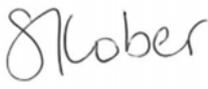




Lumen Learning Trust

Learning together for a brighter future

Communications Policy

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| SIGNED DEPUTY EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL | Sarah Kober  | DATE | 15 th March 2019 |
| SIGNED CHAIR OF DIRECTORS | Ray Vango  | DATE | 15 th March 2019 |

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Lumen Learning Trust puts the children's needs at the heart of its provision. Our whole school community is committed to enabling the children to become successful lifelong learners and happy, fulfilled adults who can make positive choices about their future.

1. Definition of Communication

Good communication is much more than the exchange of information. It is through effective and interactive communication that information is transmitted, understanding is developed and shared, trust is built, confidentiality respected and action coordinated. Communication includes not only the message but also how that message is communicated.

This policy should be considered as an integral part of other policies and procedures used within the Trust, including:

- Behaviour policy
- Attendance policy
- Child Safeguarding
- Complaints procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct & Handbook
- Social Media policy
- Emergency plan
- Privacy Notices
- Data Protection policy
- Acceptable use of ICT & Email guidelines and etiquette
- Educational Visits policy and guidelines
- Remissions & Charging policy

2. Principles & Aims

Communication is central to life and learning. Through communication we build social relationships and knowledge, make our needs and feelings known, and share ideas with others. Communication involves listening, understanding and responding, and also links to literacy skills.

The importance of communication in empowering pupils and ensuring their access to the curriculum is recognised. All those involved in a child's education should possess the necessary skills, knowledge, passion and attitude to ensure that effective communication is achievable for all.

To ensure that Lumen Learning Trust thrives we must communicate effectively with each other, with our pupils, with their parents and with other members of the wider community.

Communication involves the following processes:

- The management of relationships and the need to involve people
- The understanding that communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about message
- Listening
- Recognise that the quality of the communication reflects on the Trust's reputation

All communication should:

- Be of high quality
- Keep staff, pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders well informed.
- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.
- Use jargon free, plain English wherever possible and be easily understood by all.
- Seek to avoid bias, stereotyping or discrimination.
- Be actioned within a reasonable time.
- Use the methods of communication most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience.

- Take account of relevant school policies.
- Be compatible with the core values of the Trust and individual schools where necessary as reflected in all our policies and ethos.

This policy seeks to:

- Ensure effective consultation takes place between the academies, parents, carers, students and other stakeholders using a robust framework of communication channels.
- Build and maintain the reputational value of the Trust
- Encourage parents and carers to support their child's learning at school and at home. Information will be provided to enable this support to be effective.
- Support the key skill of communication which is embedded within the National Curriculum. It is recognised as being fundamental to participation and achievement in all curriculum areas, a cross-curricular skill which impacts on all aspects of teaching and learning. It must be considered when planning, teaching, recording, evaluating and assessing and when monitoring and reviewing at both a personal and whole school level.

3. Roles & responsibilities within the Trust

Senior leadership team (SLT)

- To ensure information is made available to staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels, where practicable face to face.
- To ensure that staff have the relevant information available to communicate with colleagues effectively.
- To maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff.
- To keep governors informed of developments and concerns.

All staff

- To communicate regularly with each other, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the classroom and working environment.
- To ensure they are informed and have access to information in order to be as effective as possible in their role and to support their work within the school.
- To use open channels of two-way communication to keep the leadership team and colleagues informed.

Directors & Governors

- To ensure the use of trusted online spaces when communicating between governors or with the school
- Use a variety of communication methods to promote & explain the work of the directors and governors
- Listen to people online to hear what is being said about the school.

4. Parents & Carers: Communication Channels

Effective communications enable us to share our aims and values, through keeping parents and carers well informed about school life. This reinforces the important role that parents play in supporting the school and their child's learning. Children achieve more when schools and parents/carers work together and parents can naturally help more if they know what the school is trying to achieve.

