Communicating with Stakeholders Policy

Introduction

In light of experience and best practice, the effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually and reviewed every three years. This mechanism recognises that changes in legislation may prompt a review of the policy before the three years stipulated.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expect all staff, partners and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by the Academy in pursuing its purpose as an educational institution whilst serving its students, community and wider stakeholder interests.

All policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessments. Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to see whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of race, gender, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this document in an alternative format and/or language, please contact our Executive Support Officer, Mrs Christine Connolly.

We are always keen to hear suggestions regarding Academy policies.

To make suggestions or to see further information please contact:

Executive Support Officer

Telephone: 01207 507001
Email: dpo@ncdat.org.uk

Footnote

In an effort to keep costs to a minimum, a conscious decision has been made not to print out this document and it would be appreciated that you refer to the copy and relevant Appendices available on the Website/VLE.

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1.   Rationale & Aim

Rationale

It is important that the Academy continues to build relationships with the stakeholders for Consett Academy. To this end, it is necessary to have a clear and transparent communication line which is a direct reflection of our professionalism and, as such, we need to ensure we communicate with key stakeholders appropriately, responding in an effective and timely fashion.

Aim

To ensure effective lines of communication are available for all stakeholders. To ensure that our stakeholders have a clear transparent process which is followed by all members of the Academy.

2.   Objectives

- to set out clear expectations when communicating with stakeholders;
- to ensure that staff are supported when communicating with stakeholders;
- to build a positive relationship with our wider stakeholders.

3.   Strategies

To ensure progress against these objectives:

- the Academy has clear procedures for reporting to stakeholders in terms of regular data entries, progress reports and Parents' Evenings;
- all Academy communication will follow the Trust corporate expectations and guidelines. This will be controlled by the Senior Administrator;

- the Academy will work to have several lines of communication, the main form of communication will be via our Virtual Learning Platform (VLE). Information will also be shared via text message, Academy website, social media and written format when required;

- the Academy will strive to share positive news through the medium of website and social media. These platforms will be used to demonstrate the opportunities available to students and to inform all stakeholders;

- when communicating with parents/carers, individual staff may contact parents/carers via telephone or email (this must be the Academy email);

- meetings held with parents/carers should be carried out with more than one member of staff present. Key notes should be agreed and a copy signed by the parent/carer and member of staff to ensure a fair and transparent process;

- all external communication will be responded to within 24 hours of receipt;

- all formal complaints from parents/carers need to be referred to the Complaints Policy. This is a different policy;

- compliments received from stakeholders will be collated and recorded centrally by the Senior Administrator;

- views from our stakeholders can be gathered via the official online Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and is encouraged at our open events, there is also an opportunity to share views via our VLE;

- following events or at set times, views from stakeholders may be collected via Microsoft Forms/VLE and a report/responses collated.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The Company Secretary will ensure:

all policies are kept up to date.

The Principal will:

monitor and evaluate the policy.

Senior leaders will ensure that:

- all communication is appropriate and relevant;
- encourage the sharing of good news;
- support colleagues in developing their ability to communicate effectively with stakeholders.

Subject heads and learning leaders will ensure that:

- staff are clear of the communication policy and support staff as and when needed;
- share positive news with the Senior Administrator.

All teachers/staff will:

- ensure that all communication methods are through the correct mediums;
- share positive news with the Senior Administrator.

Senior Administrator will:

- quality assure the information being shared;
- control and monitor all social media;
- ensure all correspondence is fit for purpose;
- collate and record all good news and compliments received.

5. Standards by which the success of this policy can be evaluated

Evaluation will be through the analysis of the views collated from the sources. For example, the OFSTED Parent View website, Microsoft Forms analysis and the VLE feedback received.

Analysis can be conducted and discussed for areas for development and changes made accordingly.

6. History of Policy Reviews

Implementation Date	
1st Review Date	
2nd Review Date	
3rd Review Date	

7. Associated Documentation

This policy and its accompanying Policy into Practice are underpinned and shaped by the relevant legislation and guidance including:

Behaviour & Rewards Policy
Complaints Policy

Communicating with Stakeholders

Policy into Practice

Policy into Practice

All practitioners should read this Policy into Practice in conjunction with the Communicating with Stakeholders Policy.

Communication of Safeguarding & Welfare Concerns

- any issues relating to safeguarding must be referred to the designated Child Protection Officer or deputy immediately who can then decide on the most appropriate course of action;
- any written of verbal information which may result in harm to another person must be immediately reported to the Director of School or the Assistant Director for Behaviour;
- any information regarding a student should not be shared with other parties other than those with designated parental responsibility.

