Endeavour
Multi-Academy Trust

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Endeavour Multi Academy Trust

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24/02/26	V1.0	New policy drafting
May 2026	V2.0	Further changes by Capita

Communications Policy

1. Introduction & Purpose

Endeavour Multi Academy Trust (the Trust) is committed to open, transparent and effective communication with all stakeholders. Communication plays a critical role in ensuring our schools feel connected, informed and aligned with our mission to provide exceptional education, empower communities and ensure that every child thrives.

This policy sets out how the Trust, its schools and all staff will communicate internally and externally, and is informed by, and operates in accordance with, relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE statutory guidance), the Equality Act 2010, and Department for Education statutory requirements for school and trust websites. All communication across Endeavour Multi Academy Trust must comply with these requirements to ensure lawful, safe, inclusive and transparent practice.

Where guidance referenced within this policy is statutory, the Trust and its schools must comply with it. Where guidance is non-statutory, it will be followed as best practice unless there is a clear and justifiable reason not to do so.

2. Aims and Objectives

Aims

The Purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure consistent, professional, and timely communication across all Endeavour MAT schools.
- Build trust, transparency, and positive relationships with all stakeholders.
- Support pupils' learning, staff collaboration, parental engagement, and community confidence.
- Protect and enhance the Trust's reputation.

Objectives

We will:

- Provide clear, accessible, jargon-free information.

- Use multiple communication channels to ensure accessibility for all families.
- Respond to stakeholder enquiries within agreed timescales.
- Ensure all staff use professional, compliant and secure communication methods.
- Maintain consistent brand, tone and standards across all schools.

3. Scope and Stakeholder Groups

This policy applies to:

- Trust Board & Trustees
- Local Governing Committees
- Central Team
- Headteachers & Senior Leaders
- All School Staff
- Pupils
- Parents & Carers
- Community partners
- Media and external agencies

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Trust Responsibilities

- Set Trust-wide communication standards and expectations.
- Maintain an effective Trust website and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.
- Coordinate major announcements, statements and crisis-response communications.
- Ensure consistent branding, templates, and tone of voice across all schools.
- Provide training and support to staff on communication best practice.

4.2 School Responsibilities

Each Endeavour MAT school will:

- Maintain up-to-date school websites with statutory information.
- Inform parents/carers promptly about all key events, updates and concerns.
- Encourage two-way communication with parents/carers, pupils and community partners.
- Share good practice with other Endeavour MAT schools.

4.3 Staff Responsibilities

Staff must:

- Communicate professionally, accurately and respectfully at all times.
- Follow data-protection rules, avoiding use of full pupil names externally.
- Use school email accounts and approved systems only.
- Ensure sensitive matters are addressed face-to-face, not via email.

4.4 Parent/Carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Read communications shared by the school.
- Use appropriate channels for raising concerns.
- Keep contact details up to date.

Escalation of Communication Issues

Any communication matter that may pose a safeguarding, reputational, legal or operational risk to a school or to the Trust must be escalated immediately.

In such cases:

- Staff must notify the Headteacher without delay
- Headteachers must inform the CEO (and relevant Trust lead) as soon as reasonably practical

No external communication relating to significant incidents should take place until appropriate escalation and authorisation has occurred.

5. General Communication Principles

Endeavour MAT adopts the following principles:

- Purposeful – communication must have clear intent.
- Positive – focus on solutions and respectful dialogue.
- Accessible & inclusive – avoid jargon, provide alternatives where needed.
- Timely – respond within defined timescales.
- Measured & factual – avoiding opinion.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Endeavour Multi Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that communication is accessible, inclusive and equitable for all members of its community.

This includes:

- Using clear, plain English wherever possible
- Providing translations or language support for families where English is an additional language, where reasonably practicable
- Offering alternative formats such as large print or simplified versions on request
- Supporting families who have limited access to digital communication through appropriate non-digital methods
- Ensuring Trust and school websites meet recognised accessibility standards

Schools and the Trust will take reasonable steps to remove barriers to communication and ensure no individual or group is disadvantaged through inaccessible communication practices.

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Trust will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations when communicating with the community.

6. Internal Communication

6.1 Communication within schools

Schools may use:

- Staff briefings
- Weekly bulletins
- Email updates
- Noticeboards
- Assemblies
- SharePoint/Teams platforms

Sensitive or complex matters should be discussed verbally, not over email.

