



Communications Policy Including Social Media

Our mission statement: *“Outstanding learning and personal development
for the future”*

This policy should be read in conjunction with the college's Equality Opportunity and Diversity Policy Statement.

Purpose

To recognise that effective communication with all key stakeholders is an essential component in maintaining and improving the performance of the College.

This policy aims to ensure that expectations and responsibilities are clear for all stakeholders and provides a reference point against which to measure and judge the effectiveness of communications at all times.

Principles

Heathfield Community College believes that there are nine key stakeholder groups with whom communication is either essential or beneficial to the performance of the College:

1. Students
2. Staff
3. Parents/Carers
4. Local Authority/Education Partners
5. Feeder Primary Schools
6. Local Community
7. Alumni
8. Local Businesses
9. Governors

Effective communication is much more than the exchange of information. It encompasses the management of relationships, involvement, consultation, attitude, behaviour and listening. It includes not just the message but how the message is communicated.

Effective communication is two way, placing responsibilities on both the College and individuals within Stakeholder Groups. Every member of staff has a responsibility to recognise that the quality of their communications reflects on the College's overall reputation.

All communications at Heathfield Community College must:

1. Be open, honest, ethical and professional
2. Use plain language that is jargon-free and can be easily understood by all
3. Be timely and relevant
4. Use a method or methods of communication most appropriate to the context, message and audience
5. Take account of other relevant College policies, in particular Equal Opportunities, Staff/Student Internet & Network Use Agreements, E-safety & Email Policy, Data Protection Policy and the Information & Communications Technology Statement.
6. Be compatible with the core values of the College as reflected in our Mission Statement and College Improvement Plan

Monitoring and Review

Adherence to the policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team.

Effectiveness of communication and the relevance of the Policy will be reviewed every two years by the Governing Body through the Communication and Community Sub Committee.

Appendix 1:

The following information should be read in conjunction with the Communication Policy and provides a Summary of main communication activities by stakeholder group, together with the specific activities designed to deliver a successful outcome:

1. Students

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Communicating to and involving Students in key decisions that affect them and explaining change constructively	Student Voice. Year Council Meetings with results fed back through form time Student Bulletins Assembly presentations PSHE lessons
Encouraging students to attend or become involved in performances, exhibitions and events and contributing to the social and extra curricular activities of the college	Calendar of events maintained through the College Website Letters to parents via Parentmail and through school bags to highlight events in a timely fashion Posters Plasma screen in Main Crush Hall After event reports and pictures to celebrate successes
Individual Communication between students and teaching staff pertaining to attainment, progress and well being* <i>* Please specifically refer to E-Safety and Email Policy for clear guidelines on how this communication is to be managed</i>	Messages via Tutor Tray Emails via College Website Coaching sessions (6 th form only) Parents evenings Surveys at the end of Extended Learning Days and Extended Learning Projects
Communicating effectively on issues of discipline to minimise the disruption of progress for individual students or classes.	Individual meetings with teaching staff, form tutor, head of year and senior Leadership Team

2. Staff

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Staff Briefings	Twice weekly briefing sessions with staff, lead by SLT provides opportunity for communication of policy and operational priorities as well as direct feedback and discussion.
Weekly Bulletin	Provides written update of operational issues and changes in policy
Inset Days	Provides opportunity for staff and Senior Leadership Team to focus on specific areas, build team and individual relationships
SIMS	Principle means by which lessons are monitored and important messages about students captured, stored and shared
Staff Pigeonholes	Provides convenient internal system for messages to be exchanged between teaching staff and SLT
Ensuring that there is an independent channel of communication between department heads and Governors	Governor link to individual departments with twice yearly departmental visits followed up with reports. Reports submitted to Curriculum Committee with issues raised being discussed as necessary

3. Parents and Carers

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Informing and involving parents and carers in the progress of their students and leveraging their support to ensure an effective partnership to maximise individual attainment and fulfil individual potential.	Access to performance targets and attainments through the College Website Twice yearly formal reports on progress and performance Twice yearly parent evenings to discuss progress and performance with teaching staff
Encouraging parents to support students and the college by attending performances,	Calendar of events maintained through the College Website Letters to parents via Parentmail and through school bags to highlight events in a timely fashion

exhibitions and events and contributing to the social and extra curricular activities of the college	After event reports and pictures to celebrate successes
Informing parents and carers about College policy, approach and expectations and any changes in the same that have the potential to affect their students.	Policy guidelines maintained and updated through the College Website Letters to parents via Parentmail and through school bags to highlight changes in a timely fashion Tailored open events as appropriate from time to time.
Encouraging parents to support sustainable communication by signing up to ParentMail	Using Parentmail effectively to encourage full registration of parents for the service
Communicating effectively on issues of discipline to minimise the disruption of progress for individual students or classes.	Letters to parents delivered to home addresses via Royal Mail Individual meetings with form tutors, heads of year and Senior Leadership Team as necessary

4. Local Authority/Education Partners

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
HUUB schools links	The College communicates effectively with Uckfield Community Technology College, Uplands Community College and Beacon Community College both formally and informally. This group of schools meets termly as the key members of the Wealden Local Area Partnership Board and in addition the Head Teachers and Principals meet termly to look at broader aspects of education policy.
East Sussex County Council	The College communicates effectively with the Local Authority through Head Teacher attendance at the Strategic Management Board, The Strategic Partnership Board and Secondary Head Teacher meetings and conferences.

