Staff should call a meeting to a close if parents or carers become angry or abusive and report it immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

**9. Reports and Progress**

Parents and carers receive progress reports and a full annual report each academic year. Additionally, they have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers during parents' evenings.

**10. Accessibility**

We will make reasonable adjustments to enable parents or carers with disabilities to participate fully in meetings or receive and understand communications. Documents can be provided in larger fonts upon request.

**11. School Website**

The school website provides a range of information about the school, including curriculum information, pupil premium information, homework, uniform list, school events, holiday dates, and the school prospectus.

**12. Educational Apps**

Our schools use various apps to support teaching and learning, all cleared for GDPR compliance. Parents may also access data about their child's attendance and progress via online apps.

**13. Severe weather and emergency closure**

In the event of emergency closure, communication will be made via school app/email/SMS. Parents and carers should also tune in to local radio and check the school website and social media channels.

**14. Prospective parents/carers**

Prospective parents and carers are invited to an Open Event in the Autumn Term and an induction event in the Summer Term. The school prospectus provides comprehensive information about the school.

**15. Supporting parents and carers of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

Our schools recognize the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of pupils with additional needs. All staff will make every effort to ensure effective communication and help parents understand how to contribute to their child's education.

**16. Investigating incidents**

When investigating incidents involving pupils, staff will interview all involved and ask for written accounts. Information identifying pupils will be shared in accordance with data protection regulations.

**17. Monitoring, evaluation and review**

A member of the senior leadership team and the ELT will review this policy at least every three years to assess its implementation and effectiveness. Next review is due March 2028

**PART B – Internal Use only****18. Communication between pupils and staff**

Two-way verbal communication between pupils and staff is encouraged. Pupils should address staff formally and respectfully, and staff should use pupils' first names and full names of staff in front of pupils.

**19. Communication between staff****i. Verbal**

Staff should use first names when communicating with each other and full names in front of pupils.

**ii. E-Communications**

Staff should check emails and Microsoft Teams at least twice a day and respond to internal emails, chats and posts within 48 hours. Whole staff emails or chats should not be set up without the headteacher's permission.

**iii. Meetings**

Agendas for staff meetings should be circulated at least 2 days in advance, with minutes circulated within 2 days of the meeting.

Appendix 5 summarises the staff communication guidelines and expectations when using the different types of communication e.g. email, Teams chat and Teams posts.

## **20. Professional duty to communications**

Staff are also expected to check their pigeon-holes at least twice a week and to respond to any internal mail within 48 hours.

## **21. Dealing with the media**

All media enquiries must be directed to the PA to the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher must approve every piece before it is sent externally.

## **22. Communication with other Schools and outside agencies**

We hold information on all pupils and may pass some of this information to others for educational purposes, in accordance with GDPR.

## **23. Communicating actions with senior and middle leaders**

The Trust endorses the use of Microsoft Planner to record and communicate actions. Agendas, minutes, and actions must be saved consistently following each meeting.

## **24. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Esher High School

Appendix 2: How to Communicate and Which Channel to Use

## Appendix 1 ; Esher High School

### (Part A – External)

#### 1. Communications with Parents and Carers

The main school email address is [office@esherhigh.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:office@esherhigh.surrey.sch.uk)

Whole school information is included in a Parent newsletter, published on Friday every 3 weeks during school term time. A link to an electronic copy of this is emailed to all parents and carers.

The school uses an app called Edulink One which provides a one stop solution for most of the information for parents and students. This includes a child's timetable, achievement record, behaviour record, academic reports. It is also main way to contact teachers and receive school correspondence via the 'communication/messages' function of the app.

##### I. Social Networks

The school has both an Instagram and a Facebook account which is used to provide updates to parents and pupils who wish to subscribe to this. However, any key messages will be relayed through formal school communication channels for those not signed up to these social media accounts.

Staff also communicate ideas and post best practise examples and with pupils Instagram and Facebook accounts.

##### II. Communication between pupils and staff

Pupils may also email staff on their school accounts in relation to their learning. All pupils are taught email protocol:

- Complete the subject line
- Use 'Dear Ms/Mrs/Mr' and Surname as salutation
- Use Standard English
- Avoid abbreviations
- Sign off with Thank you or Kind Regards.

Correspondence is to remain professional at all times.

##### III. Communicating with the School

If you have a general query or concern, not specific to your child, please either contact Reception on 01372 468068 or email your child's Tutor.

If your query or concern is about your individual child please follow the communications route applicable to your specific question below.

- a) **Query is about your child's learning:** You can contact the Subject Teacher and/or Tutor by Edulink.

- b) **Query is about my child’s wellbeing, behaviour or non-compliance:** You can contact your child’s Tutor, Head of Year, Student Wellbeing Coordinator or Assistant Headteacher (Student Wellbeing) by phoning the school or emailing the relevant person listed here.

