



Communications Policy

Including Complaints Procedure (Page 4)

November 2018

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Communication Protocol

Creating a supportive partnership with parents, carers, families and stakeholders

Effective communication skills that build a positive, supportive partnership with parents, carers, families develop as a result of sending direct, complete, consistent, relevant, congruent messages; actively listening and positively using feedback received.

Rationale

We want all students, their families/carers and the local community to be happy with the education we provide, and our staff do their best to facilitate this within reason.

We recognise the importance of clear, consistent and effective communication with all stakeholders and are committed to being open and accessible for all those who have an interest in the Academy. We welcome feedback and comments.

The key stakeholders are parents/carers and students and this document addresses the main ways in which the Academy ensures effective two-way communication between home, the Academy and other appropriate partners.

Communications can take a variety of forms: verbal (through meetings or by telephone), written (through letters, notes in planners, notes on Go4Schools) or via School Comms, attendance texts and email.

Effective telephone communication can sometimes be a problem, where teachers may be teaching full time and running clubs or otherwise working with students at lunchtime or after school. Parents may be exasperated 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.

For this reason the Academy has been active in encouraging use of email, with staff email contacts being publicised regularly in correspondence and all parents/carers being encouraged to provide an email address for prompt and effective communication.

Surveys indicate that the majority of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the two-way communications they have with the Academy. However, this does not mean that the Academy always gets things right and this document aims to clarify the parameters within which we operate to ensure that communication is carried out with all stakeholders and interested parties effectively, consistently and clearly. Parents also have a Go4Schools login to view progress of their child.

Aims

1. To constantly strive to improve the quality of service provided to students by ensuring that effective communication and consultation takes place between the Academy, parents/carers, students and other stakeholders.
2. To work together to develop each student's personal qualities of Character, Creativity and Confidence to equip them with the skills and qualifications to make a success of themselves in adult life.

Communication

Communication between the Academy and parents/carers operates in the following ways:

1. Prospective parents are invited to an Open Evening in the Autumn term preceding the year of entry to the school. All prospective parents receive a school prospectus, a tour of the Academy, a presentation by the Principal and an opportunity to interact with staff and students in all departments. Daytime tours are offered should parents/carers be unable to attend the evening.
2. Prospective parents are invited, along with students, to an induction evening in July where the main channels of communication are outlined and information about the school is presented.
3. *Parents are invited to a 'Year 7 Welcome to the Year Ahead Evening' in the September of Year 7 to meet the student's form tutor and review how the student has settled into the school.*
4. Parents are invited to attend a Parents' Evening each year to review the overall progress of the student.
5. Parents of students in Year 11 and Year 12 are invited to attend a 'Welcome to the Year Ahead' meeting in the September of those years to gain an insight into the year ahead.
6. The Student Planner is used as a key means of communication between parents/carers and the Academy and this planner is fully explained at the induction evening for new parents in July and to all pupils as they start. All students will be rewarded for working to the required climate for learning CODES through the Academy 'stamps' system. For meeting all of the CODES, students will be awarded a stamp which will be recorded in their planners by the end of each lesson. If a student does not meet all the CODES, a stamp will not be awarded and a consequence will follow.
7. Go4Schools provides parents/carers with access to a range of information relating to their child's progress, behaviour, homework and timetable information. Homework will take a range of tasks and timescales between and within subjects in order to maximise student progress. They can range from short practice tasks to long term projects; from using a website to producing a model and will be set using Go4Schools. However, students are more than welcome to use their planners to record the information as well. We value homework here at Hazeley and do set detentions when it is not completed and support students to complete it so it is important that your child speaks with their form tutor and teachers if they have concerns.
8. School Comms is the Academy's main messaging service used to communicate with parents/carers via email and also text message (attendance related).
9. Staff will also communicate on an individual level via email from their Academy email accounts.
10. The Academy website includes a weekly update from the Principal as well as providing a calendar of events and access to a range of Academy documents such as policy documents; key information; curriculum specifics and extra-curricular activities.
11. Key email addresses are available on the Academy website – www.thehazeleyacademy.com

Service Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder correspondence to be acknowledged within two working days• Our communication will consistently follow this protocol• Staff will act in a professional manner• Visitors without appointment are not guaranteed to be seen

Concerns

Parents' Evenings, Welcome to the Year Ahead Meetings, School Comms, Go4Schools and Open Evenings help to keep parents/carers up-to-date with what is happening and how students are getting on at the Academy.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of the Academy that you are worried about or you may be unhappy about the way in which a member of staff has dealt with your child.

