



**The  
Three  
Rivers**  
Learning Trust

<b>Name of Policy</b>	<b>Communications</b>
<b>Policy Number</b>	<b>NS17</b>
<b>The Three Rivers</b>	
<b>Named Person(s)</b>	<b>Mark Tait</b>
<b>Review Committee</b>	<b>Full Board</b>
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<b>Purpose</b>	Regular policy review
<b>Key Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Key, School Bus, Jump
<b>Statutory/Non-Statutory</b>	non- statutory

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

- Education Act 2002
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Staff Handbook
- [Branding Principles](#)
- [Communications Procedures](#)
- [GDPR \(Data Protection\) Policy](#)
- [SAR and FOI Procedure](#)
- [Freedom of Information Policy](#)
- [ICT Control & Security](#)
- [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Business Continuity Plan
- [Confidentiality](#)

## 1. Introduction

At The Three Rivers Learning Trust there is a strongly inclusive ethos where students have positive relationships with adults and with each other. This policy sets out the aims of the Learning Trust with regard to internal and external communication and the responsibilities of all staff, trustees and parents.

## 2. Aims and objectives

The Three Rivers Learning Trust aims to promote effective communication between students, members of staff, parents, trustees, stakeholders and all members of the school community. Our objectives are:

- To have clear and professional communication systems in place which will help us to keep staff, students, parents/carers, trustees and the wider community well informed
- To improve the quality of service by making sure there is a robust process in place for consultation between the Trust, parents, staff members and students on key areas
- To be open, honest, ethical, professional and recognisable
- To use jargon free, plain language and be easily understood by all
- To use the method of communication most effective and appropriate for the context, message and audience.

Communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people.

Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about the message. We are welcoming and professional, are polite and interested, listen and support, deliver against our promises and inform others when actions have been taken.

### **3. Responsibilities**

#### **The Learning Trust's responsibilities**

- To place key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community

#### **The school responsibilities**

- Placing key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community.
- Communicating the curriculum clearly to parents.
- Informing parents of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- Regularly keeping parents informed of their child's progress.
- Informing parents about the types of data that the school holds concerning pupils, who controls the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent and easily accessible; written in a clear and plain language; and free of charge.
- Ensuring that parents understand their right to access information about their child that is held by the school.
- Ensuring that parents also understand their rights to rectification, to erasure, to restrict processing, to data portability and to object to processing
- Ensuring that consent obtained from parents, or pupils, 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 school.
- Taking steps to ensure parents who do not have access to the internet can still access the information that is included on the school website.

#### **Staff responsibilities**

- To ensure the principles and procedures of this policy are followed
- To communicate proactively with parents/carers about student progress and helping parents/carers to support their children's learning
- Ensuring that relevant information is passed on to supply teachers

#### **Parents/carers' responsibilities**

- To read the key communications circulated by the school and respond/act on communication (eg sign forms, attend meetings)
- Where possible, download the SchoolComms app for your smartphone or tablet

- Regularly check emails for important communication
- Log on to the schools' websites for detailed information about the school calendar and term dates, exam details, information on mentoring, options and other useful downloads
- Inform the school of medical conditions/allergies, along with medical documentation
- Inform the school of child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation
- Raising any issues or concerns they may have with the class teacher
- Ensure that the school has up to date contact details for parents/carers at all times

#### **4. Internal and external communication**

Each school will maintain a communications calendar that details regular parent, student and staff communication events.

Schools will share their contact details with staff, students and parents so that everyone understands how and when to communicate with school.

Staff members do not engage in personal correspondence with pupils. Communication between pupils and parents with staff members will be carried out via the school email address, and not via staff members' personal email addresses. or mobile phones

Parents will only use staff email addresses to contact staff directly and will be aware that teachers are not in a position to check emails consistently throughout the day. The Trust does not expect work emails to be checked during staff personal time.

The Trust aims to respond to all email enquiries within two working days. Staff and parents are aware that part-time staff may take longer to reply due to the nature of their work schedule.

[Procedures for the following can be found here.](#)

- Face to Face
- Telephone Calls
- Email
- Written Communication
- Staff Handbook
- Noticeboards
- Meetings
- Social Networking Sites
- The Website and Google Sites
- Newsletters
- School Calendar
- School Prospectus

#### **5. Emergency communication**

- Parents/carers must ensure that the school has the latest contact details, including the address, telephone number and email address, so that they

may be contacted in the event of an emergency, such as an unplanned closure or injury/ill-health.