5. Feeder Primary Schools

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Ensuring successful transition from primary to secondary school	Buddy system in operation to provide students with peer group support Taster days Visits to feeder primary schools Close contact with schools transition officer HCC Governors meet with Governors from each feeder primary school to focus on transition issues, informed by best practice nationally Effective transfer of assessment data on all foundation subjections. Specialist transition area on the college website The College communicates effectively with its main 11 feeder primary schools known as HASP (Heathfield Area Schools Partnership) through termly Head Teacher Meetings and additional cross phase projects and working groups.

6. Local Community

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Engaging with youth services, local police	Governor Community and Communications Sub Committee includes regular reports from youth services and local police liaison The Principal of the College is a Director of the Heathfield Partnership and as such has an input into all Community projects undertaken by the organisation. The Chairman of the Heathfield Partnership Trust Company Ltd is a Governor at the College. Other staff and Governors are active members of sub committees. There is regular communication with Heathfield & Waldron Parish Council on relevant issues of mutual interest. Churches Together in Heathfield support the college by taking part in Extended Learning Days. Local clergy are invited to take assemblies. Street Pastors under the umbrella of CTH provide support to students when approached.

7. Alumni

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Maintaining links with ex students	A database of "friends of the College" is maintained and invitations to events are provided Providing opportunities to communicate the success of college alumni through the college website

8. Local Businesses

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Media	Through Parent Governor, links with local media business to provide a range of real-life project based experiences for media students at all levels
Local Business Community	Maintaining open dialogue with local businesses and business organisations

9. Governors

Area of Focus	Main communication activities
Meetings	Formal Meetings and informal gatherings/training
Department links	Maintaining links with individual department heads and subject/focus areas between nominated governors
Clerk's office	Ensuring that relevant information is circulated to Governors from the college internally and County Council/other external sources
Head Teachers Reports	Formal reports to Governors
Website	Access to online performance and benchmarking systems

Appendix 2

The following information should be read in conjunction with the Communication Policy and provides guidance on standards to be applied in respect of all main channels of communication:

1. Internal Communications:

1.1 Meetings

There is a structured programme of meetings, both formal and informal which are notified to interested parties in advance.

All formal meetings have a clear agenda which is circulated in advance to allow attendees to prepare effectively.

Attendees are invited to contribute to the agenda in advance where appropriate. Formal meetings are minuted and clear action points and responsibilities are allocated within minutes.

Minutes are reviewed for accuracy and actions followed up at subsequent meetings. The approved minutes of meetings are available on Staff Shared Areas of the college website.

Non-confidential minutes of meetings are available for inspection on request.

1.2 Email

Email is treated as a formal means of communication at all times.

Language, tone and content must be appropriate to be read by a third party and should not include anything that would not be communicated face to face or in a formal meeting environment.

Emails should be proof read and spell checked prior to sending.

Subject headers should be appropriate to allow the receiver to find, sort and store emails for future reference and to differentiate between urgent and non-urgent communication.

Email boxes should be subject to regular housekeeping and archiving to ensure that the system remains stable at all times.

Wherever possible, it is best practice to avoid the indiscriminate use of blanket emails to all staff. Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure that emails are delivered only to those that require the information.

Use of the College email system for communications other than in relation to college activities is not allowed.

1.3 College Learning Portal

The College Learning Portal is the principal means of storing and sharing information on individual student progress and performance.

All information uploaded to the Learning Portal will be date stamped and identify the "owner" of the document. The owner of the document is responsible for reviewing the information on at least an annual basis.

On review, even if information is unchanged, the date stamp will be updated with the review date.

Information which is found to be out of date on the Portal should be highlighted to the Owner for review and updating promptly

1.4 Written Communications

All written communications in hard copy or electronic form, whether circulated or stored for access will be considered a formal document and will adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and professionalism at all times.

Written communications with staff will normally be delivered via pigeon holes located in the staff room which staff are responsible for checking on a daily basis. An archive of letters and newsletters will be maintained on the College Website. Confidential communication will be marked as such and will be hand delivered. Where circumstances prevent this, such communication will be delivered by Royal Mail to home addresses.

1.5 Telephone Calls

Every effort will be made to answer telephone calls personally first time.

Where telephone calls cannot be answered personally, voice mail facilities are provided and these will be checked on a daily basis.

Every effort should be made to return calls within 24 hours.

