



The **Ongar** Academy

Title	Communications Policy
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Communications Policy

Enquiries & comments

Any enquiries and comments about this publication may be made to:

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Aim

In order to communicate effectively with each other, with our students, with their carers and with other members of the wider school community, we need to ensure that communications between all members of the school community are clear, transparent, professional, timely and appropriate. The aim of this policy is to summarise the key methods of communication and how best they should be used to enhance relationships with all major stakeholders.

Objectives

All communications should:

- keep staff, students, carers, governors and other stakeholders well informed
- be open, honest, transparent, 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
- take account of all relevant school policies

Internal Communication

Meetings

There is a programme of both formal and informal meetings to facilitate communication with staff. The school calendar stipulates the **minimum** standard of frequency of these.

All formal meetings should be structured and minuted or have notes taken if more appropriate. It is expected that these meetings will be attended by teaching staff as part of their directed time commitment and by support staff in line with their job descriptions. All faculty meetings should include standing items which will be named via the FL meetings at the beginning of each academic year.

Meetings should be used when seeking to promote discussion and debate.

Face – to – Face Communications

Should normally be used for sensitive, serious and/or personal issues.

Written Communications

These are placed in pigeon holes, in the staff room, which staff should check at least twice daily. Phone messages taken by office staff will also be placed in pigeon holes except in cases of emergency.

Staff Briefings

Staff Briefings take place on a daily basis from 8.30 am to 8.40 am. Whole Staff Briefings take place on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday, there is a year team briefing and on Thursday, there is a faculty/subject team briefing. Messages should be important and should not take the place of other means of communication (in particular e-mail/circulation of written notes/documents which should be used to convey detailed information). Staff

briefing notes are available in the staff briefing book and will be emailed to all; staff who have missed briefing through absence of any kind are responsible for ensuring that they are up to date with briefing information.

Bulletin

The bulletin is published every Friday for the following week and a copy is placed on the noticeboard. All staff should check the bulletin and the information it contains.

E-mail

Email is a quick, effective way of communicating information. However it does not replace face to face meetings where some discussion is required. To ensure that each member of staff is using e-mail effectively, the following guidelines should prove useful:

- Consider a telephone call – would this be more appropriate?
- Do not copy in more individuals than required.
- Appropriate language is important in the use of e-mail; e-mails should be proof read in order to check tone and suitability.
- Deadlines should be realistic.
- Teaching staff and support staff working at a computer should check their computer daily. Support staff, without automatic access to a computer, will check less frequently, but once a week as the absolute minimum.
- Subject Headings should be used in order to allow emails to be found and filed easily.
- Please avoid emails titled 'for the attention of the teachers of xxxx', take the time to identify in SIMS which teachers are responsible for certain individuals.
- Do not use e-mail to avoid face to face contact.
- Although it may not be intended by the originator, e-mail may be made more public than intended. The wording of all e-mails should, therefore, be carefully thought through and confidential information should only be circulated by e-mail rarely and with extreme caution.

External Communication

Face – to – Face Communications

Individual meetings should normally be used for sensitive, serious and/or personal issues. Members of staff can request that someone else be present at a meeting with carers. Staff should always request the presence of a line manager at a meeting where sensitive issues are to be discussed. It is strongly recommended that members of staff should not see students of the opposite gender alone in a non-public space.

Letters

Staff will endeavour to reply to carers' letters as quickly as possible. Any letter of complaint should be referred to the HT or relevant FL for advice.

Letters to carers or students must be processed through the Admin Office which has checking and filing systems in place; these will include seeking the approval by the

relevant member of SLT before posting, circulating copies to relevant staff and placing copies on student files.

E-mail

Carers are increasingly using e-mail as a method of communicating with staff.

Currently, this is at the discretion of individual staff but copies of e-mails to carers should be sent to the relevant line manager (e.g. FL, SL).

Staff (school supplied) e-mail addresses may be passed to students at the discretion of individual members of staff but copies of all e-mail correspondence (both to and from) must be kept filed under an appropriate folder for retrieval if needed. All e-mails to students should be copied to a relevant line manager where appropriate.

All e-mail communication with both carers and students is covered by the same guidelines as present for internal communication. (See above.)

All e-mail communication should be via the school provided e-mail addresses. Under no circumstances should staff personal e-mail addresses be given to students.

It is strongly recommended that staff should **never** use personal e-mail addresses for communication relating to school issues.

It is recommended that any queries should be addressed by a courtesy phone call within 24 hours in the first instance and then completed within 48 hours as outlines below.

Telephone Calls

When carers contact staff by telephone or by visiting Reception, it is recommended that a response should be made within 24 hours, in the first instance, and finally concluded within 48 hours. This response does not have to be from the teaching staff themselves and could be a courtesy phonecall arranged through the admin team. Where matters take longer to resolve; carers need to be updated about progress regularly.

Social Networking Sites/Blogs etc

It is recommended that for their own safety and security, staff should not add students/ex-students or carers as 'friends' on social networking sites such as Facebook. Staff should consult where necessary to ensure that they are aware of how to retain their on-line profile as private. They have a duty to ensure they check this thoroughly on whatever social media site they are accessing. If staff wish to contact students or ex-students, use of the school provided e-mail system is highly recommended only.

