TRUST IN LEARNING (ACADEMIES)

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Approval Date: February 2025	Version: 01	Review: 3 years (or sooner if required by statutory guidance)
Approval By: Quality of Education committee	Lead: Director of Education	Review date: March 2028
As part of the review process, this policy/procedure has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.		

History of Policy Changes:

Date	Page	Change	Reason for Change
January 2025		New policy	New over-arching policy for the Trust

Contents:

1. Statement of Intent

This document sets out the policy and principles for successful communication between Trust in Learning Academies schools, and parents, carers and the wider community. We believe that clear, open communication between the school and parents/carers has a positive impact on pupils' learning because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their child's education
- Helps the school improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers
- Builds trust between home and school, which helps the school better support each child's educational achievements and pastoral needs

2. Values and Principles

This Trust Policy is set out with the following principles at its core:

Trust in Learning Academies is a family of schools each with a distinctive identity, collaborating to strengthen and support each other. We deliver high quality education with evidence-informed approaches to teaching, learning and the curriculum. Inclusion is at the heart of all we do. We actively listen to the voices of our pupils, staff and communities. Every school makes deliberate choices to be sustainable and globally focused.

The Trust vision is to:
- Inspire pupils to trust in learning and achieve their full potential
- To empower pupils to have confidence in their successes to make a positive contribution to the world
- To remove barriers to learning and help transform the lives of our pupils

Any data collected, stored or managed as a result of this policy is in accordance with UK and any relevant retained or assimilated EU law, and in line with the Trust's ethos and values.

This Policy has been framed in accordance with the guidance on best practice from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Objectives and Scope

3.1 The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:
- Outlining the principles of communication to which the Trust is committed
- Setting clear standards and expectations for responding to communication from parents
- Making clear the expectations of parents and carers communication with the school as part of the code of conduct
- Explaining unacceptable behaviours and likely implications of these
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of school staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible

3.2 This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to, the following:
- Education Act, 1996
- Equality Act, 2010
- DfE (2024) Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

- Data Protection Policy/General Data Protection Regulations, 2018
- Code of Practice, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, 2015
- Human Rights Acts, 1998

3.3 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following Trust policies:
- Special Educational Need Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Acceptable Use/Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Uniform Policy
- General Data Protection Policy

4. Responsibilities and Accountabilities

4.1 Responsibilities of the Trust central team
- To ensure that the policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- To ensure the policy is well communicated to all Headteachers.
- To ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Headteacher
- To ensure communications with parents and carers are effective, timely and appropriate
- To ensure the implementation of and compliance with current policy and procedures at school level
- To monitor systems, resources, impact and actions related to the policy
- To ensure the policy is well communicated and staff understand their role in its implementation
- To communicate the policy to all parents and carers
- To handle any complaints at school level which arise through this policy

4.3 Responsibilities of school leadership
- To ensure staff are inducted into the procedures surrounding this policy and any updates
- To provide training to ensure policy compliance
- To hold sessions for parents and pupils as required, to ensure the policy is understood

4.4 Responsibilities of all staff
- To respond to communication from parents and carers in line with this policy and with respect to the GDPR and internet acceptable use policy
- To work with other members of staff to make sure parents and carers receive timely and effective communication, for example if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves, staff will pass the message on at pace
- To uphold the whole school approach to the policy through modelling expected standards and utilising appropriate procedures
- To keep up to date with policy changes over time
- To promote a collaborative and inclusive ethos where all pupils can thrive
- To feed back to school leaders where concerns may arise in the implementation of the policy

4.5 Responsibilities of parents and carers
- To follow the code of conduct when communicating with the school

- To support the implementation of the policy with their child, as appropriate
- Where a parent has feedback on the implementation of the policy, to raise this directly with the school while continuing to work in partnership with the school

4.6 Responsibilities of pupils
- To uphold school rules and expectations and thereby comply with the implementation of the policy
- To feed back on the implementation of the policy through appropriate means, such as school council, to school staff

5. Expectations of school communication with parents/carers

5.1 Principles
The school strives to create an environment where all families feel valued and included in their child's education. Schools therefore intend for all their communication with parents and carers to be:

- **Welcoming** – whether offering information, feedback or raising of concern

- **Professional in tone and content** – demonstrating courtesy and respect

- **Clear and accessible** – written in straight-forward language, and provided in an accessible format or in a translated format, if requested

- **Accurate, honest and open**

- **Inclusive** – avoiding bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination

- **Timely** – in line with the school's expected response times

- **Regular** – keeping parents and carers informed of updates

- **Logged** – with key messages noted on the school's information management system

5.2 Expected communication

The school must make clear to parents and carers:
- how the school communicates with them
- expected response times from the school
- the best way for parents to communicate with the school
- the code of conduct

The code of conduct is included below, and a summary of this for parent and carer distribution is in the appendices. Further details of school communication as outlined above are in the appendices.