Where messages are taken by staff these will be summarised accurately and communicated in writing to the intended recipient via Staff Pigeon Holes or via the College email system.

Emergency telephone calls will be handled immediately or escalated to the necessary level of the Leadership Team to ensure urgent attention.

1.6 Handbooks

Staff and Student Handbooks are available electronically via the College Learning Portal. These contain all up to date policy information appropriate to the target group.

Handbooks are updated and revised as necessary but all information is reviewed at least annually.

1.7 Notice Boards

Noticeboards are used as a back-up broadcast communication to highlight specific events and activities and to showcase work.

Student noticeboards are located in the main school corridor.

Staff noticeboards are located in the staffroom.

1.8 Newsletter

A Parent Newsletter is produced at the beginning and end of every term and circulated primarily via ParentMail.

An archive of newsletters is maintained on the College Learning Portal.

Student Bulletins are produced weekly and circulated via electronic mail.

Staff Bulletins are produced weekly and circulated via electronic mail.

1.9 Events and Social Gatherings

The college looks favourably on opportunities to develop professional working relationships and encourages formal and informal gatherings within and outside the organisation in order to build on relationships, develop strong teams and encourage communication. The College will organise at least one social event each year to which all members of staff are invited.

2. External communications

2.1 Letters

Staff will endeavour to reply to parent's letters within 48 hours of receipt. Where this is not possible, staff will confirm an acknowledge receipt of correspondence and confirm an appropriate timescale for a full response within 48 hours.

All letters of complaint must be referred to the head of department and an appropriate member of the senior leadership team. All replies to a letter of complaint

must be approved by the head of department or an appropriate member of the senior leadership team.

Copies of correspondence with Parents and Carers will be placed on student files.

2.2 Emails

Email communication will be handled consistently as if the communication was received as a letter.

A digital archive of emails received and sent will be maintained and backed up every 24 hours.

2.3 Telephone Calls

Every effort will be made to answer telephone calls personally first time.

Where telephone calls cannot be answered personally, voice mail facilities are provided and these will be checked on a daily basis.

Return calls where they are necessary will be made within 24 hours. Where this is not possible, a clear commitment to return a call with appropriate information will be given.

Where messages are taken by other staff these will be summarised accurately and communicated in writing to the intended recipient via Staff Pigeon Holes.

Emergency telephone calls will be handled immediately or escalated to the necessary level of the Leadership Team to ensure urgent attention.

A file note will record the details of all telephone conversations with Parents and Carers and these will be placed on student files.

2.4 Social Networking sites/blogs

Staff will not communicate with students via social networking sites or accept them as “friends”. The exception to this rule is networks or blogs used within the College Learning Portal for the exclusive purpose of teaching and learning.

Staff will not communicate with parents/carers via social networking sites on college-related issues.

2.5 Reports

Once a year a full report on each students performance and progress will be provided to Parents and Carers.

Throughout the year a clear set of targets and progress achievements will be maintained and discussed with Students. Parents are able to view these targets and attainments via the College Learning portal at all times.

2.6 College Prospectus

The College Prospectus is published annually and is available to download via the College Website

2.7 Public Access Documents

College Policy documents are reviewed on an annual or bi-annual basis and are available at all times on the College website.

2.8 College and Arts College Website

The College website, in conjunction with the Arts College Website is our principle forum for information and archived information and is updated regularly.

2.9 College Broadcasts and news participation

The College broadcasts material based on Arts College events and activities from time to time. The College also embraces the opportunity to work with local Media to showcase the achievements of students and the College. Photographs used externally will be checked to ensure that they are suitable and those used will not be captioned

with children's full names. Parents/Carers permission will be obtained before using photographs of Students

2.10 Newsletters

A College newsletter is produced x times a year and is delivered via ParentMail or through school bags.

2.11 Notice Boards

Notice Boards will be used from time to time on the College Campus to communicate information in a visible way to selected groups - particularly to update on College closure information.

2.12 Communication with outside agencies

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All staff and volunteers at the College must have a current CRB enhanced clearance for East Sussex County Council.

The College recognises that students have diverse needs and that various agencies and groups of professionals are available to support the work of the College, helping to meet the needs of individual students so that they can participate fully in the life of the College.

The College recognises that students have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, that their protection is a shared responsibility and that the College should provide a safe and secure environment. Staff at the College are the people most in contact with Students and so are in a strong position to identify and help abused children. When any member of staff has concerns about a student these will be passed on to the designated teacher, who may share this information with Social Services.

The College holds information on students in the College and from time to time are required to pass this information to others for educational purposes. Details will be supplied to parents about the types of data we hold, why we hold that data and who we may pass it on to. This is a requirement under the Data Protection Act 1998. Parents have a right to view the information we hold and we have contact details of the agencies to which information is passed. Parents wishing to view information or receive contact details should contact the Head Teacher's PA, Carolyn Abbott, cabbott@heathfieldcc.e-sussex.sch.uk, in the first instance.