



Communications policy

March 2017

Office use

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Associated documents:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT acceptable use of computers and internet policy 			
Links to:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Order Act 1986 Data Protection Act 1998 Education Act 2002 Education and Inspections Act 2006 Children and Families Act 2014 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 DfE Governance handbook NGA The Governance Handbook 	

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1. Policy statement

1.1 This policy applies to all Diverse Academies Trust and National Church of England Academy Trust employees – collectively known as the Diverse Academies Learning Partnership (the ‘trust’ or ‘organisation’) – and associated governors, trustees and volunteers. The policy outlines the framework in which we communicate as an organisation.

1.2 It is the responsibility of all employees to adhere to this policy and, wherever possible, to resolve issues swiftly and effectively.

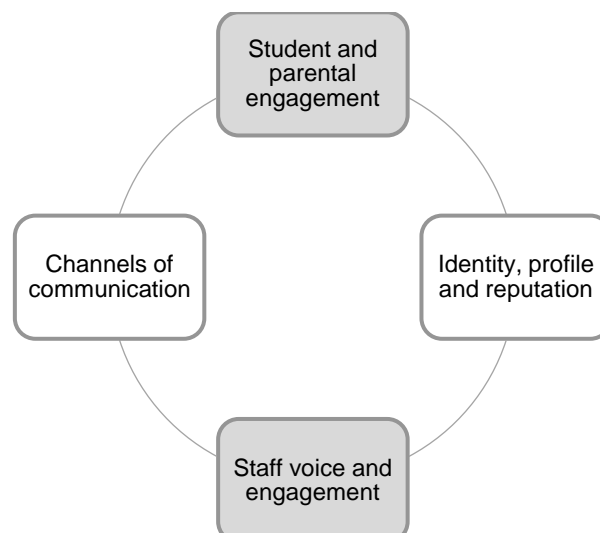
1.3 This policy aims to ensure that all communications – written or verbal, conventional or digital, internal or external, formal or informal – reflect the strategy, collective mission and shared values of the trust, and are delivered professionally according to the setting and audience.

2. Introduction

2.1 The trust recognises that communication and engagement plays a critical role in delivering high quality education. The trust is committed to and values listening as well as communicating.

This policy is concerned with the context for:

- ensuring the identity and reputation of the trust and its academies is reinforced through a shared vision and shared values, demonstrated consistently in staff behaviours
- enabling staff, student and stakeholder voices to be listened to and assistive in supporting the trust in delivering and improving the quality of education provided
- actively seeking the engagement of our stakeholders and audiences to enable the trust to deliver its mission
- embracing the influence of stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally to contribute to the educational debate; and seeking their support in demonstrating the trust’s relevancy in the communities it serves



2.2 Communications are an intrinsic facet of organisational life. Communications are not 'owned' by any single function or member of staff, it is a collective responsibility and one which cuts across the entire organisation. This policy seeks to set out the broad overarching principles, underpinned by a comprehensive series of guidelines and should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Board and governance	Must hold leadership to account as regards the impact of the organisation's communications, in line with the vision and values, and the overall strategy of the trust.
Executive and senior leaders	Are responsible for the organisation's leadership and management. As such their role is to ensure communications are of a high quality, reflect strategic objectives, and that all staff are clear and understand what is expected of them. It is an expectation that the senior leaders put in place and maintain clear lines of communications within their academies, and that responsibilities are appropriately delegated to avoid communication bottlenecks.
All staff	All staff are accountable and have a vicarious responsibility as a representative of the organisation. All staff are expected to respond/relay communications in a timely and professional manner, and where possible, clearly state their position/role/title and how they can be contacted e.g. an email footer must be included on all email accounts detailing individual contact information.

4. A summary of trust vision and values

4.1 The Diverse Academies Learning Partnership is founded on a proud commitment to the development and improvement of the children and young people in the communities in which it serves. It is the trust's belief that all its students and pupils should be given the very best chance in life to progress and develop into further or higher education and employment.