When establishing a new social media account on behalf of the school (e.g. Twitter), staff should inform the SLT member responsible for the communications policy so that they can 'follow'. When posting to this account, all necessary care and attention should be paid so that the image of the school is not called into disrepute. This could place the member of staff at risk of disciplinary action (please see disciplinary policy).

Staff should ensure that photos and commentary are appropriate to the audience for which they are intended whilst also remembering that posting images and comments on social

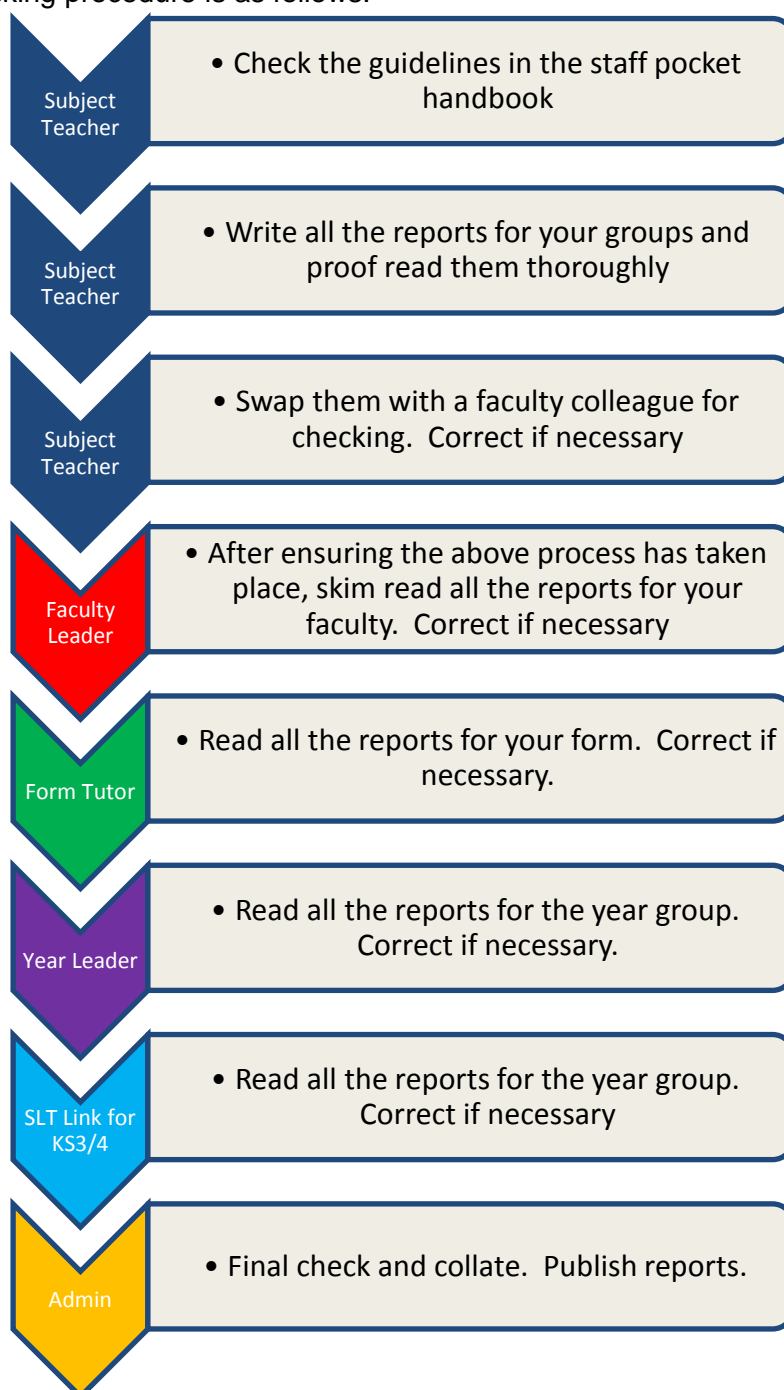
media is on a worldwide basis and cannot be deleted or retrieved easily once posted. The photo exception list (available in the T drive) should be checked BEFORE posting so that student images are not used if carers have requested this.

Written Reports and Tracking

As part of the school's normal assessment routines, carers will be communicated with regularly with regard to student progress. Carers will also be consulted upon progress once a year on the identified Parents' consultation evenings.

Report Checking

The report checking procedure is as follows:



Website

Documents posted on website are in the public domain. Appropriate language should be used and all documents should be proof read and, therefore, grammatically accurate and without spelling errors, and should be checked for their suitability for the relevant audience. Letters and formal school documents are subject to the same processes as described in the Letters section under External Communication.

Newsletters and general letters

General letters to carers or students and newsletter entries must be processed through the Admin Office which has checking and filing systems in place; these will include seeking the approval of the relevant member of SLT before posting.

Signs Around the School/Other Communication

It is important that signs and other forms of communication are subject to appropriate proof reading. Please see the Office Manager if help with this is required. Any signs should include the appropriate mission statement footer and ideally the logo if deemed appropriate.

Data Protection and FOI Acts

All information and correspondence should be filed in the relevant files. All such information is subject to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and, if requested, referral should be made to the appropriate school policies on these issues.

The Ongar Academy and its Governing Body are committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness, and will abide by all relevant equality legislation.