If, following the communications route above you are still dissatisfied with the response you may complain to the school. Please refer to the school’s Complaints and Suggestions Policy available on the school website.

## 2. School trips, visits and activities

The school will endeavour to publish all proposed trips, visits and activities on the school calendar at the start of each academic year. Parents and carers will be notified by letter of trips, visits and activities that their child/children may wish to participate in as early as possible, and within at least six weeks of the proposed trip, visit or activity. Occasionally opportunities arise during the academic year to offer pupils additional trips, visits or activities that were not known or available when the school calendar was published. The school will always ensure parents and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events (see also the separate Trips Policy, copy available on the policy page of the school website).

## 3. Communication with other Schools and outside agencies

Prior to pupils joining Year 7, pupils are visited in their primary schools to gain further information about them to help and support their transition to EHS. We recognise that children have diverse needs, and where required we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals including medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), educational psychologists, health professionals and specialists and various welfare-focused services, such as Educational Welfare and the local authority Children’s Services Single Point of Access.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our school must provide a safe and secure environment (see the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy copy available in the Policy Folder on the School Network or on the policy page of the school website).

When pupils leave the school, we will also share certain information with the local authority so that they can provide Post-16 education and training, Youth Support services and Careers advice. Details of this and associated Privacy Notices can be found on the policy pages of our website.

### **PART B – Internal Use Only)**

#### 1. Communication between EHS staff

Staff on call out will use Teams Out of Class Alerts channel to communicate class support requirements around the school to keep communications low level and also to avoid discussions being overheard by students.

Walkie talkies are to be used in the Premises team and SLT when on duty and in the case of a fire.

A weekly bulletin will be sent to all staff on Friday afternoon to plan for the following week and to share news and articles.

## Appendix 2 – How to communicate, and which channel to use

Format	Email	Teams Channel Posts	Teams Chat	Text
<b>Communication style</b>	External (or for forwarding internally)	Public/formal – Internal Communication	Conversational - Internal communication	Direct contact where urgent and no other form of communication is possible
<b>Description</b>	<p>For communication to organisations/individuals who are not part of ELT</p> <p>OR</p> <p>For forwarding externally received communication to a colleague/s</p> <p>Or</p> <p>For communication internally to colleagues who are being asked to review/amend/edit a passage of text</p> <p>Or</p> <p>For asking for approval or decision that may form part of an audit. Eg time off, HR requests / clarifications, renewals, policy review.</p>	<p>Used to share news, professional links appropriate to the Team or Channel. E.g. perfect for sharing ideas, links, resources, subject based admin updates etc.</p> <p>It should be used where the communication is pertinent to everybody in the channel, not to directly share something with a team member/s.</p> <p>Announcement banners to only be used for urgent announcements. If in doubt, avoid using the announcement. The search function at the top of Teams is significantly better than outlook.</p>	<p>Use when communication to a colleague who works within the Trust</p> <p>Manage your notification alerts and use your status to stop notifications and to alert others to your availability.</p> <p>If communicating to more than one person within your team – use Group chat rather than a post. You can rename a group chat (E.g. SLT/Maths/HOYs) once a chat has been sent.</p> <p>All shared links and files in Chat (either direct or Group) can be found at the top of the chat in Shared tab</p>	<p>Can be used for immediate contact when an urgent response is needed and where permission has been given by the person receiving the message for the purpose for which it is being sent</p> <p>What's App groups should be avoided, teams chat/group chat/posts should be used as an alternative where possible, and where staff have not selected to set a working day limitation on their notifications</p>
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent communication</li> <li>• LA/DFE</li> <li>• External Organisations</li> <li>• Forwarding an email where the information required is in the body of the text rather than an attachment – which should otherwise be saved to Teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme of Work updated and share the link</li> <li>• Document for comment</li> <li>• Proposal needing input</li> <li>• DFE Guidance</li> <li>• Consultations/Policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing a document to work on; send a link to an existing file (rather than creating a new one) in chat – this then appears in files within the chat as a live link</li> <li>• Need to ask a question</li> <li>• Checking details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT outages</li> <li>• Emergencies</li> <li>• Off-site emergency</li> <li>• Personal emergency (1:1 contact)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing new content for a piece of communication which requires feedback from colleagues prior to use.</li> <li>• Formal requests for information</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Things to avoid</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sending in email then repeating in another method.</li> <li>• Having a back and forward conversation on email – tell the other person to move it to teams/meeting/call</li> <li>• Avoid CCs to third parties unless indicating in the email why the person has been cc'd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting a new post rather than replying to the post</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uploading a download of a document unless the document is not held anywhere else in teams eg GDPR Privacy notice that will only be needed for this one purpose and will not need to be accessible in Teams in the future</li> <li>• Having a lengthy back and forward conversation where it might be easier to address personally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messaging a group about work related content</li> </ul>