

High Tunstall College of Science



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Communications Policy

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Stakeholder Consulted	-	Staffing, Staff Welfare and Finance Committee
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Responsibility for Review	-	Deputy Headteacher (Staff)

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Statement of intent

At High Tunstall College of Science, we understand the importance of the relationship between parent/carers, students and the college.

We have a strong inclusive ethos where students have positive relationships with staff members and with each other. This policy sets out the aims of the college with regards to internal and external communication, and the responsibilities of the college, its staff members and parent/carers.

The college aims to promote effective communication between students, members of staff, parent/carers, stakeholders and all members of the college community. The college's objectives are to:

- Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which helps to keep parent/carers well-informed about their child's educational progress and any other matters related to their child's overall wellbeing.
- Improve the quality of education by making sure there is a robust process in place for consultation between the college, parent/carers, staff members and students on key areas.
- Monitor and evaluate communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parent/carers and members of the college community.
- Develop a strong marketing presence in order to build a positive reputation for the college within the wider community.

1. **[Updated]** Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- The Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

[Updated] This policy operates in conjunction with the following college policies:

- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- **[Updated]** Information Security Policy
- **[Updated]** Risk Protection Arrangement - Cyber Response Plan
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Adverse Weather Policy
- Evacuation and Invacuation Policy
- Lockdown (Full) Policy
- Lockdown (Partial) Policy
- Technology Acceptable Use - Staff
- Complaints Procedures Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Placing key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire college community, e.g. on the college website
- Communicating important information, e.g., the curriculum, clearly to parents
- Informing parent/carers of all college events within appropriate timelines
- Regularly keeping parent/carers informed of their young person's progress
- Informing parent/carers about the types of data that the college holds concerning students, who controls the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent/clear and easily accessible; written in a clear and plain language; and free of charge
- Ensuring that parent/carers understand their right to access information about their young person that is held by the college

- Ensuring that parent/carers also understand their rights to rectification, to erasure, to restrict processing, to data portability and to object to processing
- Ensuring that consent obtained from parent/carers, or students, regarding the processing of personal data, is freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the individual's wishes. Consent cannot be inferred from silence, pre-ticked boxes or inactivity
- Ensuring that individuals are informed of their rights to withdraw consent and are provided with easy ways to do so
- Ensuring that information regarding staff pay and conditions of service is made available to all who are employed at the college
- Taking steps to ensure parent/carers who do not have access to the internet can still access the information that is included on the college website.

The Admin Office is responsible for:

- Ensuring the communication of key messages and college values
- Ensuring all platforms of communication are up to date with audience-appropriate material and are easily accessible by parents, the LA and the wider community
- Identifying the promotional value of student achievements and college events and promoting them accordingly
- Developing and managing networking and engagement programmes to enhance the college's relationship with parents, other schools, LAs and the wider community
- Undertaking appropriate market research, including competitor analysis, demographic and economic reviews, and the examination of educational trends
- Helping to shape college events which exemplify and communicate the school's values, e.g., prospective parents' evenings
- Advising on event planning with the aim of improving audience experience
- Meeting the timescales set to complete marketing tasks
- Setting marketing goals and targets for the college
- Identifying and targeting specific groups to provide information relevant to them, e.g., information relevant to the parents of students with SEND
- Working with the DPO to ensure that marketing material complies with data protection law and that consent is properly requested and recorded
- Working with the local media to promote and enhance the reputation of the school, in accordance with the Social Media Policy.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Ensuring the principles and procedures of this policy are followed
- Communicating proactively with parent/carers about student progress and helping parent/carers to support their young person's learning
- Ensuring that their internal communication with other staff is strong, e.g., passing on relevant information to supply teachers and updating classroom planning files with specific student information
- Updating classroom planning files with specific student information
- Being involved in the school's marketing communication as required.

Parent/carers are responsible for:

- Reading the key communications circulated by the college and responding/acting on communications, e.g., by attending meetings
- Engaging with verbal communications, so that they understand the information being communicated to them
- Logging on to the college website or School Synergy for detailed information about the college calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, college achievements and other useful downloads
- Informing the college of medical conditions or allergies their child has, along with medical documentation relating to these conditions
- Informing College of any SEND or other needs their child has
- Informing the college of child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation
- Raising any issues or concerns they may have with the appropriate contact, e.g., contacting the class teacher with education-related issues.

3. [Updated] Internal and external communications

[Updated] A staff briefing is held each Thursday, and any information will be uploaded each Thursday on the School Synergy Staff Intranet homepage.

[Updated] All staff members are aware of the School Synergy – Staff Intranet homepage, which details the statutory website published of college policies. Staff must refer to the complete suite of college policies available to them via The Schoolbus application.

Written communications to staff members are delivered by email.

Staff will ensure their internal communication, i.e., within the college with other members of staff, is strong, effective, and abides by the procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook and Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies if the reason for sharing does not fall under a lawful basis for

processing as outlined in the UK GDPR. Under no circumstances will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.

