



NORTHAMPTON PRIMARY  
ACADEMY TRUST PARTNERSHIP

## Communication and Social Media Policy

Date approved by the NPAT Board of Directors:	13.12.2018
Chair of Directors Signature:	
Renewal Date:	13.12.2020

## **Communication**

### **1 Policy statement**

1.1 Northampton Primary Academy Trust is committed to the promotion of effective communication between pupils, members of staff, parents/carers, stakeholders, governors, Trust Directors, Trust Members, our school communities and beyond.

1.2 Our objectives are to:

1.2.2 Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which will help Northampton Primary Academy 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.

1.2.3 Make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination.

1.2.4 Be open, honest, ethical and professional using jargon-free, plain English which can be easily understood by everyone.

1.2.5 Ensure that there is a robust process in place for consultation between the schools parents, staff members and pupils on key issues and areas of development.

1.2.6 Ensure that the systems in place are fully aligned to the Trust's vision, mission and values.

1.2.7 Recognise that monitoring and evaluation of communication issues through regular meetings and discussion with pupils, staff, parents, governors and Directors is an on-going consideration. In the context of a growing Trust it is particularly important to review systems and facilitate the best possible communication at all stages of the Trust's development.

1.3 The following communication methods are used across the Trust:

1.3.1 Letters.

1.3.2 Email.

1.3.3 Websites.

1.3.4 Social Media.

1.3.5 Text Messages.

1.3.6 Newsletters.

1.3.7 Face to Face meetings.

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

1.4.1 Between schools.

1.4.2 Between staff.

1.4.3 Between pupils.

1.4.4 Between Trust Directors.

1.4.5 Between Trust Members.

1.4.6 Between the Board of Trustees and Local Governing Bodies.

1.4.7 Between the Central Team and schools.

1.4.8 Between all stakeholders.

1.4.9 Beyond Northampton Primary Academy Trust.

## **2 Responsibilities**

### **Board of Directors**

- 2.1. To publish key policies, documents and procedures on Trust and school websites and in other appropriate areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire community of Northampton Primary Academy Trust.
- 2.2. To publish on Trust and school websites key information about the composition and remit of Local Governing Bodies, including a list of members, their record of attendance at meetings during the previous 12 months, and a register of their business and pecuniary interests.

### **Schools**

- 2.3. To inform parents/carers of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- 2.4. To keep parents/carers informed of the progress of their child at regular intervals throughout the school year.
- 2.5. To consult with and work in partnership with parents/carers on the well-being and education of their children.
- 2.6. To seek the views of the parents and children on their education and ensure that their ideas and feedback are always treated with respect and built into planning and development. (Eg regular circulation of Parent and Pupil questionnaires).
- 2.7. To seek creative ways of making key messages relevant to the communities served by each Academy.
- 2.8. To remind staff of the Northampton Primary Academy Trust's vision, mission and values.

### **Staff**

- 2.9. To ensure that the principles and procedures of this policy are followed at all times.
- 2.10. To communicate proactively with parents/carers about pupil progress and to support parents/carers to help their child's learning.
- 2.11. To communicate effectively with colleagues across and beyond the Trust to ensure communication is clear, informative and understood.
- 2.12. To keep the school office up to date with any changes to contact details (address, phone numbers, email addresses).

### **Parents/Carers**

- 2.13. To read key communications circulated by the Trust and its schools (eg homework tasks, website information, newsletters)
- 2.14. To respond/act on communications from the school (eg sign consent forms, attend meetings as required).
- 2.15. To keep the school office up to date with any changes to contact details (address, phone numbers, email addresses).
- 2.16. To inform the school of any medical conditions along with medical documentation.
- 2.17. To inform the school of any child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation.
- 2.18. To raise any issues or concerns with the class teacher in the first instance.

### **3 Internal Communication across the Trust**

#### **Communication with members of staff**

- 3.1 A timetable is made available to staff, which outlines weekly activities across the school. In addition, daily updates are given through morning briefings, regular meetings between staff, noticeboards, online alerts etc.
- 3.2 The Staff Handbook contains details of all procedures and policies.
- 3.3 Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff without their consent.
- 3.4 NPAT News produced by the Central Team on a fortnightly basis and circulated to all staff, Directors and governors to keep all members of the Trust's community fully informed of current events and developments.

