



# Reading School Communications Policy

## **Responsibilities**

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Assistant Headteacher  
**Governors Committee** EXPC

## **Audit Control**

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## Document Control and Approval

### Version Control

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### Responsibilities

Job title	Responsible for;
Assistant Headteacher, Staff Wellbeing	Policy Owner
EXPC	Committee Responsible

### Policies Linked

Policy name	File location

### Forms Linked

Form name	Form location

### Staff that need to sign

Staff Group	Form location

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## Introduction

### **What does this communications policy cover?**

Communications between Reading School and members of the school community:

- Staff & students
- Staff & parents
- Colleagues
- Governors

(The word staff includes both teaching and associate staff throughout this policy.)

### **What is good communication?**

Good communication is clear, professional, timely and appropriate. It should be useful and relevant to all parties, with a clear purpose as to the reason for the correspondence.

### **Benefits of good communication to stakeholders**

Good communication is essential for student wellbeing and educational progress. Staff will recognise that timely and effective communications, be it with colleagues, students, parents or governors, should first and foremost have student wellbeing and progress as the priority.

### **Communications and Wellbeing**

We recognise that our staff body have responsibilities outside of their Reading School role. Methods and times of communications should be an individual choice as to what fits best with their personal circumstances.

Staff are never expected to communicate or respond to a communication outside of their working hours (except in exceptional circumstances such as an emergency).

Staff should be expected to send communications at a time that suits their normal working hours and fits around their daily lives.

Students and parents should not expect a response to communication outside of a staff member's normal working hours.

This policy has been created due to the following problems with communication:

- Too many emails
- Emails too lengthy
- Students emailing at inappropriate times of the day
- Teams vs email confusion
- Acceptable reply times

## Aims and responsibilities

The following pages set out the aims and responsibilities for all stakeholders at Reading School and how they should communicate with each other.

## SLT-Staff communications

*SLT will communicate with internal and external stakeholders regarding the running of the School and actionable points in a variety of formats:*

- **Staff briefing** – (8am Monday mornings in the staff room) to provide information to all staff regarding important issues / calendar points / actionable requests. A forum that all staff, including SLT, can address the staff body in person, with minutes sent out to all staff.
- **Daily update** – an emailed update sent out daily that provides information that can affect the day to day running of the School, that all staff can contribute to, and that is saved on Sharepoint.
- **Weekly Head's bulletin** - information sent to all stakeholders of Reading School, including staff, students, parents and Governors. It provides a forum for sharing information and celebrating achievements.
- **Pastoral board** (8am weekday morning in the staff room) provides a forum to discuss pastoral issues of students and share best practice with regards to wellbeing and safeguarding (highlights of students with concerns are posted on All Staff Teams)
- **SLT weekly meeting** – the leadership team meet once per week to discuss strategic and operational priorities.
- **Department meetings** - Liaison with departments once per fortnight (calendared meeting or teams conversation)
- **Staff Handbook** – essential information available for all staff, found on Sharepoint, as well as Staff Code of Conduct.
- **Staff Wellbeing Hub** – sets out processes, signposting and support for all staff to access regarding wellbeing.

## Governor-Staff communications

School staff will communicate regularly with governors through:

- Attendance at meetings of the Governing Body, Committees and Working Groups and dealing with questions and issues raised by governors in those meetings;
- Written and oral reports to the Governing Body, Committees and Working Groups;
- Governor engagement activities as set out in Governor Engagement Programme and School Visits Programme Policy;
- Providing copies of communications to parents, such as the Headmasters weekly e-mail, news from Boarding etc.;
- Involving governors in appropriate activities, such as educational visits, entrance examinations etc.;

- Regular issues of key self-evaluation documents, Annual Operational Plan updates, etc.;
- In-house training and briefing sessions on relevant topics;
- Regular communication on all governance issues from the Governance Professional.

Governors are aware that they can raise questions with any member of staff and will receive a response at the appropriate level of detail.