Whilst staff will always seek to establish open and friendly relationships with parents and carers, they will also ensure that the relationships are professional. To this end parents should always be addressed in an appropriate manner acceptable to all involved in the communication.

Letters

The Trust has the following processes in place:

- Letters should be on the relevant school headed paper, dated and the sender clearly shown.
- Receipt of a letter will be acknowledged within two working days either by telephone, email or letter
- A reply should be sent within ten working days.
- Letters must be approved by a member of SLT before issuing.
- Copies of child specific correspondence with parents will be placed on the individual pupil/s files.
- A letter from the Headteacher will be sent to parents when a class teacher has an extended absence from teaching to provide an update on the situation and clarify what procedures have been put in place.
- Each school will use standard templates for letters where possible.

Email

The Trust has the following processes in place:

- Each school within the Trust has an e-mail system which it uses to communicate with parents and carers as well as business Google email account for general two way communication. Not only is it more environmentally friendly as it decreases paper usage, but reduces photocopying and other costs in the school. We urge parents to provide us with a valid email address. Where it is not possible to use Parent Mail, most written correspondence is passed on to families through the child's school/book bag. Any other correspondence will be forwarded through the Royal Mail postage service if deemed appropriate by a member of SLT.
- E-mails should be short and clear and the same care and consideration should be given as when sending a letter written on school headed paper. For all matters not related to general daily administrative queries the communication must be approved by a member of SLT.
- If a parent communicates with the school using email regarding a complaint the sender should be directed to the Trust Complaints policy to ensure the correct process is followed.
- Administrative staff should forward relevant emails from parents to the appropriate member of staff ensuring they are mindful of the escalation process at the individual school.
- All e-mails requiring an answer should be acknowledged within 48 hours (2 school days).
- Emails sent at weekends may not be dealt with until the following working week, and emails sent in holidays cannot guarantee a reply until the new term begins.
- Under no circumstances should staff contact students, parents or conduct any school business using personal email addresses.

Texts

The Trust has the following processes in place:

- Each school within the Trust has a text system which it uses to communicate with parents and carers.
- Parents and carers may be contacted by text to inform or remind them of a particular event e.g. parents evening or for absence matters. Texts will also be used in the event of an emergency e.g. early closure.
- This is a one way communication channel and the school is unable to receive texts from parents and carers.
- Texts must only be sent via the school text system.
- For all matters not related to general daily administrative communication approval must be sought by a member of SLT prior to sending.

Telephone calls

The Trust has the following processes in place:

- The telephone should always be answered in a timely (within 5 rings wherever possible) and professional manner using a standard greeting as devised by the individual school.
- Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem in an academy, where teachers may be teaching full-time and running clubs or working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents and carers may be frustrated 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.
 - o Office staff will not interrupt teaching for staff to answer a telephone call unless it is an emergency.
 - o Urgent calls may be put through to the most appropriate or available person.
 - o Non-urgent calls to class staff should be kept to a minimum at times of the day where teaching

- and learning may be disrupted. This includes before school where lessons are being prepared.
- In a non-emergency messages will be delivered at the end of the teaching session which will cause minimal disturbance e.g. at lunch time or end of the day. A return call by the relevant member of teaching staff will be made within two working days with any follow up action from the outline of the request/query/problem being dealt with within 10 working days. Staff will make a file note recording details of any telephone conversations with a parent or carer. It may be helpful to use the Parental Contact template form found in the Appendix.
- Staff should always tell a member of SLT if a parent contacts them, so that they can be supported, especially if the phone call relates to a complaint.

Conversations in person with parents and carers

The school encourages parents to share any issues about their child at the earliest opportunity. The first point of contact is often with a member of the office team. Staff should be aware of their body language and tone of voice when talking to parents and carers. It is essential that all conversations with parents are conducted in a professional manner.

When difficult conversations are had regarding a child the conversation should always be about the behaviour of the child and not the child as a person.