#### **Email Communication for members of staff, Directors and governors**

- 3.5 All members of staff and governors have their own Trust email account and must ensure they use the official signature strip on all internal and external emails. The email signature must include name, position and school.
- 3.6 Staff and governors 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.
- 3.7 Staff must be mindful of the tone and propriety of their email communications and ensure that their written correspondence is always polite, appropriate and professional.
- 3.8 As the Trust encourages staff to have an appropriate work/life balance, staff are not expected to write and respond to emails outside of schools hours. It is expected though that emails are responded to within two school working days. If it is not possible to reply within two school days, this should be communicated to the email sender and a likely response time provided.
- 3.9 To ensure effective management of emails, please be mindful of who emails are being sent 'To' and 'Cc' to. 'To' should be used for communicating to colleagues who you expect to respond or follow an instruction you have given. 'Cc' is helpful to use if the information will be directly useful to a colleague.
- 3.10 'Subject' information in emails should be clear. Requests for information should be titled 'NPAT Request for Information' followed by the subject of the request. Unless it is an emergency, a minimum of 5 working days should be given for the recipient to provide the information.
- 3.11 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 minutes taken as necessary. If email communication on a sensitive matter is necessary after a face-to-face discussion staff/pupil initials should be used.
- 3.12 Emails sent outside the Trust containing personal information should be encrypted.
- 3.13 Documents sent electronically outside the Trust to a third party should be password protected. The password should be sent under the cover of a separate email or communicated directly to the recipient(s). Documents should be sent under encrypted email.
- 3.14 Communicating with parents and staff members must be carried out via the

school email address and not via a personal email address.

- 3.15 Engaging in personal correspondence with pupils is not allowed.
- 3.16 When responding to or forwarding an email, and copying in other people, please be mindful of previous emails in the chain. If necessary delete previous emails in the chain that are not appropriate.
- 3.17 Emails are not private documents and the Trust as the employer can request to see staff emails. Emails may also be subject to Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act.

**Social Networking Sites and Blogs for members of staff, volunteers and governors**

- 3.18 Staff will not communicate with pupils or parents privately via social networking sites/personal accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc and all communications should be professional in nature.
- 3.19 Staff will not accept personal 'friend' requests from pupils or parents.
- 3.20 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 Trust and its schools.
- 3.21 When using social media outside school for personal use, all staff, volunteers and governors must remember that they are personally responsible. They must take care to ensure that they always act responsibly, follow the law, the Trusts Acceptable Use of ICT policy and the relevant code of conduct outside school as well as in school.

**Communication with Pupils/Accessing 'the pupil voice'**

- 3.23 Pupils' views are sought via lessons, discussion, pupil questionnaires.
- 3.24 Each school has a developed School Council to enable pupils to discuss issues and areas for development within the school.

**Communication between the Board of Directors and Local Governing Bodies**

- 3.25 To ensure efficient and effective communication between Directors and between governors, there are key expectations of members of the Board of Directors and members of Local Governing Bodies as follows:
  - 3.25.1 To regularly attend Board of Director meetings/Local Governing Body meetings.
  - 3.25.2 To prepare for meetings by reading all communications and papers in advance. Papers will be sent out a minimum of 5 working days prior to the meeting.
  - 3.25.3 To ensure that any planned absences for any length of time are communicated to the Chair and Clerk of the relevant committee.
  - 3.25.4 To respond in a timely manner to email correspondence from fellow Directors/governors and the Clerk as outlined in this policy.
  - 3.25.5 To access relevant information on the designated IT systems.
  - 3.25.6 To immediately advise the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Directors of any issue which might affect the interests of Northampton Primary Academy Trust.
- 3.26 Effective communication between the Board of Directors and Local Governing Bodies will ensure:
  - 3.26.1 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.

- 3.26.2 The views of the Trust's schools, through their Local Governing Bodies, are appropriately represented at Board of Directors level.
- 3.26.3 Local Governing Bodies are able to implement policies and decisions agreed by the Board of Directors.
- 3.27 In order to facilitate communication the following systems are in place:
  - 3.27.1 Terms of Reference for the Board of Directors, Local Governing Bodies and sub committees.
  - 3.27.2 A standard agenda item is included on each Local Governing Body termly meeting agenda to receive feedback from the Board of Directors.
  - 3.27.3 All Local Governing Bodies have a direct link with the Board of Directors via the termly Chair of Governors forum and the officers of the Central Team who, through their roles, attend Local Governing Body meetings as and when required.
  - 3.27.4 All Local Governing Body meeting minutes are submitted to the Central Team.
  - 3.27.5 Centrally appointed Trust Clerks are appointed to all Local Governing Bodies.

**Communication between Northampton Primary Academy Trust Central Team and schools**

- 3.28 Close collaboration between Northampton Primary Academy Trust's schools is an expectation of the Trust and the Central Team work closely with Head Teachers, staff and governors to ensure that expertise is effectively shared across the Trust.
- 3.29 Regular meetings of the Head Teacher Operational Group, network groups and working parties between the Central Team and staff within the schools at various levels ensure effective communication.
- 3.30 All members of the Trust are also encouraged to celebrate the successes of other Trust members. Publicising 'good news' stories from across the Trust, is positive and cohesive. Methods of communication include:
  - 3.30.1 Email
  - 3.30.2 NPAT News
  - 3.30.3 Trust and school websites
  - 3.30.4 School newsletters
  - 3.30.5 Authorised Social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Blogs

**4 External Communication**

- 4.1 The communication of Northampton Primary Academy Trust's moral purpose is achieved through:
  - 4.1.1 Ensuring Northampton Primary Academy Trust's vision, mission and values is constantly referenced.
  - 4.1.2 Maintaining a frequently updated Trust website.
  - 4.1.3 Featuring in regular local and national press articles.
  - 4.1.4 Facilitating and speaking at national conferences and seminars.
  - 4.1.5 Networking and facilitating visits to our schools.

**Communication with the Media and Wider Public**

- 4.1 When press coverage takes place, all parties who may be interested such as parents, staff, Trust Members, Trust Directors, governors and the community will be informed via email, social media, newsletters and school/Trust websites.
- 4.2 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 have not given consent for their child to be photographed or filmed.
- 4.3 All publications and prospectuses will be mindful of the equal opportunities policy, reflecting and celebrating the diversity of the Trust's community.
- 4.4 Head Teachers are authorised to provide press releases to the local press on 'Good news' items relating to their school. The Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Local Governing Body would expect to be informed of any press contact on good news events.
- 4.5 Any other contact with the press, local or national, relating to the Trust should always be made via Chief Executive Officer. No other Trust Member, Trust Director, members of staff, governors or volunteers are authorised to speak to the press without first having agreed this with the Chief Executive Officer.

## **5 Communication of Recruitment Opportunities**

- 5.1 A proactive approach is taken by the Trust to the recruitment of high quality leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and volunteers.
- 5.2 Internal vacancies are advertised solely on the Trust and school websites and in the NPAT Newsletter. The onus for checking this is on individual members of staff.
- 5.3 External advertising will be via Trust appointed recruitment methods and Social Media where appropriate.

## **6 General Data Protection Regulations 2018**

- 6.1 All areas of this policy must comply with the Trust's policy and procedures on the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Details of which can be found here:

<https://npatschools.org/index.php/npat-information/gdpr-compliance>

## **Social Media Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Trust recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions, engage with the wider community and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis. However, staff use of social media can pose risks to confidential and proprietary information, and reputation, and can jeopardise compliance with legal obligations.

1.2 To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, the Trust expects staff to adhere to this policy, which outlines staff responsibilities when accessing and using social media websites.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may, after consultation with the recognised trade unions, be amended at any time by the Trust.

1.4 Any reference to the Trust also, by definition, includes reference to each school within the Trust.

### **2. Who is covered by the policy**

2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full time and part-time staff, fixed-term staff, consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

2.2 Third parties who have access to the Trust's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

### **3. Scope and purpose of the policy**

3.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including but not limited to: Facebook; LinkedIn; Twitter; Instagram, Snapchat; all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs. The Trust has a separate policy regarding acceptable use of the Trust's IT systems more generally and all staff should ensure that they read, understand and sign the Acceptable Use Policy in addition to this social media policy.

3.2 This policy applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

3.3 The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice; to protect the Trust, its staff and pupils; to clarify where and how existing policies and procedures apply to social media and to promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of the Trust's activities.

3.4 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the Trust's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the Trust's investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. The Trust also reserves the right to suspend internet access where it deems it necessary during

an investigation. When considering any potential breach of this policy, the Trust will consider the context of any social media posting.

3.5 Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

#### **4. Responsible use of social media**

4.1 The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

4.2 Protecting the Trust's reputation:

- Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:
  - (i) the Trust;
  - (ii) its staff;
  - (iii) its pupils;
  - (iv) its suppliers and vendors; and
  - (v) other affiliates and stakeholders, but staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's reputation, even indirectly.
- Unless expressly authorised to speak on behalf of the Trust, either using a Trust social media account or otherwise, in accordance with section 8, staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.
- Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media and the Trust would advise that all profiles are kept private and security features enabled. Staff should remember that what they publish might be available to be read by a wider audience (including the Trust itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Staff should keep this in mind before posting content.
- If staff disclose their affiliation as an employee of the Trust, unless expressly authorised to speak on behalf of the Trust, either using a Trust social media account or otherwise, in accordance with section 8, they must also state that their views do not represent those of their employer. For example, staff could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer". Staff should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with the professional image they present to pupils, clients, and colleagues.
- Staff should avoid posting comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as the Trust's performance. Even if staff make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of the Trust, their comments could still damage the Trust's reputation or breach confidentiality obligations.

- If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until they have discussed it with their line manager.
- If staff see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust or its stakeholders, they should contact their line-manager, Headteacher or the Trust ICT Development Manager. All staff are responsible for protecting the Trust's reputation.
- Staff should use their school e-mail addresses for the conduct of Trust business via social media. Use of private e-mail addresses for Trust business is prohibited.

#### 4.3 Respecting intellectual property and confidential information:

- Staff should not do anything to jeopardise the Trust's security, confidentiality and intellectual property through the use of social media.
- In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other organisations and individuals, which can create liability for the Trust, as well as the individual author.
- Staff must not use the Trust's logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks in any social media post, or post any of the Trust's confidential information without prior written permission from the Data Protection Officer.
- To protect themselves and the Trust against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, staff should reference sources of particular information they post or upload and cite them accurately. If staff have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, they should seek advice from the Data Protection Officer.

#### 4.4 Respecting colleagues, pupils, clients, partners and suppliers:

- Staff must not post anything that their colleagues or the Trust's pupils, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenities.
- Staff must not post anything (e.g. comments or images) related to their colleagues, or the Trust's pupils, clients, patients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders without their (/an owner's) prior written permission.

### **5. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy**

5.1 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operations Officer.

5.2 All managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

5.3 All staff are responsible for the effectiveness of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should in the first instance be reported to the Head Teacher, and if necessary, the Trust's Data Protection Officer and the ICT Development Manager. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Trust's Chief Operations Officer.

## **6. Compliance with related policies and agreements**

6.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Trust's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of the Trust's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, staff are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach the Trust's Acceptable Use Policy;
- breach any obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- breach any obligations staff may have relating to confidentiality;
- breach the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure;
- breach the Trust's Code of Conduct or the relevant national professional standards;
- defame or disparage the Trust or its affiliates, clients, pupils, business partners, suppliers, or other stakeholders;
- harass or bully other staff in any way or breach the Trust's Dignity at Work Policy;
- unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties or breach the Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy;
- breach the Data Protection Act or the Trust's Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online) or breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, social media should never be used in a false or misleading way, such as by staff claiming to be someone other than themselves or by making misleading statements).

6.2 Unless expressly authorised to do so in writing by the appropriate senior leader, staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Trust.

6.3 Staff who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## **7. Personal use of social media**

7.1 The Trust recognises that staff may work long hours and occasionally may desire to use social media for personal activities at work or by means of the Trust's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. The Trust authorises such occasional use so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not interfere with employment responsibilities or productivity. When using social media for personal use, all staff, volunteers and

governors must remember that they are personally responsible. They must take care to ensure that they always act responsibly, follow the law, the Trust's Acceptable Use Policy and the relevant code of conduct outside school as well as in school. While using social media at work, circulating chain letters or other spam is never permitted. Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to the Trust's affairs are also prohibited.

## **8. Business use of social media**

8.1 If an employee wishes to create a Trust social media account, prior written approval must be sought from the Chief Executive Officer.

8.2 If an employee's duties require them to speak on behalf of the Trust in a social media environment, approval must be sought for such communication from the Chief Executive Officer, who may advise them to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to social media activities. The only exception to this is when the employee has previously been expressly authorised to speak on behalf of the Trust in a social media environment.

8.3 Likewise, if staff are contacted for comments about the Trust for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they must direct the inquiry to the Chief Operations Officer or Chief Executive Officer and must not respond without written approval.

8.4 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

## **9. Monitoring**

9.1 The contents of the Trust's IT resources and communications systems are the Trust's property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the Trust's electronic information and communications systems.

9.2 The Trust reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to the extent permitted or as required by law, to ensure that the Trust's rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

9.3 The Trust may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

9.4 Staff should not use the Trust's IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential from the Trust.

## **10. Monitoring and review of this policy**

10.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Trust Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Trust Chief Operating Officer and ICT Development Manager.