- Where sensitive or complex matters need to be documented or followed up in writing, emails must be clearly marked 'Private and Confidential' in the subject line and should contain only essential information.
- Staff should consider whether email is the most appropriate method and use professional judgement when deciding whether written communication is suitable.
- Labelling such correspondence supports good data-protection practice and helps demonstrate appropriate handling in the event of a Subject Access Request.

6.2 Email Protocols

Staff must:

- Use professional tone and approved signatures.
- Not include full pupil names externally.
- Respond to internal emails within a reasonable timeframe, normally within 1–2 working days, recognising that response times may vary during peak workload periods. Avoid sending or expecting responses outside working hours.
- Staff are not expected to provide same-day responses unless a matter is urgent. Workload, meeting schedules and part-time working patterns should be taken into account when determining reasonable response times.

Digital Communication Boundaries

To safeguard pupils, families and staff, Endeavour MAT sets clear boundaries around digital communication.

- Staff must use only approved Trust or school communication systems when communicating with parents, carers, pupils or external stakeholders.
- Personal messaging apps (such as WhatsApp, Messenger or SMS) and personal social media accounts must not be used for professional communication with parents/carers or pupils.
- Instant messaging platforms (including Teams chats) must only be used in accordance with Trust guidance and must maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Staff are not expected to read or respond to messages outside of working hours, except in exceptional circumstances or where explicitly agreed as part of senior leadership roles.

These boundaries exist to protect all parties and maintain professional, auditable communication channels.

6.3 Communication Between Endeavour MAT Schools

Endeavour schools are expected to:

- Attend Trust-wide networks.
- Share expertise and best practice.
- Celebrate each other's successes through Trust newsletters and social media.

6.4 Communication between Trustees, LGBs and Leaders

- Trustees will receive timely agenda papers, updates and reports.
- Chairs and Governance Partners act as key communication links.
- Minutes of LGB meetings will be accessible to the Board.

6.5 Communication with Trade Unions and Professional Associations

Formal communication with recognised trade unions and professional associations will be managed centrally through Trust Executive Leadership and the Human Resources function.

Individual staff members should not engage in formal negotiations or issue official responses on behalf of the Trust. All such communications must follow established Trust processes and be coordinated through the Executive Board.

7. External Communications

7.1 Communication with Parents/Carers

Schools will use:

- Email
- Newsletters
- School apps (e.g. Arbor/MIS messaging)
- Letters
- Text messages
- Parent meetings
- Website notices

Response expectations:

- Phone calls returned within 24 hours (term-time).
- Emails will be acknowledged within 1–2 working days where reasonably practicable. During very busy periods, staff absence, or non-working days (e.g. part-time patterns), response times may be longer.
- Acknowledgement may take the form of an automated response or a brief holding message where appropriate.
- Letters acknowledged within 72 hours (term-time).

7.2 Written Communication (letters, emails, documents)

- Must be spell-checked, accurate and reviewed for tone.
- Letters must be on School or Endeavour MAT letterhead and approved by the Headteacher/CEO if appropriate.
- Emails must never include sensitive details or personal opinions.

  For the purposes of this policy, 'sensitive information' includes:

- Personal data relating to pupils, parents, or staff (e.g., medical, safeguarding, SEN, behavioural or pastoral information).
- Information that could identify an individual in relation to a concern, complaint, or disciplinary matter.
- Any communication relating to safeguarding, allegations, wellbeing concerns, or family circumstances.
- Data classified as 'special category data' under UK GDPR (e.g., health, ethnicity, religion).
- Sensitive information must not be included in email communication unless essential and should be marked 'Private and Confidential' where used.

7.3 Websites

Endeavour schools must keep:

- Statutory policies
- Curriculum information
- Performance data
- Safeguarding information
- Governance structures
- Financial documents

  up to date at all times.

7.4 Social Media

- Only authorised staff may post on official accounts.
- Posts must be factual, positive and grammatically correct.
- Pupil photos require explicit consent (first names only).
- Staff must not engage with parents/carers on personal accounts.

The Trust and its schools will not engage in detailed discussion of individual matters, complaints or allegations via social media and will redirect individuals to appropriate formal communication channels.

7.5 Media Relations

- Staff may engage with the media for positive or promotional purposes without prior approval. However, any media contact relating to sensitive, negative, or potentially reputational issues must be referred to the CEO for approval before any response is given.
- All enquiries must be logged and escalated immediately.
- Press releases of a sensitive, negative or potentially reputational damming nature must be approved centrally.

7.6 Handling Negative Public Comments

- Respond politely, factually, and avoid personal opinion.
- Escalate if posts attract wider attention.

