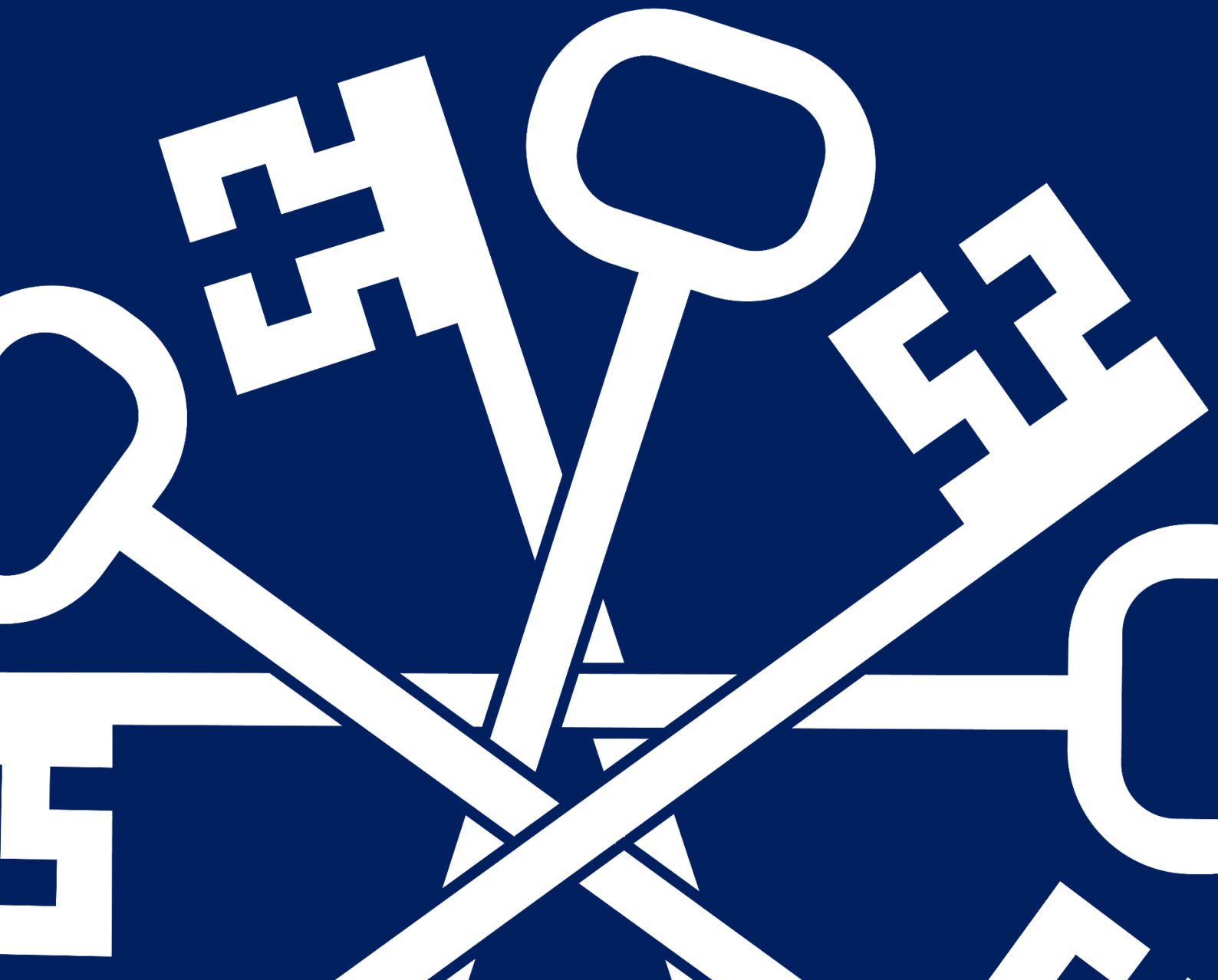




KEYS
ACADEMIES
TRUST

Communications Policy

Version 1.1



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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. At the heart of our mission is the belief that every individual has untapped potential waiting to be unlocked. By fostering an environment that challenges and supports growth, we want to create pathways for social mobility. By providing the right tools, guidance, and opportunities, we enable each person to overcome barriers and reach their fullest potential.
- 1.2. We want our schools to not only places of learning but vibrant communities where every person feels they truly belong. Within this students, teachers, and support staff alike should feel they are developing and succeeding. This success should be an achievable reality for all, irrespective of background or circumstance. It may be quite different for each of us, but the key is the feeling of pride in doing well and enjoyment of the journey.
- 1.3. We are committed to building inclusive environments where the uniqueness of every individual is celebrated, and where collective growth is the norm.

2. Change Summary

- 2.1. No notable changes since first iteration.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all communication from Keys Academies Trust ("the Trust") and its respective academies is consistent, accurate, honest, timely and relevant. The Trust places a high value on its ability to listen and react to comments and feedback both from its staff members and external stakeholders.
- 3.2. This policy sets out the Trust's communication strategy for internal (staff members, learners) and external (parents, wider community, businesses, media, other schools and Trusts etc.) stakeholders.
- 3.3. Effective communications in all aspects of our Trust's business helps us to:
 - a) Build and maintain trust
 - b) Prevent and resolve problems and avoid misinterpretation
 - c) Provide clarity and direction
 - d) Create new and improved relationships
 - e) Build confidence and reassurance
 - f) Increase engagement
 - g) Increase productivity and wellbeing amongst our staff and children
 - h) Create a recognised Trust brand

- i) Raise the Trust's profile
- j) Maintain our high standards and expectations

4. Internal Communication

- 4.1. Effective internal communication helps ensure that everyone is working collaboratively towards achieving the Trust's strategic vision, values and objectives. It develops a cohesive culture and empowers staff to make the right decisions in line with those goals. This in turn leads to greater efficiency and productivity and improves outcomes for all of our learners.
