



Policy	Contacting Parents
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Eastern Multi-Academy Trust recognises the importance of clear and effective communications with parents/carers and is committed to being open and accessible for all.
- 1.2 Communications can take a variety of forms including verbally, ie: during meetings or by telephone, written - letters, notes in planners, email, etc.
- 1.3 Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem, for instance where teachers may be teaching full time and there has been no available opportunity for the member of staff to answer or to return a call. For this reason, the Trust endeavours to be proactive in encouraging use of modern communications methods; email and text messaging.
- 1.4 This Policy aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all parents/carers effectively and clearly.

2. Aims

To support the students, and the Trust as a thriving and successful organisation, we must communicate effectively with each other; our students, their parents/carers and other members of the wider community. We need to ensure that communications between all members of the community are clear, professional, timely and appropriate.

3. Objectives

All communications should:

- keep staff, students, parents/carers well informed
- be open, honest, ethical and professional
- use jargon-free, plain English and be easily understood by all
- be actioned within a reasonable time
- use the method of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience

4. Communication

- 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 the message.
- 4.2 All participants have a responsibility to support effective communications and recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the students' learning.
- 4.3 Communication between the Academy and parents/carers operates in the following ways:
 - prospective parents/carers are invited to an Open Evening in the autumn preceding the year of entry to the Academy; they receive information about the Academy including recent performance statistics

- prospective parents/carers are invited, along with students, to an Induction Evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the Academy is presented
- parents/carers are invited to a Year 7 Curriculum Evening in the Autumn Term of Year 7 to meet the student's form tutor and review how the student has settled into the Academy
- parents/carers of each Year group are invited into the Academy to an appropriately themed Parents' Evening, to cover issues relating to the relevant Year group of their child (e.g. Study Skills for Year 11, Core subjects for Year 10, options for Year 9, Teaching & Learning methodology for Year 8)
- the Student Planner is used as a key vehicle for communication between parents/carers and the Academy and this Planner is fully explained at the Induction Evening for new parents/carers in July and to all students as they start at the Academy. The Planner should be monitored on a regular basis by both parents/carers and the student's form tutor. We are also developing our on-line communication systems, and our SIMS Learning Gateway will develop into a live communication tool alongside the students' planners in the academic year 2013/14.
- communication about student progress takes place formally each half term for each student through a Current Assessment report which shows where students are and whether they are on target to reach ambitious goals we set with them
- the updates to the website or newsletter emailed weekly to parents are a key vehicle for communicating in a variety of ways: alerting parents/carers and students to forthcoming events or issues; celebrating the life of the Academy; petitioning for parental views; publishing the results of consultations, etc
- teacher email addresses are published on the website

5. Service Standards

5.1 Responding to parents/carers

We strive to ensure that any concerns, requests for information, references or progress are responded to imminently and, where possible, dealt with within 2 working days.

5.2 Consultation

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

- questionnaires are issued to parents/carers on a range of issues and through a variety of means (hard copy, electronic surveys, email). They may be distributed at specific parental events (e.g. Parents' Consultation Evenings, Parents' Information Evenings, the Parents' & Friends Association) or via student post.
- 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 Methods of Communication

6.1 We try to make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible. We seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or any form of racial discrimination. We wish to recognise and celebrate the contributions made to our society by all the cultural groups represented in our Academy.

6.2 Communications with Parents/Carers

6.2.1 Letters

Staff will reply to parents' letters without delay, usually within 2 working days. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the Head of House and copied to the Principal or Vice Principal. Letters to parents/carers must be approved by the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team before posting, with copies being kept on file. The corporate text document for all Eastern Multi-Academy publications is 'Arial', Point 10.5. Letterheads should be used for all written communications.

6.2.2 Email

Staff will respond to emails politely and efficiently as soon as is practicable, usually within 24 hours of receipt. Staff may copy emails from parents/carers to a member

of the Senior Leadership Team for information where necessary and should always do so if the content is a complaint; in which case, the Principal must also be sent a copy.

6.2.3 Telephone calls

Staff will respond to parents' phone messages within 24 hours where it is reasonable to do so. Where necessary, a linked document added to SIMS will record the details of the conversation.

6.2.4 Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

Staff should not communicate with parents/carers or students personally via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". The exception to this rule is networks or blogs used in the safety of Academy portals for the purpose of teaching and learning.

6.2.5 Written Reports/Progress Reports

Once a year we provide a full written report to each child's parents/carers on their progress in each subject. This report identifies areas of strength and areas for future development. Students are given the opportunity, using the attached reply slip, to comment on their own progress and parents/carers are invited to make a comment.

In addition, parents/carers are given the opportunity to meet their child's teachers at least once during the year for a private consultation 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 at the time of the concern.

Each student is issued with a Current Assessment Grade report 6 times per year which gives grades for effort and progress.

When children have special educational needs, or if they are making less than the expected progress, we will meet with parents/carers more regularly.

With advance notice, 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.

6.2.6 Academy Prospectus

The Academy prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents/carers a general picture of provision at our Academy.

6.2.7 Public access documents

Documents relating to the provision of teaching and learning and Trust policies are made available to parents/carers upon request.

6.2.8 Academy Website

The Academy website provides information about the Academy and an opportunity to promote the Academy to a wider audience.

6.2.9 Home-Academy Communication

A calendar of Academy events is produced at the start of each year/term and issued to parents/carers.

The Academy arranges various meetings for parents/carers throughout the year. Meetings are held prior to any residential trip to inform parents/carers of planning, content and arrangements.

Additional meetings include Year 5/6 Secondary transition meetings, Years 8 and 9 Options Evenings, Year 10 pre-GCSE Information Evening, Year 11 Focus Evening, Sixth Form Information Meeting for Year 11 and Year 12/13 Higher Education Presentations.

If a child is absent from the Academy, and we have had no indication of the reason, the parent/carer will be contacted to find out the reason for the absence.

If parents request information or support from the Academy through our Parent Partnership Initiative, we endeavour to hold an event to meet their requests, or where the Academy consults parents on their views on developments in the Academy. A full programme is published on the website and via the Newsletter.