8. Crisis Communications

The Trust will follow a clear process in any urgent or sensitive incident:

1. Immediate notification to Headteacher & CEO.
2. Fact-gathering before publishing any information.
3. Drafting of a controlled, factual statement.
4. Communication to families via multiple channels.
5. Only authorised spokespeople may comment publicly.

9. Feedback, Compliments, Concerns & Complaints

- Feedback is welcomed and encouraged in all forms.
- A concern is an expression of worry that can usually be resolved informally and early via school channels.
- A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction which requires progression under the Trust Complaints Policy.
- Social media platforms are not an appropriate route for raising concerns or complaints. Any issues raised in this way will be signposted to the Trust's formal complaints procedures.
- Compliments will be recorded and shared with staff/trustees.

Record-Keeping and Audit

The Trust and its schools will maintain appropriate records of significant communications, including complaints, media enquiries, incidents and decisions taken during crises.

Records will be:

- Accurate, factual and timely
- Stored securely
- Retained in line with the Trust's retention schedules

This enables transparency, accountability and effective response to regulatory, inspection or legal scrutiny, including Freedom of Information requests.

Freedom of Information requests must be referred immediately to the Trust's DPO and must not be responded to directly by schools without Trust approval.

10. Monitoring & Evaluation

Communication effectiveness will be measured using:

- Parent, pupil and staff surveys
- Website engagement analytics
- Social media reach and sentiment
- Informal feedback
- Governor monitoring

Findings will inform annual improvements to communication.

11. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if:

- Legislation or statutory guidance changes
- Trust structure changes
- Significant feedback indicates revision is needed

12. Associated Procedures and Appendices

This Communications Policy is supported by detailed operational procedures which must be followed alongside this policy in specific circumstances. These documents form part of the Trust's communication framework and are reviewed separately to ensure operational accuracy and responsiveness.

The following appendices apply:

- Appendix A: Crisis Communication Plan
- Appendix B: School Closure Communication Procedure

Appendix A: Crisis Communication Plan

This appendix provides detailed operational guidance for managing communications during significant or severe incidents. It must be read and followed by Headteachers, senior leaders, and Trust staff responsible for incident management.

Crisis Communication Plan Endeavour MAT 2024-2026

What is a Crisis?

A crisis is something that threatens the reputation and even the existence of your organisation.

What is the purpose of this plan?

To stop a situation or event occurring so an event does not become a crisis.

To ensure procedures are in place to 'warn' and inform others if a crisis happens.

To protect the reputation of Endeavour MAT through handling the media effectively.

1. Potential Crisis.

- Cyber attacks
- Death of pupil/staff
- Natural disasters
- Severe serious H&S breach/accident
- Financial crisis
- Threatening/abusive parents/carers (may be low-level or severe)

2. Crisis Management Team.

Low-level crisis should be handled by Headteachers and the Local Governing Board within their own schools according to their policies.

Where the crisis is judged to be 'significant' or 'severe' in the Headteachers professional judgement then the appropriate person within the Trust should be contacted.

For all financial matters – the CFOO should be informed.

For all matters relating to school buildings/estates/health and safety – the Estates manager should be informed.

For matters relating to personnel and staffing or involving death – the CEO should be informed.

For matters relating to pupils or education - the DoE should be informed.

For safeguarding matters the Trust's nominated/appointed safeguarding lead/officer/s should be informed.

3. Communication.

For all significant/severe incidents the relevant person should contact the Trust's HR provider or solicitors for legal advice before making any press statements or before talking to the media. Be aware of secret filming/mobile phones and think before you speak.

'No comment' is neither helpful or appropriate to families and the general public needing information for example if children are involved in a coach crash. Never speculate, if you don't know the facts and you are 'ambushed' by the media make a holding statement.

CARE is useful:

Concern – Show concern, the Trust is sorry to hear this incident has happened, our thoughts are with those affected are useful phrases.

Action – State clearly what is going to happen, are the police investigating the incident, is the Trust carrying out an investigation, when will people know the facts?

Reassurance – provide reassurance to the public, calm the situation. Never say things such as, 'we're doing all that we can' instead the Trust is committed to providing support to those affected whilst a full investigation is carried out.

Exit – Remove yourself from press/media and explain that you now need time to respond to the crisis and that further updates will be provided through the Trust's website.

It is likely in 'severe' crisis it will be the CEO that appears in front of the press.