Contacting Parents/Carers and Other Key Stakeholders

The Academy has clear procedures for reporting to stakeholders in terms of regular data entries, progress reports and Parents' Evenings. In addition, it is sometimes important to contact stakeholders more frequently to ensure students are safe and making good progress. Such instances may include:

- any injury requiring first aid **(First Aider);**
- complaints of illness after being checked by Year Manager. Depending on the nature of the illness, contact with parents/carers will not necessarily be the default course of action **(Year Manager);**
- risk to personal wellbeing and safety, such as smoking **(Year Manager);**
- violent incidents **(Year Manager);**
- protection from other students **(Year Manager);**
- leaving the Academy site without permission **(Year Manager/Senior Leader);**

- requiring comfort or counselling **(Achievement Leader/Year Manager/Academy Counsellor);**
- excluded internally or externally for a fixed term **(Year Manager/Achievement Leader/Senior Leader –** depending on the nature of the incident);
- persistently failing to submit homework **(Learning Leader/Learning Director);**
- changes to classes or tutor group **(Achievement Leader);**
- curriculum/class alterations **(Achievement Leader/Senior Leader);**
- persistently under achieving **(Achievement Leader/Learning Leader or Director);**
- does something exceptionally well **(Learning Leader/Learning Director/Achievement Leader);**
- involvement in **any** activity outside of school time. This includes detentions, work catch up sessions, sports events, drama events etc. **(all colleagues);**
- involvement in **any** off-site activity **(all colleagues).**

Those instances as highlighted in red are deemed urgent and contact must be made as soon as possible or within one hour. Those instances highlighted in green are deemed non-urgent, and contact must be made as soon as possible or a minimum of 24 hours in advance of any changes being made or activities being attended.

Guidance for Colleagues not in Leadership Roles

The corporate team, senior leaders, middle leaders and the pastoral teams, will carry out the overwhelming majority of communication with stakeholders. Other colleagues will generally only communicate with stakeholders through reporting procedures and through comments written on student work or diaries/planners etc. **However, it is expected that all colleagues**

check/respond to their emails at least once per day to ensure that our wider communication channels function efficiently.

Stakeholders will not typically have access to these colleagues outside of the planned communication processes. These colleagues should not be expected to formally communicate with stakeholders unless agreed with their line manager. Exceptions to this may include:-

- on occasions, colleagues may agree with their middle leader that the classroom teacher is the best person to contact a stakeholder. Clearly, there are numerous examples of student achievement being promoted through close working relationships between classroom teachers and parents/carers, but the establishment of these should be mediated by the appropriate middle or senior leader;
- colleagues running events including trips, sports events and artistic performances may be best placed to contact parents/carers, but this should again be agreed with the appropriate leader.

Responding to Enquiries

Most of the informal communication with stakeholders will arise from them contacting the Academy. Once an enquiry has been accurately logged and passed to the appropriate member of staff, **an initial response must be made by the end of the working day and always within 24 hours** (another member of staff can be asked to make this call if it is not impossible for the designated staff member to reply, ie. out of the Academy or teaching/meetings all day). This initial contact maybe merely to acknowledge the enquiry whilst further investigations are carried out. However, the member of staff **should notify the stakeholder when they will contact them again.**

Staff should not feel obliged to cancel other appointments or change plans in order to acquiesce to a stakeholder request. Although, the temptation is to deal with the issue immediately, we must always bear in mind 'Students First' and ensure that their education and welfare is not affected. Rather, it is important stakeholders know when they can expect to receive further information.

Difference between Concern and Complaint

Staff need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended Academy provision, will be the first to be approached. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Dialogue with Stakeholders

It is imperative that we remain professional and objective when conducting dialogue with stakeholders.

There may be times when a stakeholder acts in a manner that staff may feel is inappropriate, for example:-

- raising their voice;
- misquoting you or another colleague;
- arguing or not allowing you to speak;
- using foul and/or abusive language;

- making direct/indirect threats.

It is vital that staff remain calm at all times, adopting an even tone and not responding to attempts to antagonise them.

Staff should be aware that whatever they say can be quoted back to them later. They should not respond directly to issues they are unsure about or commit to something they do not have the responsibility to act upon.

Staff should not argue with stakeholders. If a stakeholder disagrees with a point staff are trying to make, staff should allow them to have their say, and then clearly and calmly put forward their point of view. If stakeholders do not accept this, then give them the option to speak to a more senior member of staff, although this may involve scheduling an alternative time.

There will be other occasions where a stakeholder may wish to speak to a member of staff who is not best placed to deal with their issue. For example, if a stakeholder requests to speak to the Principal or another member of the Senior Leadership team regarding a bullying issue, they should be directed to speak with the appropriate Year Manager or Achievement Leader in the first instance.

In such instances, it is important to notify the stakeholder that their issue is being passed on to the relevant colleague who is best placed to address it. **An initial response should be made by the end of the working day and always within 24 hours**.

In any communication, should the stakeholder become aggressive or verbally abusive, the member of staff should calmly explain that they are not prepared to continue the conversation if they continue to use such threatening language. If this continues, the member of staff should explain

that they will terminate the call and ask a senior member of staff to call the stakeholder back.

Face-to-Face Meetings with Stakeholders

Due to the nature of our roles, it is highly unlikely that a stakeholder arriving on site will be able to speak to a specific member of staff without an appointment. However, our reception team will make a note of the issue and inform the stakeholder that the appropriate member of staff will contact them at the earliest opportunity. If a stakeholder would like to send an email detailing the issue, they should be directed to the enquiries/info email address so this can be passed on to the appropriate member of staff as soon as possible.