- 4.2. There are many forms of internal communication and whilst our academies have their own structures of internal communications, the Trust requires consistency in the following approaches which align to the wider strategic aims and objectives.

5. 'Open Door Policy' for learners, their families and staff

- 5.1. The Trust strives to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for learners, staff and families to feed in their views and comments outside of the formal channels in place. The Trust and its academies also attempt wherever possible to respond appropriately to suggestions and comments.
- 5.2. Each academy within the Trust will:
 - a) Ensure that opportunities for informal communications are in place including an 'open door' culture whereby learners, parents and families can easily speak with the Headteacher and SLT members.
 - b) Publish on their websites a central email account for parental enquiries.
 - c) Ensure there are ample opportunities and mechanisms for staff to raise comments, suggestions and feedback to the Headteacher and SLT.
 - d) Annually issue a survey to all parents, learners and staff that has been agreed by the Trust to support a review of engagement and satisfaction.

6. Internal Emails

- 6.1. Emailing colleagues is an effective and quick method of communication and is promoted by the Trust. However, effective and appropriate use is crucial.
- 6.2. Particular care should be taken when writing emails to ensure that consideration is given to the guidance on Paragraph 9 of this policy and the Code of Conduct is upheld. Staff should not write anything in an email that they would not want to be shared more widely. Staff should also note that any emails, even after deletion, remain on the server and may be used in a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request by a member of the public.

7. Face to Face and Indirect Non Verbal Communication

- 7.1.
- 7.2. Keys Academies Trust promotes a widespread culture of ethical leadership and we are committed to consistently applying these principles in everything we do. The Trust believes that every member of staff is in a position of leadership and can have great influence on colleagues. This includes all forms of face to face communications with colleagues, be that informal or formal.
- 7.3. Staff are reminded of the power of non-verbal communication in the form of body language, facial expression and behaviour. The Trust expects every staff member to be mindful of their own non-verbal communication and consider how this can affect (and be received by) others.