Usually we can deal with any problems informally, but unfortunately this is not always possible and you may wish to make a formal complaint. Whatever the issue, please come and talk to us so that we can sort it out.

We are committed to providing an excellent education at the Academy and maintaining a good reputation in the local community. The Principal, staff and Governors take all concerns and complaints very seriously and we will do everything we can to ensure that you and your children are happy with our Academy.

Our promise to you:

- Your concern will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence
- Your concern will be considered thoroughly and fairly
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage
- You will receive an apology if we have made a mistake
- You will be told what we are going to do to put matters right
- This procedure applies to any matter (other than matters relating to admissions and exclusions, which have their own processes) which has been raised with the Academy as a matter of concern

Communicating a concern:

1. In any community misunderstandings arise or actions are taken which might be felt to go against the spirit of fairness and common sense established in the Academy. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about Academy policies or procedures, the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff or Governors and the standards of teaching and learning. It is important to move swiftly to prevent the escalation of a minor problem into a major incident.
2. Do not hesitate to contact the Academy if you are uneasy or dissatisfied about something. It is important not to let little concerns build up into serious mistrust or irritation. We are as keen to see things run smoothly as you are.
3. When you contact the Academy, begin as informally as possible - say what concerns you have and try to find out the facts. You will be in a much better position to know if you have grounds for/need to make a complaint when you are in possession of all the facts. We may be able to give an explanation or fill in details which answer your concerns. Do not rely solely on a child's account or on information from other parent/carers.
4. A telephone call or email is better than a letter, and a temperate letter is better than an ultimatum or threat of action. We welcome telephone calls and emails from parent/carers who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint.
5. Staff are not available to meet with stakeholders without a scheduled meeting. This is due to teaching and staff management commitments. We request that initial contact is made by telephone or email. If the matter is not resolved by this the next step would be a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

6. If a stakeholder approaches a member of the Governors directly, the Chair of the Governors will direct that person to take the complaint to the Principal. In circumstances where the complaint is about the Principal, it may be appropriate for the Governor to make contact with the Chair of Governors.

Contacting the Academy

7. Talk to the right person. It may be tempting to "go straight to the top" but putting the problem to the Principal often escalates something that could have been better resolved at a lower level and will often be referred to the relevant member of staff. The reception team can help direct your enquiry to the correct person.
8. Who to contact?

Subject Related:

If your concern is related to a subject matter, your son or daughter's class teacher would be your first line of approach, or should your concern not be resolved with them, contact the head of subject and then Director of Faculty.

Pastoral Care:

If your concern is related to pastoral care, or discipline beyond concerns in one subject area, your first line of approach is your child's Form Tutor and, overseeing their work, the Progress Leader for a particular year group.

Care and Welfare:

Overseeing care and welfare in the Academy are the Senior Deputy Principal and Deputy Principal for Pastoral. These are the people who have immediate and overall responsibility for your child's pastoral care, discipline and involvement in Academy life. They are senior members of staff and members of the Academy's senior leadership team. In most cases, they will be best informed about your child and will be best placed to resolve problems.

Community:

If you do not have a child that attends the Academy or your enquiry is not covered above; please contact the reception team who will direct you to the correct member of staff.

The Academy's expectation of parents/carers and other stakeholders

9. The Academy seeks to build a partnership with parent/carers in the education of their children and with the local community.

This Communication Policy sets out how the Academy will deal with your concerns. We would ask that, for your part, you:

Parents/Carers

- Do not believe everything you hear, even from your own children – things are often not entirely the way they are reported (by children or by other parent/carers); children very much see things from their own point of view and important elements, circumstances and nuances of the story are often omitted in the version told to parent/carers.
- Find out what your child is like in the Academy - you may be surprised; children can be very different people from the way they are at home - sometimes for better and sometimes for worse;
- Do not involve your child inappropriately in your complaint - it is important that the child sees parent/carers and the Academy working together to resolve differences or difficulties; the child should not be placed in a position where s/he appears impertinent, insolent, disobedient or acts

inappropriately; remember that directly countermanding a teacher's instruction or requirement is likely to make matters worse and bring confrontation rather than resolution.

