



LONG FIELD ACADEMY

Communications Policy

Formulation date:	October 2014
Senior Team Responsibility:	Principal
Governors' Reviewing Committee:	FRHP
Reviewed:	Feb 2017
Next review date:	Feb 2018
Associated documentation:	

1. Rationale

- 1.1 Long Field Academy recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with all stakeholders (students and parents/carers, staff, FoLFA, outside agencies, national bodies, etc), and is committed to being open and accessible for all who have an interest in the academy. This policy addresses the main ways in which the academy ensures effective two-way communication between the academy all and stakeholders.
- 1.2 Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes in planners, or email). Occasionally a communication may be received second hand or through an intermediary.
- 1.3 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in a school, where teachers may be teaching full time and running activities or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated 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 to return a call.
- 1.4 For this reason the academy has been particularly proactive in encouraging use of modern communications methods, with staff email contacts being available and all parents/carers being encouraged to give an email address for prompt and effective communication. Recent surveys indicate that the majority of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the communications they have with the academy.

2. Aims

- 2.1 To support Long Field Academy as a thriving and successful organisation we must communicate effectively with each other, with our students, with their parents and with other members of the wider academy community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the academy community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 All communications at Long Field Academy should: keep staff, students, parents, governors, the FoLFA and other stakeholders well informed. Communication should be open, honest, ethical and professional, it should use jargon free, plain English and be easily understood by all. Communication should be actioned within a reasonable time, use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context message and audience, take account of relevant academy policies in particular Equal Opportunities & Acceptable ICT Use. It should also be compatible with our core values as reflected in our vision and values and Academy Improvement Plan.

4. Communication

Processes and key messages

- 4.1 Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people. Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message. We should also remember the importance of listening.
- 4.2 Every member of staff has a responsibility to support effective communications and needs to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the academy's reputation.
- 4.3 For the purposes of this policy communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated; not only the responsibility for communication but also how effectively that responsibility is carried out.
- 4.4 Communication between the academy and parents operates in the following ways:
- Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening and Open Mornings preceding the year of entry to the academy. All prospective parents receive information about the academy.
 - Prospective parents are invited, along with students, to an induction evening in the Summer Term where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the academy is presented.
 - Parents are invited to a Parent and Tutor Evening in the Autumn Term to meet the student's house tutor and review how the student has settled into the academic year.
 - Parents of each year group are invited into the Academy to an appropriately themed Parents Meeting, to cover issues relating to the relevant year group of their child (e.g. options for Y9).
 - The Student Planner is used as a key vehicle for communication between parents and the academy and this planner is fully explained at the induction evening for new parents and to all students as they start at the academy. The planner is monitored on a weekly basis by both parents and the student's house tutor.
 - Communication about student progress takes place formally each term for each student through a Progress Report which reflects student progress towards targets and engagement in learning.
 - Details about events at the academy are published on the website and details are sent via SMS/SchoolComms to all parent contacts.
 - Updates to the website are a key vehicle for communicating in a variety of ways: alerting parents and students to forthcoming issues; celebrating the life of the academy; petitioning for parental views; publishing the results of consultations, etc.

- The academy has all newsletters, events and key information on an up to date website.
- Queries about events at the academy may be made by phone to the academy or by email.

5. **Service Standards at Long Field Academy**

5.1 Any requests for information, any concerns, and requests for references or progress are acknowledged and wherever possible addressed within 24 hours (term time only).

5.2 Complaints Procedure:

- Initially, concerns should be addressed to the appropriate House Tutor or Student Welfare Manager.
- Concerns may be raised either via the Planner, or by letter, email or phone call.
- Notes in your child's Planner will be addressed within 2 working days providing your child ensures the note is shown to the appropriate member of staff.
- Letters will receive both a verbal (usually by phone) response on the same day of receipt and a written response within 2 working days.
- Verbal responses will generate a brief written note of the discussion and its outcome, to be held in the child's file for future reference.
- Concerns raised by phone will be addressed with 24 hours of the call.
- Emails will receive an email response within 24 hours of receipt.
- Those sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays may elicit no reply until term-time.
- There is a system in place for monitoring the nature of complaints at the academy in order to identify trends and address any recurring issues.