Staff members will not communicate with parent/carers or students via social networking sites, or accept 'friend' requests, except in the case of blogs or social media pages set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning, in accordance with the Social Media Policy.

Parent/carers will be contacted through the following methods:

- Letters home
- Text messages
- Phone calls
- The college website
- Email
- College Apps; Synergy
- College newsletters
- Parent/carers meetings

Parent/carers will be given the opportunity to sign up to receive newsletters etc. via email.

For general enquiries, parent/carers are required to ring the college office, which is open from Monday to Friday between 8:00am and 4.30pm, on 01429 261446.

For non-urgent enquiries, parent/carers are required to email the college using email addresses found on the college website.

All emails to the college will specify the member of staff that the query is addressed to.

All emails to the college will be treated as confidential, unless there is a specific reason not to do so.

4. [Updated] Continuous home-college communication

- 4.1. The college will have the curriculum clearly laid out on the college website.
- 4.2. The college regularly updates parent/carers of ways in which they can support students' development and progress through activities to be completed at home.
- 4.3. The college subscribes to an electronic communication system, or School Synergy communication system, which is utilised to achieve effective and consistent communication with parent/carers. The college will ensure that:
 - Only the Administration Staff will be able to access and use the messaging system with clear direction from the Office Team Leaders.

- Any parent/carers who cannot be contacted via the messaging system will be contacted via another method set out in this policy.
- 4.4. **[New]** College staff will contact parents / carers using the School Synergy messaging service, telephone or email to contact parents / carers.

College staff attend to a number of work duties and do not monitor communications on a real-time (immediate response) basis. Parents / carers should allow for a reasonable response time from college staff during the college working day.

- 4.5. **[New]** When sending messages or queries through the Synergy portal regarding your child, please note that urgent messages should be directed to the College via phone or email. While the Administrative Office does monitor Synergy messages throughout the day, there may be delays during busy periods, and responses might not be immediate.
- 4.6. School Synergy will be used to record homework assignments and as a regular channel for communication with parent/carers.
- 4.7. Class teachers will be available to discuss students' progress and any concerns with parent/carers before the start and at the end of each college day.
- 4.8. **[New]** Parents / carers who wish to hold a meeting with any staff member about their child or issues regarding the college should contact the college administration to arrange a meeting in advance which is suitable to all parties.

Ad-hoc visits and demands for immediate attention from parents / carers are not permitted as both teaching and support staff have pre-planned schedules to deliver their statutory duties which would be compromised by attending unscheduled and unarranged meetings.

- 4.9. A meeting will be held by the appropriate member of staff for new parent/carers prior to their young person's entry to the college.
- 4.10. If a student is absent from college, and the college has no indication of the reason for the absence, the college will contact a parent/carer via telephone on the first day of absence, in order to find out the reason for the absence. A home visit will occur if required.
- 4.11. If no contact can be made with any named parent/carer, the college has the right to contact the education welfare officer to ensure the student's wellbeing and safety.

5. Updated] Email, messaging & internet communication

- 5.1. **[Updated]** Email, messaging and internet access will be used in line with the College's Data Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, and Cyber Response Plan.

- 5.2. All members of staff will have their own email account.
- 5.3. Emails will not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Staff members will consider the best way to communicate according to each individual situation.
- 5.4. Staff members will not engage in personal correspondence with students.
- 5.5. Communication between students and parent/carers with staff members will be carried out via the college email address, and not via staff members' personal email addresses.
- 5.6. Chain emails will not be allowed. Staff will ensure that the sending of attachments is limited to only work-related emails. Under no circumstances will adverts be embedded into emails.
- 5.7. As emails can cause high volumes of pressure for staff, the email protocol (displayed on noticeboards in workrooms and shared by email whenever it is updated) will be followed at all times:

[Updated] See the following as an example of the layout and contents of the email protocol:

Examples of email content	Email (Y/N)	Action
Lost property	N	Send student to check in the lost property area in the student office.
Injured student, leaving lessons early	Y	Weekly bulletin on a Monday which includes; briefing notes, sports fixtures/clubs, students injured, students on report and events taking place in week. Emailed to all staff.
Sporting Events and College Trips	N	Listed on weekly on School Synergy detailing year groups affected and date and time. Names sent to Attendance team to prepopulate SIMS registers. On day of event confirmation of names sent to Attendance team by organiser to ensure accuracy of registers.
Request for student information	Y	Only email staff who teach or are involved with the student (i.e. HOY, Form Tutor, HOH)

- 5.8. Parent/carers will only use staff email addresses to contact staff directly.
- 5.9. **[Updated]** Parent/carers will be aware that teachers and support staff are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day and will not be expected to respond to emails after working hours.

- 5.10. The college does not expect work emails to be checked during staff's personal time.
- 5.11. The college aims to respond to all email enquiries within three (3) working days. Staff and parent/carers are aware that part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule.