- Take seriously and report without delay any concerns or suspicions of bullying.

All Stakeholders

- Trust the Academy to resolve matters according to the aims and methods stated in this document.
- Seek information from the Academy where you need it
- Consider what the Academy has to say
- Disclose full and frank information which would help the Academy to resolve situations with integrity and justice

Unreasonable or Unacceptable Communication

The Academy has a duty of care to all visitors, students and staff and does not accept unreasonable or offensive language.

Face to Face:

We politely request all visitors to the Academy consider their behaviour when on site. In cases of unreasonable behaviour a member of staff may advise the visitor that their behaviour is unacceptable and that they will be asked to leave if the behaviour does not stop.

Communication by telephone: Staff will end telephone calls if they feel the caller is being aggressive, abusive or offensive. The employee dealing with the caller has the right to make this decision and will advise that the call will be ended if the behaviour does not stop.

Unmanageable demands: Although not always intentionally, stakeholders may make what we consider unmanageable demands due to the amount of information they seek; the nature and scale of service they expect; or, the number of approaches they make. Examples of this include demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale; insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, excessive telephone calls and duplicate requests to more than one member of staff.

We will consider this contact to be unacceptable and/or unreasonable if it starts to impact substantially upon workload to the disadvantage of other stakeholders or Academy service delivery.

What you can expect of the Academy

10. You can expect to receive a response to your communication within a minimum of 48 hours (two working days).

11. You can expect staff to be professional. This may sometimes mean we do not agree with you and must put forward a view or make a decision that you may not like - but we will always explain our reasons.

12. Should your concern involve your child at the Academy, they will be involved only if the complaint directly and personally concerns them. Parent/Carers are sometimes worried that if they complain there will be adverse consequences for their child. The Academy is committed to ensuring that this is never the case.

13. You can expect members of staff to treat the complaint professionally and with appropriate confidentiality.

Anonymous complaints

14. Anonymous complaints are unhelpful and will not usually be acted upon.

Hazeley Formal Complaint Procedure

It is a precondition to the operation of the formal complaints policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way consistent with the Academy's Behaviour Code.

The Principal, Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Standards, Personalisation and Curriculum Development Committee shall have discretion to not allow a formal complaint to be pursued unless this precondition has been met.

We have adopted a formal procedure for dealing with complaints which have not been resolved following the informal route:

Stage 1

1. The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Principal via the Principal's Office Assistant giving concise details of the nature of the complaint and the desired outcome.
2. The Academy will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 7 working days of receipt, and the Principal will consult with those directly involved, and aim to deal with the complaint within 14 working days of the receipt of the formal letter of complaint. Senior staff will be involved as appropriate at this level.
3. The Principal or a senior member of staff may also meet with the complainant and, following any necessary investigation or actions provide a written response to the complaint.
4. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be advised of the next stage which is to have the complaint heard before a panel.

Stage 2

5. If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 1 they will then be invited to write to the Chair of Governors (at the Academy address) requesting a panel hearing stating the precise reasons they are not satisfied and the desired outcome.
6. The request for a panel hearing must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, within 7 working days of the decision in Stage 1 of the complaint being notified to parents. A panel hearing will be convened for the majority of complaints not capable of stage 1 resolution. The Chair of Governors retains the discretion not to move to stage 2 when the complaint concerns agreed Academy policies, procedure or is clearly vexatious.
7. The Chair of Governors will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint, within 21 working days of receipt of the notification.
8. The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and the running of the Academy.
9. Stakeholders may attend and be accompanied by a witness at a panel hearing if they wish.
10. The panel will also consider the Academy's response and may require further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
11. The panel will aim to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible, normally within 7 working days after the panel hearing.

12. The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and these will be sent to the complainant, the Principal and where relevant, the person complained about. This will normally be within 21 working days of the hearing.

Support

13. At any stage of the complaints procedure, stakeholders are welcome to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved in the complaint.
14. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for the Academy to engage in meetings to which stakeholders bring legal representatives or advisors.
15. The Academy will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious”. This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint and is seeking to annoy, or that a complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issue. Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the Principal and Chair of Governors reserve the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious” and to determine that the matter is now concluded.

Education Funding Agency

The Education Funding Agency also considers some complaints about Academy schools. They can be contacted at:

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints) Education Funding Agency
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH