



SUAT Communication Policy

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Staffordshire University Academies Trust

Trust Communication & Response Expectations Policy

Staffordshire University Academies Trust is committed to fostering open, respectful, and positive communication between schools and parents/carers. Effective communication is central to building strong partnerships that support pupils' wellbeing, achievement, and personal development.

This policy sets out how the Trust, and its academies, will promote positive school-to-parent /carer communication, celebrate success, and encourage constructive feedback, including compliments.

1. Purpose

This policy sets clear, consistent expectations for home–school communication across the Trust, including how parents/carers contact the Trust and our academies, how we respond, and when staff are expected to engage. It aims to:

- Support strong partnerships with families, ensuring that parents/carers feel informed, valued and listened to
- Protect staff wellbeing and working time
- Ensure communication routes are safe, recorded and consistent, supporting trust and collaborating between schools and families
- Reduce misunderstandings about response times, especially evenings/weekends (or out of working hours, recognising that different staff have different working hours?)
- Promote a culture of positive, respectful, and professional communication
- Encourage regular recognition of pupils', staff, and school achievements
- Provide clear routes for sharing compliments and positive feedback
- Support consistency of communication practice across the Trust

This policy does not replace the Trust's Complaints Policy but works alongside it by supporting clear and effective communication strategies and early, informal resolution of concerns before they escalate to formal complaints.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Trust schools (first, primary, and secondary)
- All staff, volunteers, and trustees
- All parents/carers and anyone contacting the school, including about a pupil

3. Core Principles

1. The school office is the first point of contact for all general communication.
2. Staff will communicate via Trust-approved systems only.
3. Where there are published timescales for responding to communications, we will endeavour to respond within these timescales during working days. Where there are no

published timescales, we will respond within a reasonable timescale based on the nature of the communication.

4. Staff are not expected to read or reply to messages outside their working hours.
5. Communication must remain respectful, courteous and professional at all times.
6. Concerns should be raised promptly and informally where possible, in line with the SUAT Complaints Policy, which encourages early resolution at school level.
7. All communication with parents/carers should be:
 - Respectful – courteous, inclusive, and professional in tone
 - Clear – using plain language and avoiding unnecessary jargon
 - Timely – shared at appropriate points and within agreed timescales
 - Balanced – recognising success as well as addressing concerns
 - Consistent – aligned with Trust values and policies
 - Child-centred – focused on pupils’ best interests

4. Approved Communication Channels (and what to use them for)

4.1 School Office

Use the school office for:

- Absence/Attendance, late messages, transport arrangements
- Medication, medical updates, appointments
- Clubs, trips, payments, uniform, school meals
- Requesting a meeting/call with a teacher/member of staff
- Concerns that need triage to the right person
- Administrative questions and routine queries

Why the office first?

- Messages are logged and directed quickly
- Cover is available if a teacher is teaching or absent
- Concerns are directed appropriately in line with Trust procedures
- It supports early, informal resolution of issues and queries before they become complaints

4.2 Parent/Carer-School Communication Systems

Parent/Carer-School communication systems are used as a convenience channel, not a 24/7 messaging service.

Examples of communication systems used within our academies are Telephone, Email, ClassDojo, MyCAS and Parent Pay.

Appropriate uses (where enabled by the school):

- Whole-class updates, reminders, celebration of learning
- Non-urgent questions that do not involve sensitive personal data
- Informal queries

Not appropriate for:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Urgent changes (e.g. same-day collection arrangements)
- Formal complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction
- High-sensitivity matters (health, court orders, social care, allegations)
- Sharing personal information

Messages may not be seen until the next working day. Staff are not expected to respond during evenings, weekends, holidays or otherwise outside of their usual working hours.

