

Communication Policy

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South Devon UTC Communication Policy

Communication Policy Statement:

Open and effective communication is vital to the health and wellbeing of the UTCcommunity. Effective communication encompasses the exchange of ideas, where people feel they have been heard and their opinions valued, and where information is clear and accurate.

At all times staff should be mindful of the UTC's stated values. This forms the basis for the caring community that is UTC. This should also be evident in all our dealings with the outside community.

All communication needs to be timely, relevant, accurate, well targeted, well delivered, clear and concise, open honest and frank, reciprocal and interactive. This policy's implementation enhances the quality of UTCcommunity through:

- Providing a framework for effective communication;
- Promoting understanding and co-operative partnership between the School/College/parents/carers and pupils;
- Promoting active participation of the whole UTC community in effective communication;
- Contributing to the best learning outcomes for pupils;
- Ensuring principles of effective communication are displayed by staff in their work in the School or College;
- Collective understanding that parents/carers, pupils and staff have a common goal.

1. Aims of the Policy:

- 1.1 To improve the quality of service given to pupils at UTC by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the UTC parents/carers, pupils and other stakeholders.
- 1.2 To improve the quality of service by ensuring robust processes for consultation between the UTCparents/carers and pupils on key service areas.
- 1.3 To be effective, communication must be open on both sides. Staff and parents/carers are encouraged to ensure that all communication remains polite and professional. Where parents/carers feel that standards of communication fall short of expectation, they are referred to our Complaints Policy.

2. UTC- Mechanisms for Communication:

- 2.1 Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes in planners [if applicable], or e-mail). Occasionally a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary.
- 2.2 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a UTC where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with pupils at lunchtime or after School or College. Parents/carers may be disappointed or frustrated if they feel that a message elicits no immediate reply, when in fact there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to reach a telephone or return a call. Our aim will always be to return a telephone call to a parent within 24 hours. All other calls will generally be returned within 48 hours. Return calls may be made by someone other than the person to whom the original call was made, should it be felt that this is more appropriate. Staff are not expected to read or respond to emails outside working hours.
- 2.3 The UTC has been particularly proactive in encouraging use of modern communications methods including parent apps. All parents/carers should endeavour to download the relevant parent apps to their mobile devices. All parents/carers are asked to give an email address for prompt and effective communication. Surveys indicate that the majority of parents/carers are satisfied or very satisfied with the two-way communication they have with School or College.
- 2.4 However, this does not mean that the UTC always gets things right and this policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively and clearly.
- 2.5 All communication in the Media is directly controlled by the Principal/ Head Teacher.
- 2.6 Brochures, publications, official letters and electronic communication with the wider UTC community should all conform to the School or College's guidelines on style as directed by the Principal/ Head Teacher.

3 Communication between the UTC and parents/carers operates in the following ways:

- 3.1 Prospective parents/carers and pupils are invited to Open Days and Open Mornings preceding the academic year of entry to the School or College. All prospective parents/carers either receive a UTC prospectus or have detail access to information about the school from the website.
- 3.2 Parents/carers and the pupils accepted into the UTC are invited to an Induction Evening in where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the UTC is presented.
- 3.3 Parents/carers are invited to various meet the Tutor or Class Teacher at the start of an academic year to review how the pupil has settled into the School or College.
- 3.4 Parent/Carer Evenings are also provided for all year groups, Transition Year Groups and Exam Year Groups to provide relevant information and reinforce support structures.
- 3.5 Tracking reports are issued during the academic year – usually each term. Reports are not published on a Friday or on the last day before a holiday in order to allow parents and carers the opportunity to be able to contact the school.
- 3.6 Details about all severe weather/emergency closure events at the UTC are published via our UTCwebsite, social media pages.
- 3.7 Details regarding homework for most subjects will be found on the website
- 3.8 Parents/carers are sent or provided with a letter which outlines the important events at the School or College.

4 Consultation between the UTC parents/carers/carers, and pupils operates in the following ways:

- 4.1 Questionnaires are issued to parents/carers on a range of issues via email at least once per year.
- 4.2 Occasionally questionnaires or parent forums will be used to consult with parents and carers regarding matters such as times to the school day or pertinent issues such as the Sex and Relationships curriculum.
- 4.3 Parents/carers and visitors to the UTC may make suggestions for improving the service and are encouraged to leave these with reception;
- 4.4 The pupil/student leadership team is consulted on a range of key issues relating to the School or College. Meetings take place at least every half term, with additional meetings for specific issues;
- 4.5 As part of the School or College's system of Self Review, pupils are involved in Pupil Voice feedback to review the teaching and learning within the department and contribute their own thoughts in departmental strengths and areas of development;
- 4.6 Pupils are encouraged to be constructive about how the UTC can improve provision;
- 4.7 The Special Educational Needs Department works closely with individual pupils, parents/carers and external experts and meetings held frequently to discuss best practice and provision for individuals and groups.