Only teaching staff should discuss concerns with a parent. All support staff should refer the parent or carer to the most appropriate member of teaching staff to progress.

Teachers should arrange to see parents as soon as possible. Many parents have the opportunity to have a brief word with the teacher when they collect them at the end of the day.

It may be helpful to record serious concerns from parents and carers on the Parental Contact template form found in the Appendix.

Meetings

The Trust has the following processes in place:

- Any parent wishing to meet with a member of staff should contact the school in advance and request a meeting with the member of staff. This request should be responded to within the usual communications protocols and in a timely manner. Parents should not expect to come to the school to talk to a member of staff without an appointment as it cannot be guaranteed that the member of staff will be available.
- If a parent comes to the school without a prior appointment, the member of staff may still be able to meet with them, but there is no expectation for them to do so. Parents (like all visitors) should report to Reception prior to meeting with a member of staff.
- Parents and carers wishing to meet a member of staff should contact the school to make an appointment. **This request should be responded to within two working days.**
- An early morning or late afternoon appointment is not guaranteed but will be accommodated wherever possible and a minimum notice period of 5 working days will be applied in this instance.
- If a meeting with a parent is taking place outside normal school hours, the member of staff must ensure that another colleague is nearby.
- It is perfectly acceptable to call a meeting to a close in order to allow time for further investigation.
- Staff should call a meeting to a close in the event of the parent becoming angry or abusive. The member of staff should report such an incident to a member of SLT immediately. A member of SLT should either accompany the member of staff to a further meeting with the parent or hold it without the original member of staff present.
- A record of the meeting will be taken by the member of staff involved. The Parental Meeting form found in the Appendix may be useful during this process.
- We welcome the presence of any other adult a parent or carer wishes to invite to a school meeting for support or to act as an interpreter. We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to enable a parent or carer with a disability to participate fully in a meeting or to receive and understand a communication.

Parent Consultations

Staff meet with parents early in the Autumn Term in each new school year. Parents will be invited to two parent

consultation meetings per year. These are afternoon or evening meetings and give parents and the class teacher the opportunity to talk through each child's progress.

Parents are allocated a 10 minute time slot; if more time is necessary, staff will be happy to arrange another meeting.

Only one appointment slot of 10 minutes is offered per child. For separated families it is expected that the adults with parental responsibility liaise appropriately regarding attendance at the appointment.

Parents may be invited into school prior to residential visits regarding the planning and content of the visit.

Annual Review meetings (for children on the Special Education Needs register)

As well as bi annual parent evening sessions appropriate staff and parents have an additional meeting of approximately 90 minutes to focus on a pupil's progress and to plan together for future needs.

Parents receive a written report after the meeting, which highlights progress in all curriculum areas as well as social and personal development.

Written Reports

The school will provide an annual written report on their child's progress to parents in the Summer Term. This will include information on pupils' National Curriculum assessment levels, individual skills achieved and maintained and progress made throughout the year.

Parents are invited to feed back on their child's report and progress which will be read by the Headteacher.

School Trips, Visits and Activities

The Trust will endeavour to publish all proposed trips, visits and activities on the respective academy calendar at the start of each academic year wherever possible.

Parents and carers will be notified by letter or email of trips, visits and activities that their child/children may wish to participate in as early as possible, and within at least four weeks of the proposed trip, visit or activity.

Occasionally opportunities arise during the academic year to offer pupils additional trips, visits or activities that were not known or available when the applicable school calendar was published. The school in question will always ensure parents and carers are notified of any additional opportunities for their child as soon as possible to ensure parents and carers have adequate time to plan for such events.

Absences

If a child is going to be absent from school, parents/carers should telephone the school office before 9.30am to advise that the child will not be attending school that day and the reason for this absence. If the school does not receive notification and therefore has no indication of the reason for a child being absent from school, the school office will contact a parent/carer (by telephone, if possible) to find out the reason for the absence.

Please see the individual school Attendance Policy for further information regarding pupil absence procedures.