In addition, the reception team will only be able to refer stakeholders to Senior Leaders, Subject Leaders, Achievement Leaders and Year Managers in the first instance. These colleagues are generally best placed to deal with curriculum and pastoral enquires.

If there is a complaint, whether formal or informal against a member of staff, it is more appropriate that in the first instance, stakeholders speak to a Director rather than the member of staff themselves.

On occasions, stakeholders may insist on seeing a member of staff before they leave the building. As stated above, this may well not be appropriate due to the role of the colleague they wish to see. In this instance, an available member of the Senior Leadership Team should be contacted. If the stakeholder becomes abusive and threatens the safety of students or staff, the police should be contacted immediately.

For pre-arranged meetings, colleagues are responsible for ensuring they have booked an appropriate meeting place and informed the reception team in

advance of the meeting. They should consider whether another colleague should accompany them to the meeting and ensure they have all appropriate information to hand. It is best practice that there are always at least two members of staff in a meeting and to make brief notes of what stakeholders' views are and what has been agreed. Meetings must never be made if members of staff are teaching or on duty.

Managing Challenging Communication with Stakeholders

It is not acceptable for any member of staff to be exposed to communication with stakeholders in which they feel threatened or intimidated.

If at any time, staff feel excessively uncomfortable or intimidated during a face-to-face meeting, they should excuse themselves, leave the room and request support from a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Prior to supporting/taking over the meeting, the senior member of staff should ascertain as many details as possible from the member of staff before speaking with the stakeholder. This will inform a judgement on whether to continue the meeting or to reschedule for a different time.

The guidance for dialogue over the phone is the same as for during meetings, but if at any time colleagues feel excessively uncomfortable or intimidated during a phone call, they should calmly state to the stakeholder *"I'm sorry, but I am going to have to end this call now. I will ask my line manager to contact you as soon as possible"*.

Immediately following this, colleagues should contact their line manager providing the details of the phone call. The line manager should contact the stakeholder as soon as possible in order to reopen professional dialogue.

Recording Communication with Stakeholders

It is important that communication with stakeholders be recorded in SIMS. It is good practice to make brief notes of what stakeholders' views are and what has been agreed. It is advisable to log this in SIMS/Class Charts so that a brief record of the communication is available should it need to be referred to later. This is particularly important when stakeholders are challenging aspects of our policies and procedures.

We record the discussions and outcomes from meetings with parents/carers through our online Provision Map software. These meetings include any informal complaints, return from fixed-term exclusion, behaviour monitoring, learning support plans and reviews and improvement and any other pastoral or welfare issues. The issue is discussed, with contributions from all stakeholders recorded on the appropriate form (Record of Meeting/Good Behaviour Contract/Pastoral Support Plan/Learning Support Plan etc) and a hard copy is produced at the end of the meeting which is signed by the parent/carer and student as an accurate record of the discussions which have taken place together with the associated actions and any reviews which would be booked in for the future. A copy is given to the parent/carer and an electronic copy is stored in the child's SIMS Linked Documents.

Parents/carers can access their child's behaviour record via Class Charts which is our online behaviour management software. They receive detailed information about the positives and negatives which their child receives and are in a much better position to support their child more effectively.

Please see the Behaviour & Rewards Policy and Policy into Practice for more details.

For visitors into the Academy, collecting feedback via a short survey will enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of our interactions and look at developing our communication further.

Written Communication

Written communication is the most formal way in which we communicate with our stakeholders. We use a variety of regular communications throughout the year including;-

- website keeping you informed/Newsletter/Student Views;
- social media;
- letters accompanying reports and data;
- letters relating to Parents' Evenings;
- letters relating to school activities;
- assessment reports;
- Record of Meeting/Good Behaviour Contract/Pastoral Support Plan/Learning Support Plan etc.

Colleagues will also send out letters to individual stakeholders relating to a wide range of issues.

Regardless of the nature of the written communication, it is essential we adhere to following points:-

- we should ensure communication is accessible. For example, we should remember most stakeholders do not work in education and therefore, may not understand excessive jargon;
- we must be a role model for the correct application of spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- To aid the reduction of paper throughout the Academy, generic letters

will be uploaded onto the website/VLE and parents will receive a link to the correspondence via a text message.

Digital Communication

Any electronic communication with stakeholders must be via the Academy systems. It is never appropriate to communicate using a private e-mail or a social media account. Only in an emergency should colleagues use their own mobile phones to contact stakeholders.

Only designated colleagues will be able to utilise the Academy website, social media accounts or text service. For colleagues who do not have the permissions to send text or change the academy website/social media account, information should in the first instance be sent to the Senior Administrator.

The most common way to inform stakeholders about their child being involved in after school activities may well be via text. These should be sent to the Senior Administrator at least twenty-four hours in advance of the event. No student should be involved in an activity outside of school unless parents/carers have been informed twenty-four hours in advance or following a phone conversation.

Compliments Procedures

All communication received by any member of staff must be shared with the Senior Administrator who will collate these in a folder. In addition, Microsoft Forms will be used to collate views and opinions from stakeholders following events at the school or trips.