5 Communication Systems

Parents/carers communicating with Staff

- 5.1 Parents/carers wishing to contact staff about a matter related to UTC have a number of options: Parents/carers should ring UTC reception.
- 5.2 If the matter is related to curriculum or class matters, then the request is to the subject teacher. If the teacher is not available and the matter is urgent, contact should be made with the Head of Department/Tutor;
- 5.3 If the matter is related to a welfare issue the Class Teacher/Tutor/Head of Year/Head of Key Stage should be contacted. If not available and the matter is urgent, Principal/ Head Teacher should be contacted;
- 5.4 Alternatively, a parent could email the staff member via the School or College's email system;
- 5.5 Parents/carers must make clear the nature of the concern during the initial contact with School or College.

6 Procedures for Staff Communicating with Parents/carers

- 6.1 As a general rule, parents/carers should be well informed about the academic progress and pastoral wellbeing of their child. The UTC has many formal and informal communication mechanisms in place which have been outlined in the section of the policy - School or College: Mechanisms for Communication.
- 6.2 Staff should think carefully about the correct timing in the week and when it is best to communicate with parents/carers. More complex messages to parents/carers should never be communicated at the end of the week or before a holiday where a right of reply is then restricted.

- 6.3 The following points provide guidance for staff when communicating with parents/carers about academic, pastoral and discipline issues outside the more formal mechanisms, such as parent-teacher evenings. In all dealings with parents/carers, communication should be professional, open and frank. At the same time, it is essential that staff communicate with empathy, understanding and respect for pupils and their parents/carers. The following procedures have been divided between academic and pastoral communications.
- 6.4 Where a parent/carer has contacted a staff member by phone or personal interview, notes should be taken and all aspects of the conversation should be clarified.
- 6.5 When the contact is by email or if the staff member was not available to take the initial phone call, the parent/carer should be responded to within 24 hours of the initial contact.
- 6.6 Where some action is agreed on following a meeting or communication, a time-frame should be established to either review progress or resolve the issue.

7 Academic Communication:

This section relates to communication with parents/carers about academic progress of a pupil (primarily this relates to secondary education).

- 7.1 Regular communication with parents/carers will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with.
- 7.2 Minor Academic issues such as missed homework or assignments appropriately begin with communication via our student and parent apps. Similarly, the apps may be used to communicate positive work habits, academic progress or improvements in attitude or effort by a pupil.
- 7.3 Repeated minor issues or failure to routinely submit homework, will result in discussions with the pupil and telephone contact with the parent(s) or carer(s). Notes must be kept and entered into the pupil's electronic file.
- 7.4 When there is concern for the academic progress of a child, such as the need for extra class attention, tasks for follow-up at home or for support parents/carers should be contacted by phone or by organising a meeting seeking their input. These changes should be noted in the pupil's electronic file.
- 7.5 When a significant academic change is being contemplated, such as a pupil moving to a different academic grouping, a phone call and/or email sent to parents/carers in advance, and an opportunity provided for discussion about such changes
- 7.6 Follow-up phone calls or meetings should be held on a regular basis when a child is at risk academically.

8 Communication about Pastoral and/or Discipline Issues:

- 8.1 This section relates to communication by staff with parents/carers about pastoral issues and ongoing or serious discipline issues of a student. Early and regular communication with parents/carers will build relationships and generate trust, which will enhance communications when there are more difficult issues to deal with.
- 8.2 The UTC will create opportunities for parents/carers to meet with or have contact from key pastoral staff, particularly when families are new to the School or College. (Related policies: Behaviour Policy and Child Protection Policy and Procedures).
- 8.3 Day to day matters of a pastoral nature (behaviour/discipline) will be communicated to parents/carers through phone calls and emails in order to maintain effective partnerships between home and school.
- 8.4 All matters of communication between home and school will align with the Behaviour Policy and/or the Safeguarding Policy
- 8.5 **For serious discipline issues outside the classroom** a member of the pastoral team or Senior Leadership Team will contact parents/carers preferably on the day of the event, but no later than 24 hours. If an investigation has not been completed, this contact is to inform parents/carers that the matter is under investigation. Parents/carers will be kept fully informed at all times by the UTC about the progress and outcome of an investigation including if and when serious sanctions are applied.
- 8.6 For Pastoral issues where there may be concern for the welfare of a pupil, the matter will initially be referred to either the SLT / Principal/ Head Teacher. The decision to contact parents/carers would be taken following investigations and consultation with the Pastoral Care team.
- 8.7 When the pastoral issue is "reportable" (refer to Child Protection Policy) the matter must be

reported direct to the designated Child Protection Officer, Principal/ Head Teacher. Decisions to contact parents/carers would be based on the procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