Emergency Closure

In the event of emergency closure communication will be made to parents and carers via text, email, the school website as well as the school Facebook account, dependant on the type of emergency experienced.

School emergency closures may also be published on the Surrey Local Authority website.

Further information for parents can be found in the Emergency Closure policy and individual school Emergency Plan policies.

School Prospectus

The school prospectus contains a range of specified information to give parents a full picture of provision at our

school. It is available on the school website and hard copies can be provided on request by the school office.

School Website

The Lumen Learning Trust and individual school websites provide an opportunity to share information about themselves as well as promote the school to a wider audience. As part of each school website an app is also available to parents and carers to install which mirrors the content of the website.

It is the responsibility of the Communications Manager to ensure the suite of Lumen websites are maintained in a uniform manner. Some local content will be updated by local Office Managers. Please see Appendix for further clarification on content management.

Social Networking

Staff must not communicate with parents or pupils via social networking sites (such as Facebook) or accept them as their "friends". The exception to this rule would be when school has established their Class Blog, for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Further information can be found with the Trust Social Media Policy.

Newsletters

Newsletters are sent to all parents and carers weekly via email as well as posted on the respective school website. If a parental email address is not provided, a hard copy will be sent out in the child's book bag.

The school newsletter contains general details of school events and activities and we strongly recommend all parents and carers read this document to ensure they are fully aware of school events that may affect their child.

Parent Surveys

The school may distribute surveys from time to time to gather parent and carer views on school issues that directly affect the teaching and learning of their child.

The surveys are not compulsory to complete however the more responses a school receives the more it can be sure it reflects the needs and opinions of its parental community.

Every Summer Term a survey is sent out to measure parent opinion on the school. This is analysed by senior management and governors and this data is used to provide a focus for wellbeing initiatives/school improvement in the school.

Results from surveys will be published in the school newsletter.

Home School Agreement

Having a Home School Agreement is a statutory requirement. Each school's Home School Agreement sets out the school's responsibilities towards pupils, the responsibilities of parents and what the school expects of pupils. It is designed to help achieve a supportive, communicative and effective partnership.

Supporting parents and carers of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Lumen Learning Trust recognises the importance of positive relationships with parents and carers of all students with additional needs. The revised SEND Code of Practice emphasises the importance of positive, supportive attitudes to parents and carers and user-friendly information and procedures. All professionals will make every effort to ensure effective communication with parents and carers.

All staff within Lumen Learning Trust are expected to help parents and carers understand how to contribute effectively to their child's education and will make every effort to ensure that parents understand their rights and responsibilities. All relevant information will be provided in a way for all to understand and respond to.

When students have special educational needs and they are making less than the expected progress or if they are experiencing behavioural difficulties, we would expect to meet with parents and carers more regularly.

5. Schools and outside agencies: Communication Channels

Communication with other schools and outside agencies

We hold information on pupils in our school, and from time to time we are required to pass some of this information to others for educational purposes. Our Privacy Notice for Parents details the types of data we hold, why we hold that data, and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018. Parents have a right to view the information we hold, and we have contact details of the agencies to which our information is passed.

We recognise that children have diverse needs, and we are supported by various agencies and groups of professionals who keep us informed about ways in which these needs may be met in order to help children to participate fully.

Support comes from medical services (such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy), from Educational Psychologists, from health professionals and specialists. It also comes from various welfare-focused services, such as the Surrey Educational Welfare Office, Social Services and Child Protection Units.

We recognise that children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility, and that our academy schools should provide a safe and secure environment.

Further information can be found in the Trust Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice to Parents.

6. Staff: Communication Channels

Effective communication is critical to a well-functioning organisation. The school utilises many different methods of communicating information to staff either digitally or through face to face situations. Engagement with staff is important to the organisation of the school and to the welfare of staff and pupils. These are the main methods that staff can share information.