- If your son/daughter is seriously ill or injured, we will attempt to call you by telephone.
- Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, the school will send all parents an email or text message directing them to a special message posted on the school's website. If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or some similar problem, an update will be posted on the website at least once a day

## 6. Contacting the Media

Complete a [Proforma for media outlets](#) including the Morpeth Herald. This must be sent to the nominated person in school for review and planning on which media platforms will be used.

### Responding to media enquiries

[Information on dealing with media queries can be found in the procedures document.](#)

If there is a bad news story, 3RSLT will seek legal advice on content from the Trust's legal advisors.

If there is a child protection issue, 3RSLT will refer to the Local Authority.

## 7. Social Media

### Principles – **BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL**

You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school or Learning Trust and your personal interests.

You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the school(s) or the Learning Trust into disrepute.

You must not represent your personal views as those of the school(s) or the Learning Trust on any social medium.

You must not discuss personal information about students, school(s) or Learning Trust staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.

You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame students, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, the school(s) or the Learning Trust.

You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the school(s) or the Learning Trust.

### Personal use of Social Media

Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of the school(s) or Learning Trust or service providers for the school(s) or Learning Trust in their personal webspace. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school(s) and the Learning Trust and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.

Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any student, whether from the school(s) or any other school, unless the students are family members.

The Learning Trust does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.

Staff members must not have any contact with students' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.

If staff members wish to communicate with students through social media sites or to enable students to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school(s) and through authorised school sites created according to the requirements specified in Section 7 and Appendix 1.

Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from students they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from students who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost students to become 'friends' of the authorised school site.

On leaving the Learning Trust's service, staff members must not contact Learning Trust's students by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact students from their former schools by means of personal social media.

Information that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about students and their family members, colleagues, Learning Trust staff and other parties and school(s) or Learning Trust corporate information must not be discussed on their personal webspace.

Photographs, videos or any other types of image of students and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school(s) or Learning Trust uniforms or clothing with school(s) or Learning Trust logos or images identifying sensitive school(s) premises must not be published on personal webspace.

Learning Trust email addresses and other authorised contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media. Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

Learning Trust/school(s) branding, badges, or logos must not be used or published on personal webspace.

The Learning Trust does not permit access to social media sites in school. The Headteacher can approve access for particular activities following submission of a business case and risk assessment that justify the benefits of using social media and minimise the risks.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the workplace.

Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

There are some social media sites that sit on the boundary between personal and professional life; recruitment sites such as LinkedIn are a good example. It is acceptable to use these sites and to accurately describe your employment in the Learning Trust. However the other key principles described above still apply to these sites.

### **Using social media on behalf of the Learning Trust and individual school(s)**

Staff members can only use authorised school sites for communicating with students or to enable students to communicate with one another.

The authorised Social Media accounts for the schools on Twitter are:

- @KEVIMorpeth
- @NewminsterMid
- @MorpethChantry
- @AbbeyfieldsFS
- @TVFSchool
- @HarbottleSchool

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating other school sites to communicate with students or others. Staff must not create sites for

trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Authorised school sites must be created only according to the requirements specified in Appendix A of this Policy. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.

When a new Twitter account is created, they should 'follow' the main account for that school to allow sharing of information via the authorised Twitter account.

Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of students when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

### **Naming Conventions**

Where possible, account names should be prefixed with the name of the school and the first letter of the next word as a capital letter - eg KEVI Morpeth, Chantry Science, Newminster Maths.

### **Logos and branding**

Only the authorised school logo should be used as the profile picture for an account. If the profile also has a header image, an image of your choice may be used.

If a Facebook page or group is created, a senior member of staff from the department must be made an Administrator for the page/group along with the Digital Communication Developer.

Passwords for all accounts must be shared with the Digital Communication Developer who must also be made aware of all staff (and students, if applicable) who have access to the account.

## **8. Using personal devices to take pictures**

Staff are able to use their own devices - mobile, tablet, digital camera, etc - to take pictures of students and their work, providing parental consent has been given.

Staff are advised to move these images to their Google Drive folder as soon as possible and then delete the images from their device or memory card as soon as possible to avoid potential issues.

## **9. Monitoring of internet use**

The Learning Trust monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.



Users of Learning Trust email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

## **10. Breaches of the policy**

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with the Learning Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of the school(s) or the Learning Trust or any illegal acts or acts that render the school(s) or the Learning Trust liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Contracted providers of Learning Trust services must inform the relevant school(s) officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school(s) and the Learning Trust. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.

[Appendix 1](#) - Requirements for creating social media sites

[Appendix 2](#) - Social Media Site Creation Approval Form

[Appendix 3](#) - Style Guide