*Governors should be aware that communications should generally focus on strategic issues, but that they have an important part to play in verifying the actions of staff in support of the School's strategy, and in challenging how the School deals with key issues.*

## Staff-Staff Communications

*Staff should remember that all communications and actionable points should keep our student outcomes as the main focus.*

- **Face to face** communication should be prioritised over email or Teams.
- **Meetings** should:
  - Have a clear purpose
  - Have an agenda and be timed, shared prior to meeting with leads for each agenda item (AOB should be at the start so as to allow colleagues to share then leave if appropriate)
  - Be solution driven – each agenda point has an action, named person, date for action/completion/review
  - Invite everyone to speak if appropriate
  - Leave admin for outside of meetings – focus on T&L / department focus
  - Aim to finish on time and not be a repeat of emails or deadlines
  - Consider a walking meeting for wellbeing
- **Email** should be formal and with an action, with the following thoughts in mind:
  - sent to the right *person*, at the right *time*, with the right *timescale* and for the right *reasons*
  - Copying in of colleagues for information only, with no expectation to reply (and therefore should usually not reply, so as to save email chain building up), with careful consideration of role and responsibility
  - Staff should avoid sending non-urgent emails before 6.30am or after 8.30pm (instead making use of the schedule function to ensure delivery within working hours)
  - Staff are not expected to check emails outside of school hours or when off sick or on leave. Staff, if aware, should be mindful of the wellbeing of other colleagues off-sick or on leave when copying them into an email.
  - Staff should set an 'out-of-office' email during school holidays, indicating the [safeguarding@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@reading-school.co.uk) email address for safeguarding concerns.
  - Staff should be mindful of forwarding emails that include sensitive information or are not particularly relevant, mindful of role and responsibility.

- Staff should have an appropriate way to file and organise their emails, whilst ensuring they delete emails they do not need to retain.
- Staff should use the daily update or Teams to notify all staff, rather than the 'All staff' email list. This is reserved for vital information.
- Emails should not be used for personal criticism or expressions of heightened emotion. Emails should contain a subject and polite addressing of the recipients.
- Staff should not be expected to respond immediately to colleagues, but may send a holding email to indicate receipt of the contact and to advise they will respond in due course.
- **Teams Chat** – should be used for informal, low stakes conversation / quick check-ins and is exempt from any Subject Access Requests from parents/staff/students.
- **Staff Teams** – should be used for staff-based teams such as SLT, Middle Leaders, Heads of House and all-staff channels such as CPD.
  - documents should be stored within the Files are in an organised way (attaching documents to a post and letting them uploaded to the general “Files” folder should be actively discouraged).
  - Knowledge-based Teams (such as the CPD channel) can be further enhanced with the use of a SharePoint-based “landing” or “home” page that users can access via a tab within the Team and that provides users with an overview of the available content and clear navigation to its important content.
  - The “Posts” tab can still be used for ongoing conversation between team members but it should be recognised that searching through and extracting documents from past conversations in the “Posts” area can be difficult and, in some cases, practically impossible.
  - As per emails, Teams should not be used for personal criticism or expressions of heightened negative emotion
- **Department MS Teams** should be used to share best practice and workload amongst departments
- **Daily update** is searchable and can be found saved on SharePoint.
  - Staff should share messages / updates of information for all staff that would affect the daily running of the School.
- **Absences** – on the first day of absence, staff should email cover to set appropriate cover and Cc their line manager/HOD and HR, ensuring appropriate and timely cover is set, if able to. Please refer to the staff absence policy for more information.

## Students and staff

*Students should keep all communications with staff on a formal basis and not expect immediate responses to requests.*

- **Face to face** students should always aim to speak to a member of staff in person if they have a request (or follow the expectations / directions of that particular member of staff regarding the best way to get in touch)

- **Addressing Staff** – Students should follow direction / ask staff on how they should like to be addressed, including salutation and ensure they follow this in verbal and written communication
- **Email** should be used for formal conversations with the email written in a formal way (staff can be expected to send back emails requesting a formal email if the initial conversation was not formal enough)
  - Eg.