Written Communications

Written communications should be placed in pigeon holes, in the staffroom, which staff must check daily and clear regularly, or emailed to an individual's work email address.

Reminders or letters to individual parents are sent to classes to be given out by the class teachers and must be given to children the same day. Every class must have a system for distributing letters and other materials to go home with the children.

Email

All staff are issued with a Lumen Learning Trust email account to use for school business. To ensure that each member of staff is up to date with information, staff are expected to check their e-mails regularly throughout the day. The school office receives a large amount of parent communication throughout the day and they are directed not to disturb teachers and TAs during lessons, except in emergency situations.

It is the responsibility of all class teachers to ensure that they check their emails at lunch time and the end of each day. It is also the responsibility of support staff to check their emails regularly and at least daily.

Information and notification of initiatives are communicated through the use of email where appropriate. This is mainly regarding teaching resources, information for all class teachers and support staff and messages from admin staff.

E-mail is a quick, effective way of communicating information; however it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required.

Staff should refer to the Email guidance & etiquette guidelines for further details.

Weekly Diaries and Newsletter

Information concerning what is happening in school during the week is written on the board in the staff room. The daily diary also informs staff of the events of the day.

All staff are provided with an overview of important dates at the beginning of term as well as having access to the shared school calendar within the email system which also holds this information.

All staff are expected to check the various forms of information daily and note dates and events that affect them.

The weekly newsletter to parents and carers must be read by every member of staff to ensure that they are fully aware of what is being shared with parents. This newsletter is emailed to all staff and members of the Governing Body.

Meetings

Each school has an integrated programme of meetings to facilitate involvement of staff, both formal and informal.

Each school holds regular whole staff and year group meetings, which all relevant staff members are expected to attend. The timetable of the staff meeting schedule will be communicated to staff at the beginning of each term.

All formal meetings are planned, structured and notes are taken. Members are 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 leaders' reflection on priorities, activities and future plans. For all other meetings notes should be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff.

All TA minutes are kept and distributed by the senior member of staff responsible for the TA body.

Staff Surveys

The Trust and each school within it will from time to time distribute staff surveys to measure staff opinion on possible school initiatives. This is analysed by senior management and this data is used to provide a focus for school initiatives/improvement.

Wellbeing Committee

Each school may have in place a staff wellbeing committee which meets each term to discuss staff issues and how the school can support staff wellbeing. Representatives from each area of the school workforce attend each meeting.

Induction & Staff Handbook

A comprehensive induction process is carried out for all new staff including mentoring, supply of all policies and procedures, site tours and the opportunity to feedback at the end of their induction programme to ensure inductions are as rigorous and value added as possible.

All staff can access a copy of the staff handbook giving information to staff on many aspects of their role as well as rules and procedures that operate within their school. Copies are available from their School Business Manager or within the individual school staff shared network drive.

Professional Development

Every member of staff is part of the annual performance review process to ensure routes to professional development are recognised and actioned as well as ensuring that whole school objectives are effectively supported. A meeting with the line manager responsible for the role is held, typically of 60 minutes duration and achievements, goals and next steps are recorded using our online software tool, BlueSky.

Identifying training needs of staff is vital to ensure continued progress for our pupils. Staff are equally responsible for identifying their own training needs and can apply to Senior Management at any stage to discuss relevant courses. This may be through the performance management structure or at any other appropriate time.

Senior Management Support

Senior Management are available to provide support and advice to all staff. Unless the need is of an urgent nature, an appointment should be made with the appropriate person.

Mobile phones

Personal mobile phones must not be used during the school day, they must not be on view during the school day or when in contact with the children.

Mobile phones must never be used to photograph children. Only school cameras or iPads are permitted for this.

During trips and off site provision, staff must ensure they can be contacted by mobile phone at all times; the school has mobile phones available for this purpose. During off-site visits staff may use their own mobile phone to contact school, but never parents, in the case of an emergency.

Please refer to the Educational Visits policy and guidelines for detailed guidance.