4.3 Direct email to staff

Some schools may publish staff email addresses (there is a requirement for the name of the staff member who manages queries from parents and other members of the public to be displayed on the website, typically the office manager); however:

- Parents/Carers should still contact the office first unless directed otherwise
- Emails are monitored during working hours only
- Sensitive or complex concerns should be routed via the office to ensure they are recorded and managed in line with the SUAT Complaints Policy, where applicable

4.4 Telephone / meetings

- Please call the main school number and ask the office to pass on a message or arrange a call/meeting.
- Teachers will not be interrupted during teaching time, except in exceptional circumstances.

5. Response standards (Trust-wide expectation)

Typical response times (working days only)

- Office acknowledgement/triage: within 1 working day
- Response from the appropriate member of staff: within 2 working days
- Complex matters: acknowledged within 2 working days, with an indicative timescale

Messages received outside working hours will be treated as received on the next working day.

6. Safeguarding and urgent concerns

6.1 Safeguarding

If you have a safeguarding concern, do not use Parent/Carer-School Communication Systems or social media. Contact the school office and ask for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL.

Safeguarding concerns sit outside the complaints process and must be handled immediately in line with statutory guidance and the Trust Safeguarding Policy.

6.2 Emergencies

If a child or another person is in immediate danger which requires a response from the emergency services, call 999.

If you need to make the school aware of an emergency, call the school office.

7. Concerns and complaints

The SUAT Complaints Policy defines:

- A concern as an expression of worry or doubt where reassurance or clarification is sought
- A complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken or lack of action

7.1 Raising concerns

Most concerns can and should be resolved informally by:

- Contacting the school office
- Speaking with the relevant member of staff or a senior leader

Early communication supports quicker resolution and avoids escalation.

7.2 Formal complaints

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, parents/carers may raise a formal complaint in line with the SUAT Complaints Policy. This includes:

- Complaints about staff being addressed initially by the Headteacher/Principal
- Complaints about the Headteacher being referred to the Chair of the Local Academy Council
- Complaints about Trust leaders or Trustees being referred to the Chair of Trustees

Formal complaints should be made via the school or Trust office, not through ClassDojo or informal messaging.

8. Professional boundaries and safer working practice (staff expectations)

Staff must:

- Use Trust-approved platforms only
- Avoid personal email accounts, phone numbers or social media contact with parents/carers or for other work purposes, following the Social Media Policy and Staff Code of Conduct
- Keep communication professional, factual and proportionate
- Redirect complaints to the appropriate formal process where required

This supports safer working practice and compliance with KCSIE.

9. Managing unreasonable or abusive communication

We welcome respectful communication and will always aim to work collaboratively with individuals who contact us.

We will not tolerate:

- Aggressive, threatening or abusive language
- Repeated messaging across multiple platforms
- Vexatious communications
- Unreasonable expectations, including for immediate responses

Where necessary, communication may be:

- Restricted and redirected to a single channel (usually the office)
- Escalated to senior leadership
- Managed through the formal complaints process, in line with the SUAT Complaints Policy

10. Promoting Positive Communication

Academies will actively promote positive communication through:

- Regular newsletters and school updates
- Celebration of pupil achievements (academic, behavioural, attendance, enrichment)
- Positive messages via email, school apps, postcards, or phone calls
- Celebratory assemblies and events involving parents/carers
- Social media (where used) that highlights successes and community engagement

Staff are encouraged to:

- Contact parents/carers to share praise
- Recognise effort, improvement, and positive attitudes as well as outcomes
- Use positive language that reinforces high expectations and encouragement

Parents/carers are encouraged to share positive feedback about:

- Individual members of staff
- Teams or departments
- School leadership
- Wider school experiences and events
- The impact of the Academy on pupils

Compliments and constructive feedback may be shared through:

- Email to the school or Trust
- Written correspondence
- Direct feedback to staff or senior leaders
- Parent/carer surveys or feedback forms

Recording information:

- Compliments will be acknowledged where appropriate
- Positive feedback will be shared with relevant staff members and leaders
- Themes from compliments may be reported to LACs and the Trust Board
- Compliments may be used (anonymously) in newsletters, reports, or staff recognition

Appendix One