5.3 ***Feedback and consultation***

Feedback between the academy, parents and pupils operates in the following ways:

- Questionnaires are issued to parents/carers on a range of topics and through a variety of means (hard copy, through electronic surveys, email)
- They may be distributed at specific parental events or via post and email
- The feedback process via questionnaires addresses key service areas such as the academy curriculum, changes to the timing of the academy day, uniform, the framework for parental consultation evenings, homework, the academy's reporting system, primary school transition, the quality and accessibility of the academy's materials, etc.
- Parent Forum Meetings take place at least every term, with additional meetings for specific issues.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team undertake Learning Walks regularly and discuss learning with students as part of this exercise.

- As part of the academy's system of Self Review, students are involved in Student Voice feedback to review the teaching and learning within subjects and contribute their own thoughts on subject strengths and areas for development.
- Students are encouraged to be constructive about how the academy can improve provision and are actively engaged in such projects as annual visits, ethos and organisation, etc.
- The Special Educational Needs team works closely with individual students, parents/carers and external experts and meetings are held frequently to discuss best practice and provision for individuals and groups.

6. Internal Methods of Communication

6.1 Meetings

All formal meetings should be structured and minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda. It is important that time is put aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to subject and/or the whole academy's reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff. The approved minutes of meetings are available on the Shared Area.

6.2 Email

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email where appropriate. Email is key to the academy's operations. Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. To ensure that each member of staff is using email effectively, the following actions should be taken:

- Emails should be checked each day
- Consider a quick telephone call
- Do not copy in more individuals than required
- Delete mail regularly
- Appropriate language is important in the use of email; emails should be proof read in order to check tone and appropriateness
- Subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily
- Email time should be blocked into your day if possible rather than allowing the received mail trigger to organise your day
- Do not use email to avoid face to face contact.

6.2.1 The Academy has a separate policy for dealing with internet usage; you are asked to sign the acceptable use agreement and make yourself familiar with it.

6.3 Written Communications

These are placed in pigeon holes which staff should check regularly throughout the week.

6.4 Staff Briefings

Staff Briefings take place two times per week (Monday and Thursday at 8.25am in the Staff Room). The diary for the week is discussed and information shared. Briefings are a key part of academy communication and all staff are expected to attend. Bulletin notes are issues via email after the briefing has taken place to ensure everyone has the same message and missing colleagues are informed.

7. External Methods of Communication

7.1 Newsletter

The academy's newsletter is published on a weekly basis and emailed to all stakeholders (where we hold an email address). The newsletter will promote the academy's successes and will incorporate news relevant to the academy. Members of staff are encouraged to contribute appropriate items to the newsletter which should be emailed to the Assistant Principal responsible for this activity.

7.2 The academy has many lines of communication to maintain: with parents and carers, the FoLFA, other schools, the community and with outside agencies. Good communication between the academy and the home is essential, and students achieve more when the academy and parents work together. Parents can naturally help more if they know what the academy is trying to achieve and vice versa.

7.3 At Long Field Academy we aim to have clear and effective communications with all parents/carers and with the wider community. Effective communications enable us to share our vision and values through keeping parents well informed about the life of the academy. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the academy.

7.4 ***Communications with Parents/Carers***

7.4.1 Letters

- Staff will acknowledge parents' letters within 24 hours of receipt.
- Any letter of complaint should be referred to the relevant line manager or House Tutor for that year.
- Letters to parents must be approved by the Principal or their PA before posting.
- All letters should be sent in Arial 11 and posted/distributed via the Finance/Admin Office.
- Copies of all correspondence with parents will be placed on student files.