8. External Communication

- 8.1. External communication is the transmission of information between the Trust and / or its academies and another person or entity in the external environment. Examples of these might include local businesses, the Local Authority and Department for Education, Ofsted, other MATs and schools, the wider community and the media.
- 8.2. Consistency in the way in which we communicate externally reinforces the school's brand, which is the emotional connection the Trust and its academies has with its community and stakeholders.
- 8.3. In addition to this, a strategic approach to communicating externally is sometimes needed to ensure the reputation of the Trust is upheld and to avoid misinterpretation.
- 8.4. With this in mind there are some external communications that must be pre-approved by the Trust beforehand and some regulations that must be followed which are outlined here.
- 8.5. Any external communication that features the Trust letterhead or Trust logo must be pre-approved by the Executive Team Assistant before it can be shared externally

NOTE: this does not apply to the Trust logo within your e-signature nor to generic school letters that feature the Trust logo within the letterhead templates.

9. General communications

- 9.1. We all work hard to ensure that our schools are welcoming, friendly, supportive and positive and our external communications should also consistently reflect this.

- 9.2. All members of staff interacting with external people (whether face to face or in writing) must uphold the reputation of the Trust as a whole. In all communication, we will promote and celebrate our communities and be tactful about any sensitive contextual or demographic disadvantage that might exist. This includes when liaising with external agencies for funding or donations. Where staff are unclear or unsure about how to go about this, advice should be sought from the Headteacher or the Trust Executive Team.
- 9.3. Staff are encouraged to maintain networks outside of the Trust with a view to sharing good practice, sharing experiences and enjoying the many benefits of collaboration. In doing so, staff should always ensure they are acting professionally and adhering to the Code of Conduct and ethical leadership principles at all times. Any deliberate defamatory or negative comments made about the Trust, the academies, learners, families, communities or other staff members (at any level of seniority) to any external party will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure. Staff are reminded to refer to the Trust's Whistleblowing Procedure and / or Grievance Procedure for raising any matters of concern in the correct and appropriate way.

10. Physical Environments and Displaying of Learner's Work

- 10.1. Our academies receive many visitors each term and our physical environments communicate important messages to visitors. Positive first impressions our guests take away with them are imperative to maintaining a good reputation.
- 10.2. All staff are required to play their part in ensuring our physical environments are tidy and free from hazards as per the Health and Safety Policy.
- 10.3. All staff are required to adhere to the Trust's dress code which forms part of our Code of Conduct.
- 10.4. All staff are required to adhere to the Behaviour Policy, ensuring the high expectations we have of our learners are maintained at all times, so that visitors' first impressions are always positive.

11. Letters, Emails and other written communication

- 11.1. The Trust aims to maintain a consistency of written and visual style and tone of voice. All written communication should be spell-checked and grammatically correct. As an education provider this is essential for our own credibility and for the reputation of the academies and Trust. Staff should take steps to have their written communication proofread where necessary.

11.2. Letters:

Any letters written must be pre-approved by the Headteacher in the academies and by the CEO if it is being sent from the Trust central team.

All letters should be on academy letter head with the Trust and school logo clearly visible.

All letters should follow a consistent visual format and be presented in Arial (for school communication) or Lato (for Trust communication) font.

11.3. Emails:

Emails are a critical method of communication both internally and externally. To ensure the smooth running of school business, all staff should review their inbox at least once daily and respond to external emails within a reasonable time period (at least a holding email within one working day of receipt).

Aspects that are particularly important with regards to effective and communication are outlined as follows:

- a) Staff should always ensure emails are polite, professional, grammatically correct, spell checked and that they include the appropriate greeting and closing (e.g. Dear Sir / Madam where the recipient is unknown, followed by Yours Faithfully and Kind Regards / Yours sincerely where the recipient is known)
- b) Staff should adhere to the Trust Code of Conduct in all email communications
- c) Colloquialisms should be avoided to eliminate the risk of misinterpretation or unintended offense
- d) Staff should be mindful of the use of capital letters which can be interpreted as 'shouting'
- e) Staff should be aware that anything that is written in an email and then sent can remain with the recipient indefinitely and will remain on the Trust's server even after deletion. With this in mind staff should not write anything that they wouldn't want to be seen for example via a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request
- f) Staff are reminded to ensure they are adhering to the Information Governance Toolkit which sets out the steps to be taken to protect sensitive and confidential information (e.g. not using the names of children or staff, encrypting sensitive or confidential attachments with a password etc.)
- g) Staff should never express personal opinion on sensitive, political or potentially controversial matters via email or any other written form of communication
- h) Staff should be cautious about sending any messages via email that may negatively portray and or misrepresent learners, parents, staff or communities
- i) Staff should take care when replying to emails to ensure their response does not result in any potentially legally binding agreement
- j) All central staff emails must include the following Trust signature which is presented in black font:

NAME

JOB TITLE

Keys Academies Trust, Ledbury Road, Peterborough PE3 9PN

T: 01733 889124 | E: enquiries@keystrust.org | W: www.keystrust.org



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- i. School Staff will have their own school version of their email signature, which will be similar to the below:

NAME

JOB TITLE

SCHOOL ADDRESS

T: 01733 XXXXXX | E: genericoffice@XXX.keystrust.org | W: www.website.com

<YOUR SCHOOL LOGO>



Proud to be part of

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12. Websites

12.1. Academy and Trust websites are often the first interaction external stakeholders will have with the Trust. It is therefore important that our websites are maintained with accurate, timely and comprehensive information. Branding is also important in order to support the profile of the Trust as a whole. Each school will have its own website which will be broadly owned and maintained by the Headteacher and SLT. However, the Trust requires the following principles to be followed:

- a) All academies within the Trust must display the Trust logo alongside their own to ensure branding is protected.
- b) All academies must provide a direct visible link to the Trust website.
- c) All websites must comply with data protection and copyright regulations as per the Trust's Data Protection and GDPR policies.
- d) Before an Ofsted inspection, officials will scrutinise school websites for the necessary information and to some extent, make an assessment of the school; using some information before the inspection takes place. In addition, Ofsted and DfE place obligations with schools to ensure core compliance with national requirements on website content. With this in mind it is important that the following information is always up to date:
 - i. Performance and attainment (information showing the school's most recent performance and assessment results)
 - ii. Pupil Premium expenditure narrative report
 - iii. Sports funding expenditure narrative report
 - iv. School inspection reports

- v. School ethos and values
- vi. Admission arrangements
- vii. Behaviour policy
- viii. Charging and remissions policy
- ix. Complaints procedure
- x. SEND information including accessibility plan for disabled pupils
- xi. Safeguarding policy
- xii. Subject Access Request policy and Privacy Notice
- xiii. Equality information and objectives
- xiv. Suspension and Exclusion arrangements
- xv. Financial information including annual report and accounts (Trust website)
- xvi. Governance details including governance structure and remit, names of governors with date of appointment, register of interests and attendance record at meetings over the last year.
- xvii. Curriculum provision and content
- xviii. Contact details for the Headteacher, SENDCO and the Trust
- xix. How to request paper copies of information on the website

12.2. Social Media

This section refers to social media pages which are owned and used by the academy and not accounts that belong to individual staff members. This should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Acceptable Use Policy which outlines the Trust's policy for staff use of social media.

All academies are encouraged to maintain a regular social media presence with a view to keeping family members and communities up to date on school developments and important news.

Positive media coverage attained by each school is to be shared on Twitter using the news links provided.

The most common form of social media page owned and used by schools in the Trust is Twitter. The Trust does not endorse the use of closed / private groups such as WhatsApp to engage with communities and families.

In line with the advice and regulations in place for all written communication, all messages disseminated via these channels should be grammatically correct and spell checked.

Only children whose families have given explicit consent may be used in photographs on social media and only the first name of the child will be displayed.

On Twitter, we will follow relevant figures, organisations and companies who fit with our values and interests. We will not follow families or learners (whether currently on roll or not).