4.2 For each of its academies, the mission is to deliver excellent teaching, exceptional care and outstanding performance. The trust's core focus is the accomplishment and development of each individual student, which is considered to be best achieved through maintaining and developing each academy's unique identity and individual characteristics.

4.3 The trust encourages diversity and recognises that high levels of success cannot be sustained by adopting a 'one size fits all' model. Collectively, the Diverse Academies work together to share and co-develop best practice for the benefit of all.

4.4 Staff voice and students' opinions are valued, and parents/carers are actively engaged to support in creating the very best outcomes for their children. This diverse 'family' of academies are each empowered to enable its students and pupils to meet the highest possible standards.

5. Organisational 'voice'

5.1 Communications are a fundamental facet of the trust's organisational culture and that of each academy. The trust, as a body of staff, is accessible, open and transparent.

Although each of its academies are unique, values are shared and collectively all work towards a common goal, which is reflected in all that the trust says and does. It is proud of its achievements and that of its students, and as such, opportunities to celebrate success across all aspects of academy life are actively sought.

5.2 The trust recognises the importance of reputation and its role in underpinning the education offer. Whether communicating as an individual, as a group or as an academy, the words and actions of all staff contribute to the mission – whatever the level or position within the trust.

5.3 Through consistent communications, internally and externally, the trust seeks to provide clarity and assurance amongst its parents, carers, students and stakeholders more widely.

6. Freedom of speech and expression

6.1 The trust recognises and values freedom of expression and speech – used responsibly and within the law – and the fundamental role it plays within education and learning.

6.2 In the context of the trust's values, as well as British values, each academy promotes and encourages free debate, enquiry and, where appropriate, peaceful protest. Its staff, governors, trustees and volunteers are tolerant and mutually respectful of a wide range of views, political as well as academic; they are also protected from extremist ideologies and those organisations/individuals seeking to radicalise others.

6.3 All staff, governors, trustees and volunteers recognise that freedom of speech and expression may at times be limited, by legislation, for example to protect national security and public safety, prevent disorder or crime, protect the reputation or rights of others, and prevent the disclosure of information received in confidence.

6.4 The safeguarding and protection of the children and young people within the trust is paramount. All staff, governors, trustees and volunteers understand the confidential and sensitive

nature of the data and information associated with working with young people, and reflect this both personally and professionally as a representative of the trust and in the interests of student welfare.

7. Communication channels

7.1 Careful consideration is given to channel selection on the basis of an agreed objective and an understanding of the desired outcome.

7.2 Approaches to communicating are differentiated according to audience needs, in order to ensure that information is received and/or the expected engagement follows. Appropriate communication channels are selected depending on the target audience, therefore a message, piece of information or story may be distributed through multiple channels in order to deliver it at the right time and in the right place.

7.3 In determining channel selection, a 'digital by default' principle is adopted. In this 'always on' society, conventional methods of communications alone are not considered a sustainable approach given the limited resources available. A digital approach drives savings in some areas and overall enhances our ability to be more targeted in our communications.

The digital landscape is constantly evolving, so it is important that an open mind is maintained and that the trust and its academies keep abreast of developments and trends – considering and embracing new tools and techniques as appropriate to meet objectives.

As a tight practice, the use of social media is accepted and embraced.

7.4 Our communications have purpose and therefore it is important that parameters for success and clear 'calls to action' are agreed at the onset, in order to maximise impact. By being clear about what we expect the communication to achieve and agreeing the methods for measuring the impact, the trust can continue to assess, improve and evolve how it and its academies communicate.

8. Language

8.1 The trust recognises the importance of providing clear, meaningful, accurate and consistent written and verbal information to all its stakeholders.

8.2 The use of Plain English principles are favoured by the trust i.e. that content is written appropriately for the intended audience and in a manner which easily gets the message across in a succinct and friendly way. For further information see: www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf

9. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed in February 2018.