4. Stakeholders

It is important to inform the relevant stakeholder in a crisis these include (but not limited to):

- Executive Board
- Trustees
- Assistant to the Executive Board – 01902 761889 (Ext 227) Mob: 07777177274
- Headteachers
- Governors
- Parents/carers of relevant pupils
- Caretaker/site Manager
- ESFA
- Regional Director/Regional Team
- Local Authority
- ICO (Information Commissioner's Office)

The executive board will meet virtually or in-person to discuss who needs to be informed and when.

It is important that a nominated person creates a timeline of the Trust's response, for example in a cyber-attack the DPO/Deputy DSL for the Trust would keep a detailed timeline of dates, times and actions for the ICO. In the case of a school-based incident involving a member of staff or a pupil the HT would be responsible for logging everything.

5. Testing and reviewing this plan.

It is envisaged that scenarios will feature regularly as part of MAT Leadership meetings to ensure that senior staff are clear about their responsibilities and what to do in a crisis.

6. Support.

Should staff within the Trust require emotional support in a crisis they should speak to the Assistant to the Executive Board who can sign-post them to the various levels of support the Trust provides.

STAY CALM

INFORM THE RELEVANT PEOPLE

TAKE and FOLLOW ADVICE – from HR, LEGAL, GOVERNMENT, POLICE

HANDLE THE MEDIA APPROPRIATELY

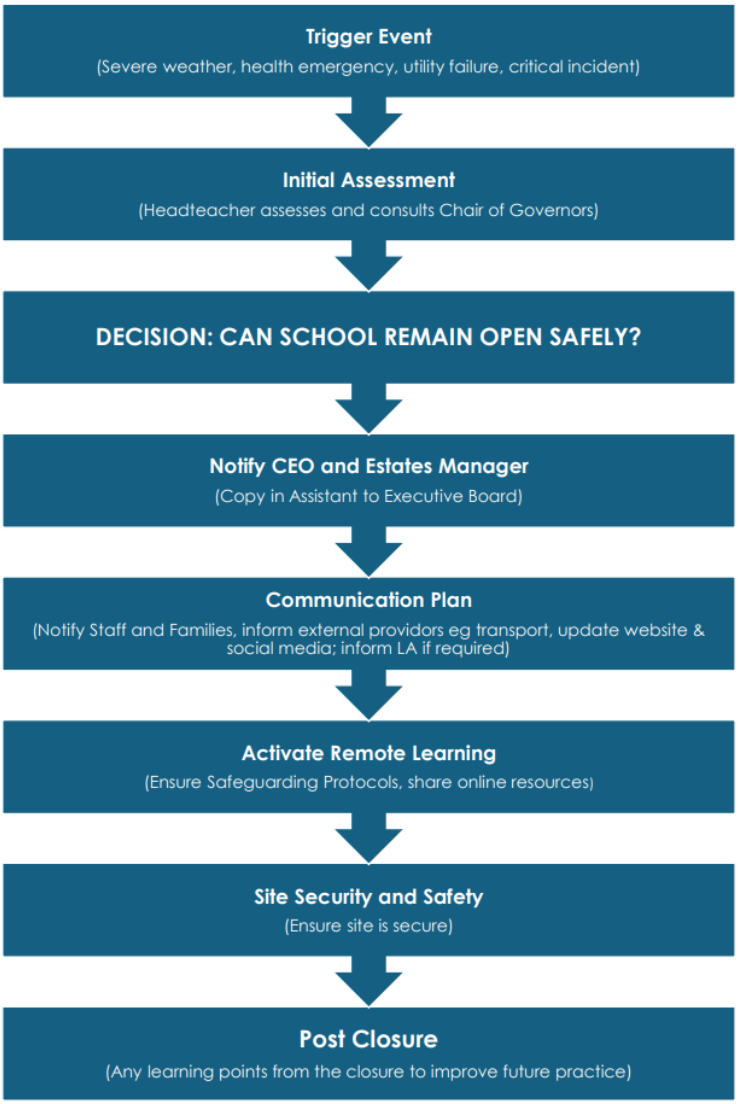
DEAL WITH THE CRISIS.

Appendix A is an internal operational document and is not intended for public distribution.

Appendix B: School Closure Communication Procedure

This procedure sets out communication requirements before, during and after any school closure arising from severe weather, health emergencies, utility failure or critical incidents. It ensures consistent, timely and coordinated communication with staff, families, transport providers, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Endeavour Multi Academy Trust School Closure Procedure



Appendix B is an internal operational document and is not intended for public distribution.