6. **[Updated]** Meetings

- 6.1. A programme of all staff meetings will be set out in the college calendar. Additional meetings will be added to the calendar as required, with appropriate notice to prepare. Time will be set aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to the school's reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.
- 6.2. All formal meetings will be minuted and members invited to contribute to the agenda.
- 6.3. For all formal meetings, minutes will be taken, action points progressed and feedback given to staff members.
- 6.4. Minutes of meetings will be copied to relevant staff members, as well as the SLT, and a copy will be saved on the staff shared area on the faculties drive, in a clearly marked subject folder.
- 6.5. When parent/carers wish to organise meetings with members of staff, they will first be encouraged to contact their young person's form tutor or classroom teacher (if the query is relevant to a specific subject).
- 6.6. **[Updated]** Parents / carers who wish to hold a meeting with any staff member about their child or issues regarding the college should contact the college administration to arrange a meeting in advance which is suitable to all parties.

Ad-hoc visits and demands for immediate attention from parents / carers are not permitted as both teaching and support staff have pre-planned schedules to deliver their statutory duties which would be compromised by attending unscheduled and unarranged meetings.
- 6.7. If parent/carers urgently need to have a meeting with a member of staff, they will phone the college office and the reception staff will do their best to find a senior member of staff to see parent/carers.
- 6.8. Lessons will not be interrupted to accommodate parent/carers needing to speak to a teacher.
- 6.9. For non-urgent meetings between parent/carers and members of staff, the college will aim to meet parent/carers within three (3) working days.
- 6.10. The college will determine the level of urgency in requests for meetings, which will aid in managing multiple demands.

7. College prospectus

- 7.1. The prospectus and college website will be utilised to communicate information regarding the following:
 - Clubs and activities
 - College hours
 - College uniform
 - Term dates
 - Student safety
 - The college calendar
 - Ofsted reports
 - Exam information
 - Informal communication between teachers and parent/carers
- 7.2. The college prospectus will be updated each Summer term.
- 7.3. The content of the prospectus will complement the work of the college, as well as contain information about the most recent activities and successes of the college, including progress, priorities and performance.

8. Emergency communication

- 8.1. All parent/carers will ensure that the college has their latest contact details, including their address, telephone number and email address, so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency.
- 8.2. If a student is seriously ill or injured, the college will attempt to contact the student's emergency contact(s) via telephone.
- 8.3. Where an incident affects the whole-college community, such as power failure or snow, the college will send all parent/carers an email, or text message directing them to a special message posted through School Synergy and onto the college's website.
- 8.4. If the college is closed for more than one (1) day due to adverse weather or similar problem, an update will be posted through School Synergy and made available on the website at least once a day.
- 8.5. The local radio station, BBC Tees and Radio Hartlepool, will broadcast a closure announcement in the event of the college closing due to adverse weather or another emergency situation, in accordance with the Adverse Weather Policy.
- 8.6. In the event of a serious incident, the college will follow its Major Emergency Incident Plan – parent/carers will routinely receive updates on how the college will communicate with them during an invacuation, lockdown or evacuation via through School Synergy and / or the college website and social media.

9. Accessing information

- 9.1. In accordance with an individual's right of access under the GDPR, personal information (such as educational records), confirmation of data processing, and other supplementary information will be shared with individuals who request access via a Subject Access Request (SAR).
- 9.2. The procedure below will be followed in terms of SARs:
 - The requests will be made in writing to the Governing Body and will be responded to within one (1) month of receipt.
 - The period of compliance may be extended by a further two (2) months where the requests are complex or numerous, or during school holidays. If this is the case, individuals will be informed within one (1) month of receipt of the request, with an explanation of why an extension is required.
 - A student, or the parent/carer of a student, will have the right to access the information that the college holds about the young person in question.
 - Individuals have the right to access their personal data free of charge.
 - Where requests are manifestly unfounded or excessive, a reasonable charge for the administrative costs of providing the information will be applied, or the request will be refused.
 - If any request is refused, the individual will be informed of their right to complain to the supervisory authority and to a judicial remedy without delay within one (1) month.
- 9.3. Under the GDPR, remote access to a secure self-service system will be given to provide individuals with direct access to their personal information.
- 9.4. In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, private data and public records can potentially be accessed through lodging an FOI request.
- 9.5. The procedure below will be followed in terms of FOI requests:
 - The requests will be made in writing to the college, stating the name and address of the requester, as well as a description of the information requested
 - Successful FOI requests will be responded to within twenty (20) working days from receipt of the request, unless the request does not comply with the procedure set out in the college's Freedom of Information Policy, a copy of which is on the college website
 - The college holds the right to charge the requester a fee, if complying with the request would cost the college an excess of £450

- Certain information will not be shared, such as that explained in Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The College will abide by its Data Protection Policy and related documentation in all of its communication and when carrying out marketing activities.

Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies without a lawful basis for data processing as outlined in the UK GDPR. Under no circumstances will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.

NOTE: Please refer to the High Tunstall College of Science - Freedom of Information Policy which is available on the college website.

10. [Updated] Monitoring and review

- 10.1. The efficiency of this policy will be continuously monitored throughout the year by the Headteacher and Governing body.
- 10.2. This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Governing body.
- 10.3. The next scheduled review date for this policy is April 2026.