6. Expectations of Parents and Carers – the Code of Conduct

When a child joins a Trust in Learning school, their parents and carers are expected to follow the Code of Conduct.

- **Be supportive** - support the school's values, rules, policies, and practices, including behaviour policies, attendance expectations and learning goals, openly with your child.

- **Engage in your child's education** - attend parent-teacher meetings, school events, and support home learning activities to show your child that their education matters.

- **Monitor school communications** regularly, ensure that your **contact details** are up to date with the school and **respond to communications** from the school (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner.

- **Model positive behaviour** - demonstrate respect, patience, and understanding in all interactions, setting an example for your children.

- **Be generous in spirit** – start from the position that each member of staff wants to help and work in the best interests of all children. We promise we will make time to communicate with you and resolve any concerns, but please accept that proper investigations and good communication can take time. Safety and safeguarding of children will always be prioritised.

- **Communicate constructively** - raise any concerns respectfully, constructively and privately with the appropriate member of staff

- **Recognise the time constraints** under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond. Parents and carers should not expect staff to respond to their communication outside of normal school hours or during school holidays.

- **Avoid inappropriate use of social media** – Avoid using social media to discuss in a public forum the business of the school or other children attending the school. The use of social media websites to fuel campaigns and complaints against schools is unacceptable and not in the best interests of the children or the whole school community. If a pupil, parent or carer is found to have posted malicious, fictitious or defamatory comments on social networking sites, the school will report them to the website host and the school expects the person who posted the comments to remove the comments immediately. Social media users may believe that their postings are 'private', however once a comment is posted other social media users can forward/share such views. If postings are considered to be threatening or discriminatory, the school may have to refer the matter to the Police.

- **Follow the complaints procedure** - Any complaints must be made in line with the school complaints policy.

- **Accept privacy limitations and GDPR** - recognise that at times parents and carers may not be able to access full information about incidents. For example, disciplinary information about other pupils is confidential; statements written by other children will not be shared. The school will not share details of your child with other parents/carers.

- **Avoid unacceptable behaviours, including disruptive or aggressive communication**. To support a safe school environment, we cannot tolerate parents, carers or visitors who exhibit any of the following behaviour:

- o **Use of loud and/or offensive language or display of temper**. This includes racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other discriminatory language which is offensive.

- o **Threat to harm or carrying out actual bodily harm** to any person on school premises.

- o **Damage to/destroying of school property**. Damaging, vandalising or theft of school property, or the personal belongings of staff, pupils, or other parents, will not be tolerated. This includes intentional destruction or defacement of school materials, buildings, or technology.

- o **Intimidation or harassment** of any other person on school premises. This includes persistent complaints, defined by obsessive or unreasonable behaviour, excessive communication, or unrealistic demands even when a complaint has already been managed; and harassment, defined by actions that target staff over time, cause distress or negatively affect anyone in the school community.

- o **Insulting** any member of the school community in an attempt to demean or undermine

- o **Making vexatious or malicious allegations** against a member of the school community, in any format, including writing, social media or via direct contact verbally

- o **Disregarding school rules or policies.** This includes refusing to comply with safeguarding policies, security procedures, or health and safety measures, such as not leaving the building during a fire alarm

- o **Encouraging children to act inappropriately.** Parents and carers should never encourage children to behave in a way that contradicts the school's values, ethos, or expectations. This includes encouraging pupils to disregard rules, participate in conflicts, or disrespect authority figures.

The above list is not exhaustive and any individual exhibiting disruptive or unreasonable behaviour will be managed by the Headteacher in line with this policy.

We aim to create a supportive and respectful environment for all members of our school community. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in adhering to this Code of Conduct for the benefit of all.

7. **Managing Unacceptable Behaviour**

7.1 Assessing risk
When parents or carers behave aggressively or threateningly, the Headteacher (or designated staff member) should assess the risk before taking action. Key factors to consider include:

- Whether the parent or carer has been verbally or physically aggressive, threatening, or intimidating
- Evidence of the incident, including witness statements
- Any history of aggression or persistent abuse towards staff, pupils, or visitors
- The risk level (low/medium/high) of repeated behaviour
- The potential for the conduct to cause harm or distress to pupils, staff, or other parents

7.2 Management of unacceptable behaviour

Once such factors have been considered, there are a number of options that the Headteacher may wish to take. These include:

- **Meeting**

The Headteacher may invite the parent or carer to a meeting (face to face or online) to discuss the incident. This approach allows for direct communication and the opportunity to resolve misunderstandings.

After the meeting, the Headteacher may send a follow-up letter to the parent or carer. This letter should outline the school's expectations, any agreed actions, and the consequences of repeat behaviour.

- **Warning Letter**

The Headteacher writes to the parent or carer, clearly stating the behaviour that is considered unacceptable and the consequences of repeating such behaviour.

This letter serves as a formal warning and sets clear boundaries for acceptable conduct.

- **Special Arrangements**

The Headteacher may inform the parent or carer in writing that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes from the meeting will be taken in the interests of all parties present.

The Headteacher may inform the parent or carer that, except in emergencies, all communication from the parent or carer to the school should be carried out in writing.

- **Temporary Suspension (ban) from the school site**

The process for issuing a ban is outlined in the Appendices.

In cases of serious aggression or persistent abuse, the Headteacher must assess whether it is safe for the parent or carer to continue accessing the school site or buildings.

If necessary, the Headteacher will withdraw permission for the parent or carer to enter the school premises. This decision must be fair, necessary, and for an appropriate length of time. The Headteacher informs the parent or carer in writing, explaining the reasons for the decision and providing an opportunity for them to respond. The letter is copied to the Chair of Governors, the CEO and the local police.

The Headteacher must regularly review the ban to ensure it remains appropriate and consistent. If a parent or carer resumes their language or behaviour after the temporary suspension is completed, the school may restart the process at an appropriate level.

- **Involvement of External Agencies**

In emergencies, the Headteacher must inform the police immediately. In the absence of the Headteacher, the senior leader in charge must make this call.

If a banned parent or carer enters the school, staff must notify the police for removal.

For non-immediate threats, staff should inform the local community police officer, who may issue warnings or take formal action.

With social media posts, the school must assess if comments constitute a criminal offence, harassment, or defamation and whether to pursue a legal claim.

- **Criminal Offence**: Sending grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, or menacing messages is punishable by up to 6 months imprisonment and a fine up to £5,000 (Communications Act 2003).
- **Harassment**: Persistent conduct that amounts to harassment can lead to injunctions and compensation (Protection from Harassment Act 1997).
- **Defamation**: Statements causing serious harm to reputation can lead to compensation (Defamation Act 2013).

Appendices

Appendix 1: School Contacts

The school's main office hours:
School phone number:
School address:
Website:
Social media:

Appendix 2: School Agreed Response Times

Our staff aim to respond to communication as quickly as possible, and may manage to do so on the same day. However, the Trust's minimum expectations for response times are as follows:
- Up to two working days to acknowledge an enquiry
- Up to one working week to respond to an enquiry

If your response has not been acknowledged within 2 working days, please do contact Reception again.

In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may choose to work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of normal school hours, but they are not expected to do so.

Some communications with school will not always require a response. For example, leaving a message to inform the school of an on-the-day absence will not always require a call back from the school.

Appendix 3: Mode of communication

We aim to use the most effective ways to communicate with parents and carers, which tends to be via our School Communication Platform (e.g. Class Dojo), email or phone, but may be face to face, including home visits, if this is deemed most effective.

We are a paperless school as far as possible, and therefore endeavour to communicate electronically or virtually rather than provide hard copies of information.

There are some legal communications that we must have with parents in written form. These include letters about exclusions and unauthorised attendance, for example.

As part of our commitment to environmental sustainability and efficiency, we aim to minimise the use of paper and encourage electronic communication, while ensuring that families who require hard copies can request them.

Appendix 4: How Parents and Carers can communicate with the School

We encourage parents and carers to find the most effective way to contact the school. This is outlined below:

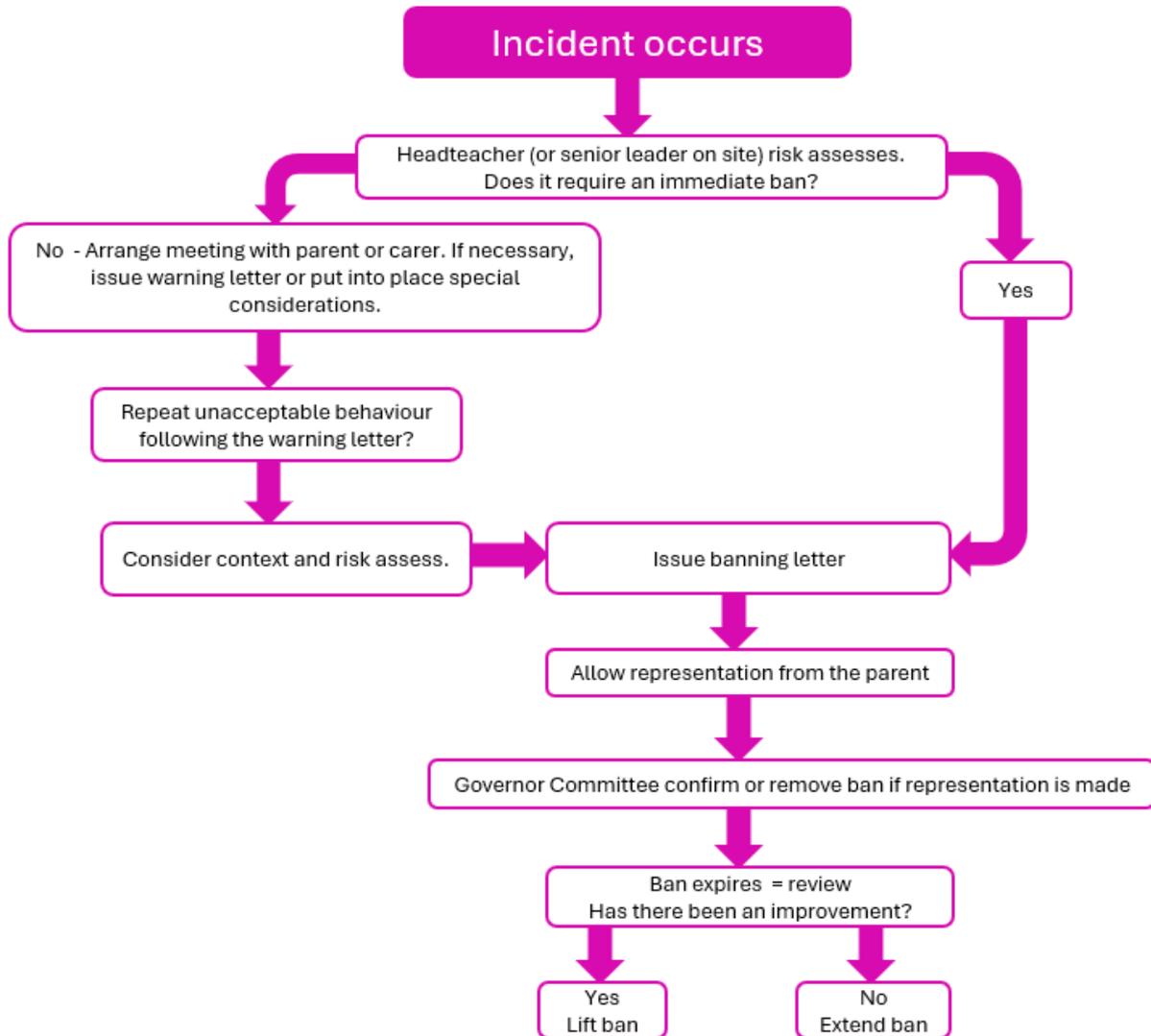| Type of Message	Who to contact	Best way to contact
General enquiries e.g. dinner money		
Urgent message for my child		
Attendance and absence requests		
Reporting sickness or medical/ dental appointments		
Complex or sensitive questions		
My child's wellbeing/ pastoral support		
My child's special educational needs or disabilities		
My child's learning/lessons/ homework		
Behaviour and anti-bullying		
Attending a detention		
Safeguarding		
Payments: school dinner money, trips etc.		
Catering/ school meals		
Uniform, including lost/found		
School events / school calendar and after school clubs		
Making a Complaint		
Severe Weather (which closes the school)		
Needing a hard copy of a document or a translated copy		
Arranging a meeting		
Contacting the Governors		

Appendix 5: How School communicates with Parents and Carers

This appendix outlines how the school communicates with you:

About	How often?	How does school communicate this with parents & carers?
Key information about the school – curriculum, policies, etc.		
School closures e.g. INSET days		
Emergency school closures e.g. due to Severe Weather closures or lockdowns		
Any specific personal enquiries		
Sports fixtures		
Your child's regular progress		
Rewards and achievements		
Behaviour incidents		
Detentions		
Consent forms		
Updates on attendance and punctuality		
Absence – day		
Absence – long term		
Updates on the school		
Events in school		
Trips or visits consent forms/payments		
Homework		
Reports		
Parents Evenings		
SEN Annual reviews		
School surveys or consultations		

Appendix 6: Process for implementing a ban

The flowchart below summarises the procedure of withdrawing permission for a parent or carer to enter school premises

Incident occurs

Headteacher (or senior leader on site) risk assesses. Does it require an immediate ban?

No - Arrange meeting with parent or carer. If necessary, issue warning letter or put into place special considerations.

Yes

Repeat unacceptable behaviour following the warning letter?

Consider context and risk assess.

Issue banning letter

Allow representation from the parent

Governor Committee confirm or remove ban if representation is made

Ban expires = review
Has there been an improvement?

Yes
Lift ban

No
Extend ban

Parent and Carer Code of Conduct

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