'Dear Mr/Mrs/Dr/Miss/Ms \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to \_\_\_\_\_. Many thanks for your time.

Kind regards \_\_\_\_\_'

- **Emailing for absences** – parents must log all absences through [attendance@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:attendance@reading-school.co.uk) Students should email staff formally to request an absence for issues such as illness or music lessons or sporting fixtures
  - Students should catch up on missed work from their peers and not their teacher in the first instance.
  - When writing emails, students must include:
  - 'Dear [insert title & surname]

Please may I be excused \_\_\_\_\_ for the reason of \_\_\_\_\_. I will speak to a friend to catch up. Please let me know if must talk to you directly.'

- Students should not expect a response from the member of staff.
- A read receipt response is an acknowledgement of receipt.
- If necessary, students should only expect a response during normal working hours for a member of staff.
- **Teams Classes** – these should be used for discussion amongst peers, without active monitoring by teachers and no expectation to respond to student questions. Students should be mindful of being kind and formal and are reminded that the Team will be periodically monitored.
  - Students should use Teams as a formal forum, to discuss with each other, without the use of spamming.
  - Posts should only be made if they are useful or actionable.
  - If the student has a question that can wait until the lesson, they should not post it.
  - Staff responsible for a Team/Channel should consider the appropriate structure of the "Files" area and ensure that attachments to Teams posts are stored in appropriate folders to facilitate later access and retrieval by members of the Team. [Preparing Teams for the new academic year.pptx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- **Teams Etiquette** – Students should be reminded that Teams is a formal space in the presence of adults and used for School work only.
  - Students should be guided by the expectations of the staff team owner(s)
  - Posts should only be made if they are for information or are actionable
  - Avoid the repeated use of @TeacherName to alert teachers
  - Use reactions sensibly and helpfully, particularly when reacting to posts by peers



- Students should expect a response from their teachers within a reasonable timeframe during the school week. Teachers should not be expected to respond during the weekend.
- Students should not be posting on Teams past 9pm and not before 6am.

## Parent-School Communications

*Parents should expect regular communication through a variety of forms:*

- Bromcom Communications
- Head's weekly bulletin
- Email
- School website and social media including Twitter / LinkedIn
- Reports
- Parents evening
- Parent portal

## Parent-Staff Communications

*Parents/carers should expect individual staff communications via their child's form tutor (or an assigned member of staff):*

- **Tutors** - Parents are expected to communicate with staff via their child's form tutor.
  - All queries should go through their tutor, who will liaise with other members of staff to feedback to parents. This ensure an holistic overview of tutees by tutors.
  - When parents contact a tutor, they should do so via email. They should expect a response within 3 working days. This includes a holding email, unless it is a safeguarding concern.
  - If, after this time, parents/carers have not had a response, they should contact a member of SLT.
- **School planners** - parents of Year 7 and 8 students are expected to sign their child's planner weekly.
  - **Reporting absences** – parents / carers must report any absences to [attendance@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:attendance@reading-school.co.uk), copying in their child's tutor, on each day of absence by 8.30am.
  - Permission will not be given for absence during term time. Any request for Leave of Absence should be made using the form on our website, Request for Leave of Absence from School during Term Time which is also available from Reception. Any absence during term time has a detrimental effect on learning and social interactions. Students with poor attendance may be invited to an Attendance Action Plan meeting or be required to provide medical evidence for any absence or appointment, in consultation with the Education Welfare Service.
- **Updating contact information** - It is extremely important that emergency contact numbers are kept up to date. Please inform us immediately if personal details change, by amending these details via the Parent Portal or by emailing [secretary@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:secretary@reading-school.co.uk)

## Further details

For further queries please contact:

Lizzie Ayres (Assistant Head, Staff Wellbeing) [layres@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:layres@reading-school.co.uk)

Policies related to this Communications Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Mobile phone policy
- Social media policy
- Esafety policy

Reading School staff should read this policy in conjunction with:

- Staff wellbeing suggestions

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