To ensure messages and posts on social media are relevant, grammatically correct and strategically considered, each academy will have its own procedures in place setting out which staff members are responsible for managing social media releases.

Comments made by members of the public are to be carefully and frequently monitored. Any negative comments made publicly are to be referred to the Headteacher and a response considered. If any matter has the potential to bring the academy and or Trust into disrepute, Headteachers are required to consult with the CEO or CFOO and the matter may need to be added to the academy / Trust risk registers.

13. Media relations

- 13.1. The Trust promotes efforts to gain positive media coverage of the work of our academies in order to raise awareness of the schools amongst parents and the local community but also to raise the profile of the Trust as a whole entity.
- 13.2. Each term Headteachers will discuss, at ESLT, any events in the coming term which they believe may be of interest to the local media. It is the Trust's policy to develop a positive working relationship with the local press.
- 13.3. Positive media coverage attained by each school is to be shared on Twitter using the news links provided.
- 13.4. Positive media coverage attained by each school is to be shared on the relevant school website and external/internal newsletter where possible.

Reactive media work / Crisis Management

Whilst our preference is always to take a proactive approach to positive media stories, from time to time there may be the need to react quickly to unexpected media interest or a crisis management situation.

All media enquiries should initially be logged by the person who is approached with details of the nature of the enquiry, the urgency and the source. No response must be given at the time of the approach. All enquiries will then be passed to the Headteacher who will always act as the spokesperson for the school.

The Principal will assess the media enquiry on the basis of:

- a) Opportunity for positive coverage
- b) Potential for negative coverage

c) Likelihood of the story 'growing'

On the basis of this, the Headteacher will decide, in conjunction with the Trust's external PR consultant, whether to involve the CEO / CFOO. For guidance, if there is any potential at all for negative coverage, misrepresentation of our families / communities / learners or any likelihood of the story 'growing' the CEO / CFOO should always be notified so that a strategic response can be agreed.

National Media

In the case of telephone or email enquiries from the national media the Headteacher, in conjunction with the Trust's external PR consultant, will always liaise with the CEO / CFOO at the earliest possible point.

In the event of any national or local media presenting to the school gates to interview staff, these must always be declined and the Headteacher informed of the approach.

Any decision to proceed with media interviews or issue a comment will be agreed by the Headteacher in consultation with the CEO / CFOO (and for more serious media interest, the Chair of Trust Board).

Cuttings

Each academy will keep an up to date book of press cuttings which is available to the central Trust team and trustees upon request.

14. Feedback, Complaints and Compliments

14.1. The Trust encourages views about our academies whether positive, negative or neutral. Families or communities may wish to comment on their experience of our provision without making a formal complaint. We use the term 'feedback' to refer to these comments.

14.2. We use the term 'complaint' in its everyday sense, to mean any statement about our provision or member of staff that has not met the standard that people could reasonably expect.

14.3. Complaints, feedback and compliments are all of equal importance. They can help us to understand what we are doing well as a Trust and identify areas for improvement.

14.4. Feedback:

We generally receive regular feedback through the established channels e.g. open door policy etc., however it is important that our academies promote a culture where feedback is welcomed by all in everything we do.

14.5. Complaints:

All complaints should be handled in line with the Trust's Complaints Procedure. It is imperative that any complaint is investigated thoroughly and fairly and in line with the procedure. In all cases, the complainant should follow the Trust Complaints Policy and Procedure.

14.6. Compliments:

Our academies often receive compliments informally in discussion with families and in dialogue between teachers and parents. However, these are less frequently issued in writing. It is important that our Trust is able to capture what we are doing well in addition to the feedback and complaints received to help us improve.

Where compliments are given informally, staff are encouraged to request that the compliment be put in writing. Where this is not possible, a verbal account should be reported to the Headteacher.

15. Version History

VERSION	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	DATE
1.0	Communications policy drafted for Executive approval	Niamh Walsh	25/07/2023
1.1	Review by Trust's External PR Consultant	JUNGLE PR	25/07/2023