9. Procedures for staff communication with the wider community.

- 9.1 Should a staff member be directly approached by telephone, email or in person to answer specific factual questions on financial, logistic and/or high-level administrative matters then they should refer the enquiry on to someone with access to such information or to their line manager, informing both the enquirer and the other member of staff of the enquiry. A response to this kind of enquiry will be made by the Principal/ Head Teacher
- 9.2 Matters of a private or sensitive nature regarding a teacher's work or the work of others and questions inviting a teacher to offer judgements or personal views should not be discussed.
- 9.3 If questions are not factual but enquire into the area of policy and procedures, reasons or rationale for policies and procedures staff should courteously explain that a member of the SLT would be better equipped to answer the query and refer it on as outlined above.

10. Staff communication procedures:

- 10.1 Communication with colleagues should be conducted in a professional and courteous manner.
- 10.2 Confidentiality and privacy are to be respected and maintained at all times.
- 10.3 All forms of communication with colleagues should reflect an understanding, empathy and respect for individual circumstances, differences and needs.
- 10.4 There is no time or room in the workplace for passing on hearsay, rumour or gossip. Do not engage in it or tolerate it from others. In particular, do not pass on to the actual person who was the subject of the hearsay, rumour or gossip what was being said about them (links to the Code of Conduct).
- 10.5 If you are uncomfortable or are concerned about matters that have been communicated, implied or suggested to you, and do not conform to this policy in fact or spirit you are to refer it to your line manager. If that could be compromising for your supervisor, then refer the matter to the next manager in line.
- 10.6 It is your responsibility to report any breaches of this policy to your line manager or other appropriate authority.
- 10.7 We have a responsibility to hold each other mutually accountable for maintaining and promoting a safe and respectful working environment.
- 10.8 Staff, when communicating in the wider community (verbally or online) should be mindful of their responsibility to protect the reputation of the School or College. Any concerns one member of staff has about a colleague who maybe communicating beyond the UTC in a way that may damage the organisation's reputation should refer it to the Principal/Headteacher.

Links to other policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Code of Conduct
- ICT User Agreement

Appendix A:

Communication at South Devon UTC– Parents Guide

The aim of this document is to support effective communication between home and the UTC.

Overview:

At Coombeshead we believe in an effective, productive relationship between families and the school.

This requires good communication from all parties. An honest, open and transparent dialogue is required to successfully support the children and staff within our care and safeguard their well-being.

Aims

- To maintain effective, proactive communication systems
- To develop positive working relationships with all families
- To support the development of all students

Methods of communication:

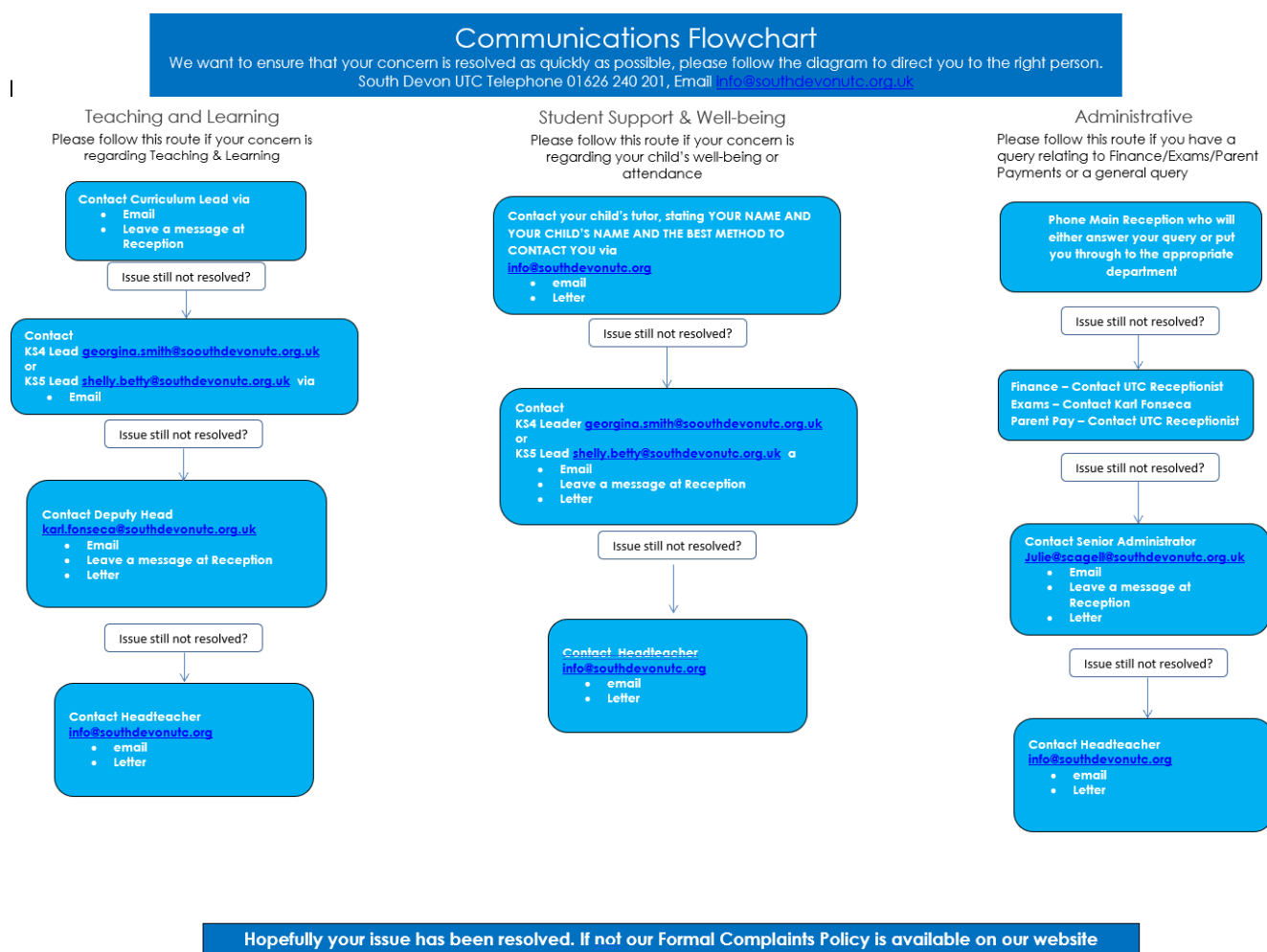
Unless there is an emergency situation, **please do not arrive at school reception** hoping to see a specific member of staff as it is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate this. Most staff teach and non-teaching staff will have a day of work planned with booked meetings and appointments etc. Please phone/email ahead wherever possible.

- **Phone:** You can phone the main school switchboard where there are a number of options that will put you through to different areas such as the student support office, attendance Heads PA, etc. If you are not sure who you need you can speak to the school receptionist who will advise you.
- If possible, the receptionist will transfer you to that member of staff however, for teaching staff it is unlikely they will be able to answer during the school day. You can leave a message on their answerphone or with the receptionist and they will get back to you when possible. **Staff will respond to you asap however it may take a couple of days depending on the issue/member of staff.**
- **Emails:** These are often the best form of communication for non-urgent matters as you have a clear trail of what has been discussed. Below is a list of key staff emails and who to contact depending on the issue or concern. **Staff will respond to you asap however it may take a couple of days depending on the issue/member of staff.**
- **Meetings:** Meetings can be requested either by families or staff. All parties need to be clear on the purpose of the meeting, come prepared and agree how long the meeting will take. Key actions will be recorded by the school and shared when appropriate.

Unless there is an emergency situation, **please do not arrive at school reception** hoping to see a specific member of staff as it is unlikely that we will be able to accommodate this. Most staff teach and non-teaching staff will have a day of work planned with booked meetings and appointments etc. Please phone/email ahead wherever possible.

Priority response: Please be aware there will be different response time for different issues for example, for an urgent safeguarding issue there would be an immediate response. For families who would like a discussion around an ongoing homework difficulty this may take a couple of days before you get a response.

Contact details:



Expectations around communication:

It's important for students that the school and families work closely together in a polite and positive way to enable them to get the correct message that supporting them moving forwards.

We are always keen to communicate with parents in order to resolve issues as they arise and understand at times this can be difficult and stressful. However, we will not accept rudeness, aggression or using poor or threatening language or behaviour. This includes communication by phone, email in person or on social media.

Following an incidence of poor communication from any member of the Coombeshead community, it may be necessary to put actions into place that enable all parties to return to a positive standing. This could be only having prearranged visits to school, using one point of communication or in worst case scenarios we may refuse people access to the site for a period of time. We hope it would never get to this point.

When the process doesn't work:

Even with all good intentions sometimes things go wrong which can lead to frustration and upset. If you have contacted a member of staff and, they have not responded, can you please do the following:

- If you haven't had a response in 48 hours please contact that person again.
- If you do not get a response in an additional 48 hours then please escalate that to the Senior Leadership Team. These staff are highlighted above.
- If you still cannot resolve the issue or get a response, please contact the Headteacher Helen Coulson via her PA Caroline Battong – details highlighted above.

We always endeavour to work closely with all our families and hope this gives some more communication about effective communication.