Investigating incidents

When investigating an incident involving pupils, academy members of staff speak to all students involved and ask them to complete a written account. We will fully co-operate with any police investigation that may occur and provide information to the police upon request, respecting the General Data Protection Regulation at all times.

Talking to Pupils

All staff are expected to communicate with pupils following agreed procedures and the Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidelines.

Two way communications between students and staff is an important aspect of school life. Lumen Learning Trust and its schools welcomes and encourages students to engage in conversation with all members of staff within the school.

When communicating with a pupil the member of staff should:

- Acknowledge the setting where the communication is taking place and adapt accordingly
- Talk with respect and empathy
- Never use a raised voice
- Avoid gesticulation
- Be clear and unambiguous
- Listen
- Wherever possible, two members of staff should be present if there is a need to discipline a child.

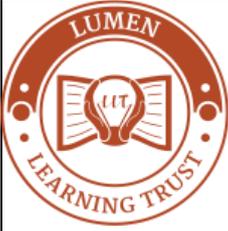
When communicating with a member of staff, a pupil should be encouraged to:

- Stand in front of the member of staff they are speaking with and make eye contact
- Address the member of staff using their formal name e.g. Mrs Smith, Miss, Sir etc, never referring to a member of staff by their first name
- Be respectful, do not talk over, raise voice or walk away before the conversation has ended.

APPENDIX A: Parental Contact Form

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p><i>[Insert School Name]</i></p> <p>Parental Contact Form</p> | |  |
| Parent Name | | |
| Learner Name | | |
| Relationship to Learner | | |
| Learner Year & Form Group | | |
| Reason for Phone Call: | | |
| <p>Details of Discussion: <i>Continued overleaf (tick if appropriate)</i></p> | | |
| Outcome of Conversation: | | |
| <p>Further Intervention Required: Yes No (Circle as appropriate)</p> | | |
| Staff member taking notes | | |
| Date | | |
| Copies to | | |

APPENDIX B: Parental Meeting Form

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>[Insert Academy Name]</i></p> <p>Parental Meeting Form</p> |  |
|---|---|

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Child Name(s) | |
| Class | |

People present:

Reason for Meeting:

Details of Discussion: *Continued overleaf (tick if appropriate)*

| Action/s to be taken (list below, include person responsible & timescale) | Agreed? |
|---|---------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Staff member taking notes | |
| Date | |
| Copies to | |

APPENDIX C: Website content management

Central information flow

In order to ensure the broader style and values of the Trust are interwoven through individual school websites the Communications Manager will maintain the sitemap for each school website. Having site layouts that mirror one another increases transparency and ease of access for visitors to any of the Trust websites.

Unless stated below under the Local responsibilities, the Communications Manager will maintain the lead in information on each sub-page of a school website to ensure consistency and relevance.

The following specific information will be collated and published by the Communications Manager with input and guidance from local Headteachers and School Business Managers where required.

- Trust wide and local school policies
- National Assessment Pupil results
- Ofsted reports
- Pupil Premium and Sports Premium reports
- Recruitment & Vacancies
- Special Educational Needs
- Admissions

Local information flow

As well as the similarities that are shared by schools in the Trust it is also recognised that each school has its own idiosyncrasies. This is what gives each school its unique character that children and parents readily identify with.

As such, there will be some information specific to a school which would be most effectively maintained by each local Office Manager with input and guidance from their Headteacher or School Business Manager as required.

The Communications Manager will work closely with each Office Manager to ensure the information is timely, relevant and consistent with the broader themes and style of Trust wide communications.

- Class timetables & curriculum frameworks
- Family Handbook
- Afterschool clubs
- Termly Lunch menus
- Home School Agreement
- Open day dates
- Term dates
- School Day timings
- Uniform
- Online payments
- News & Events – newsletter, news articles
- School calendar
- Who's Who
- Upload of examples of child learning
- Online form creation
- Photo galleries
- PTA pages