7.4.2 Email

- Parents are encouraged to use email as a method of communicating with staff.
- Staff should respond on the day of receipt after proof reading to check tone and appropriateness of their email and cc in their line manager.
- Staff may forward emails from parents to a member of the SLT to deal with if preferred and should always do so if the content is a complaint. In this instance the Principal's PA must be cc'd into that forwarded email.

7.4.3 Telephone calls

- Staff will check their emails for any phone messages received during the day and respond to parents' phone messages on the same day or as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- SIMS will be used record all phone calls home.

7.4.4 SMS

- Text messages are sent out by the administration team in regards to key messages and reminders.
- Detentions are sent via text message each afternoon, teachers must therefore resolve any outstanding detentions they have logged.

7.4.5 Reports

- Full written reports are provided once a year, with other progress reports at regular intervals; we provide a full written report to each child's parents on their progress in each subject.
- This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development.
- Parents meet their child's teachers at least once during the year at Parents' Evening. This gives them the opportunity to celebrate their child's successes and to support their child in areas where there is a particular need for improvement. We encourage parents/carers to contact the academy if any issues arise regarding their child's progress or well-being.
- When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we will meet with parents more regularly.
- We welcome the presence of any other adult the parent wishes to invite to an academy meeting to act as interpreter or professional support.
- We will also make any reasonable adjustments to our arrangements if this will enable a parent/carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting at our academy, or to receive and understand a communication.

7.4.6 Public access documents

Academy Policies are available to parents/carers via a link on the academy website.

7.4.7 Academy Website

- The academy website provides information about the academy and an opportunity to promote the academy to a wider audience.
- The academy aims to engage all stakeholders through the website and to represent the academy's vision and values.

7.4.8 Home-Academy communication

- A calendar of academy events is available on the academy website.
- Key dates are circulated via Schoolcomms, student planner and via letters to parents.
- The academy newsletter is emailed to parents when produced and hard copies are given to all students where parents have not provided an email address.
- Recent parental views have evidenced that parents/carers expect the newsletter, and appreciate the regularity of the contact.
- We send other letters of a general nature when necessary and store copies on the academy's website.
- Students in all classes have a student planner, this enables parents/carers to record a wide range of information that they wish to share regularly with the teachers.
- Teachers/students use the planner to record homework assignments, and as a regular channel for communication with parents/carers.
- Homework set is also available via the academy VLE.

8. Communication – Supporting Academy Staff

- When communicating with students and parents staff are expected to keep personal details private. You must never divulge your personal contact details: address, phone number, mobile number, personal email address etc to a student.
- Advice: If you must contact a parent in an extreme circumstance outside of school hours, always dial 141 first.
- You must never divulge your private email address to a student. Personal and private email addresses must be separate.
- Any communication about learning should be through the VLE or professional email addresses.

9. Social Networking Sites/Blogs

- Staff should not communicate with parents/carers or students via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends".
- Staff must not 'friend' students who have left the academy.

- The exception to this rule is networks or blogs used in the safety of Academy portals for the purpose of teaching and learning.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Principal in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on academy equipment.

Social Media:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the academy into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Must not be used for actions that would put academy representatives in breach of academy codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the academy's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies.
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to academy matters, staff, students or parents.
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally effects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.
- Staff should be aware that these standards must also be met post-employment.

10. Outside Communication

10.1 Press, Radio and Television

The Principal will deal with these matters in the first instance and will delegate where appropriate to other staff. It is recognised that staff will be involved in activities that involve the press, taking care not to be quoted is important in sensitive areas. The publishing of articles require the approval of the Principal and should not be assumed.

10.2 Elected Members or Local MPs

The Principal will deal with all communications with elected members and local MPs. Only when s/he gives specific permission will the matter be delegated.

10.3 DfE, other Government Departments and Agencies and Units, including Ofsted, NCSL, EFA, etc.

The Principal will deal with all communications with any of the above. Only when s/he gives specific permission will the matter be delegated.