



# Communications Policy

Approved by the Governing Body: 18 May 2016



**ACTON HIGH SCHOOL**  
CENTRE FOR MEDIA ARTS AND APPLIED LEARNING

## **Acton High School Communications Policy**

### **Introduction**

This policy sets out:

1. The conduct expected of staff, students and governors in respect of the information they transmit related to Acton High School via publicly-accessible media
2. The expectations parents/carers can have of their communications with Acton High School
3. The expectations Acton High School has of parents/carers in their communications with the school.

### **The Conduct of staff, students and governors**

#### Social Media

Acton High School recognises that we live in an era when the ability of individuals to communicate easily and instantly to large audiences has never been greater. The proliferation of social media and opportunities to comment in fora, alongside mass access to electronic handheld devices, has transformed individuals' ability to share information, images and opinions. The school itself utilises such media in its communications activities.

While the school has no wish to curtail staff, students' or governors' use of such media, it does expect that they do not bring the school into disrepute in any of their communications. In case of doubt and in specific instances guidance should be sought from the Headteacher, but as a general guide:

1. Staff and governors should refrain from publishing any defamatory or abusive material about the school and its staff, students and parents/carers or governors.
2. Staff and governors should not publish any material that is in conflict with the framework of professional standards and ethics within which they perform their roles.
3. Staff and governors should not publish any material that is at odds with the ethos of the school.
4. Staff and governors should refrain from publishing any material that identifies individual students on any personal social media platforms.
5. Staff should not have an online relationship or online contact with a student or ex-student that they could not appropriately have offline.
6. Staff who have any concerns re the online relationships that any of their colleagues are having with students or ex-students must report these concerns to the school's Safeguarding Officer.
7. Staff must not store images of students on personal devices – all images and videos featuring students must be downloaded onto the school network as soon as possible and then deleted from personal devices.

8. Students are expected to exercise the same judgement on social media as they do in everyday life; the standard the school expects is that students at the school who are identifiable as such behave according to the school's expectations of conduct. Unacceptable conduct includes cyberbullying and the posting of abusive and/or defamatory material relating to other members of the school community.

### Contact with Mass Media

From time to time the school will be contacted by journalists or other media professionals seeking information or comment about stories they are reporting. Staff and governors should not provide comment to any journalists or other media professionals on any issue relating to Acton High School without the express permission of the Headteacher. In instances where a journalist contacts a member of staff or governor directly to request comment, they should be referred on to the Headteacher or Communications Officer.

### Contact with Other Stakeholders

Staff and Governors are expected to maintain high standards of professional conduct in their communications with other stakeholders (e.g. members of the local community, local business owners). The school's Code of Conduct for Staff clarifies the expectations of staff in relation to some key areas of communication – e.g. representing the school to others.

### **What Parents and Carers can expect from Acton High School**

Parents/carers will be proactively contacted by Acton High for a number of different reasons, ranging from communications about their child's individual conduct or progress, to notifications of school closures, to information about forthcoming events and news. Parents/carers can expect that staff will consistently communicate with them in a professional and respectful way.

The medium of these communications and the timing of each will vary according to both the nature of what is being communicated and any circumstances particular to the information being communicated. However, as a general guide, parents/carers should expect communications according to the table below.

<b>Communication</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Arrangements for start and end of term	Approximately 10 school days before occurrence	Printed letter sent home with student SMS or Email via ParentMail
Student Progress Report	Received at least 48 hours before Parents' Evening	Printed report with covering letter emailed or posted home, or made available in PDF format on My Child at School

<b>Communication</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Notification of half- or full-day school closures	Approximately 5-6 school days before occurrence	Printed letter sent home with student Featured in half-termly newsletters SMS or Email via ParentMail
Notifications/reminders of Year group specific events for parents/carers and carers (Year Ahead Evenings, Parents/carers' Evenings, Year 9 Options Evening, etc)	At least 7 school days before occurrence	Printed letter sent home with student SMS or Email via ParentMail
Notifications/reminders of school events or trips (e.g. Sports Day, International Day and school productions	At least one week before the event	SMS or Email via ParentMail Paper copies sometimes sent
Publication of school newsletters	When they are published	SMS or Email via ParentMail Paper copies sometimes sent
Staff response to emails or phone messages	Within 3 school days of receipt (the initial response may not be a full response if the parent/carer's request, query or concern is complex and requires investigation)	Phone call or email to the parent/carer
Tutor's response to notes in school planners	Within 3 school days of the regular school planner check for that tutor group (the initial response may not be a full response if the parent/carer's request, query or concern is complex and requires investigation)	Phone call, email or note in school planner to the parent/carer

## **The school's response to complaints**

Staff will respond to complaints from parents/carers promptly and fairly, and in accordance with the Acton High School Complaints Policy, available from the school office or on the school website: <http://www.actonhighschool.co.uk/School-Policy>

## **What Acton High expects of Parents and Carers**

Parents/carers can aid communication between home and school in a number of ways:

1. Ensure that Acton High School has up-to-date contact details, including a mobile telephone number and email address for at least one parent or carer of every child. Email and text messages are a fast, economic and reliable way for school to contact home.
2. Check regularly with their child to see whether they have been given any printed communications to convey to parents/carers. Letters and newsletters sent home in printed format are sometimes forgotten or lost.
3. Before contacting the school directly, check the school website for the information they are seeking. The school publishes information about key events and timings for parents/carers on both the front page of the website and in the 'Parents/carers' section.
4. When seeking to speak to a specific member of staff in person, contact the school to arrange an appointment before coming in. The strictly timetabled nature of the school day means that staff are very rarely able to see parents/carers or carers who have not made an appointment.
5. When in communication with school staff and other stakeholders (e.g. Governors), be respectful in manner and use of language.
6. Check the school planner regularly for messages from staff.