



Communications Policy

Version	Date	Author	Changes made:
0.1	01.01.21	Sarah Rostron	New policy created for the MAT
0.2	08.12.2021	Sarah Rostron	Signed off by MAT Directors

"I'm a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other, and how they can achieve the kind of freedoms that they're interested in."

Bill Gates

1. Introduction

The MAT recognises that good communication with children, their families and the wider community is essential. We love to hear from everyone. Visitors are very welcome; volunteers even more so.

This policy covers communications in general. You will find details of how the MAT/Academies communicates in relation to specific matters, such as admissions or complaints, in the policies which cover these topics. All of the MAT and Academies' policies, including this one, are available on the St. Bede & Tonge Moor Academy websites. Hard copies can be requested from each Academy office. Communication is a two-way process, so this policy aims to cover not just what the MAT/Academies want to say, but also what it needs to hear.

2. Communications from the MAT

2.1 The MAT/Academies aim to make sure that all communications are timely, useful and respectful.

2.2 Timely communications are issued neither too early nor too late to be useful. The MAT/Academies aim to give families sufficient warning of activities that need some preparation, changes to the normal timetable and any matters that relate to MAT/Academy business that require a response. Examples: Academy trips, home learning, whole MAT/Academy activities, changes to previously stated arrangements, changes to Academy procedures.

2.3 It is understood that, at times, some communications will have to be done at short notice. Academy closures due to bad weather are an example of this. In the event of this, the MAT/Academies will aim to communicate using: texts, emails, Academy websites, Twitter and Facebook pages, to ensure parents receive the information as quickly as possible.

2.4 The MAT/Academies aim to respond in a timely manner to all enquiries. In general, you should expect the following response times:

Phone Calls: as soon as possible, definitely within 24 hours during term time.
Emails: as soon as possible, definitely within 48 hours during term time.
Written letter: acknowledge receipt as soon as possible, definitely within 72 hours during term time.



2.5 Useful communications contain all the information that is required, expressed in a clear way. Jargon will be avoided. Acronyms and unfamiliar terms will always be explained. If the communication requires pupils or parents to do anything, this will be made clear.

Examples: Permission forms for activities, sign-ups for events, communications about pupil progress and achievement.

2.6 Respectful communications take into account that family life is busy, and that children's best interests are always best served if everyone communicates well with each other. The MAT/Academies will always aim to communicate openly, honestly and in a friendly way. This is particularly important in cases where communication might relate to difficult situations or areas of disagreement between the Academies and other parties.

Examples: Behaviour, unpaid debts, changes to MAT/Academy activities or policies.

2.7 Because family life is busy, the MAT/Academies will make every attempt to communicate the same information in multiple ways, so that it is always easy for families to have access to important information. The MAT/Academies aim to keep paper communication to a minimum. Families are encouraged to be proactive and familiarise themselves with the various ways that they can receive information.

Examples: Website, Email, Twitter, Facebook, Newsletter, Academy Offices.

2.8 Permission forms will normally be sent home electronically and by paper copy. Duplicates can be requested from the Academy Offices.

2.9 From time to time, the MAT/Academies will seek to communicate with the wider community. This may be in order to publicise events, share achievements, or something similar. If these communications involve specific pupils, they will be in line with the Academies use of photograph permissions which parents are asked to complete when children first start, and which are updated annually.

Examples: Newspaper articles, Press Releases, Brochures, Marketing Emails and Social Media.

2.10 Where the MAT/Academies receive a communication from an outside organisation, such as a journalist calling on behalf of a newspaper, website or broadcaster, the Academy's office staff will field the initial contact, and refer to the respective Head of School, or a designated member of the Leadership Team. The MAT/Academies will ask for all media enquiries to be submitted via email. Replies will be given in the shortest possible time but should not be expected immediately.



3. Communications to the MAT/Academies

3.1 The MAT/Academies welcome communications from pupils, their families and the wider community. Our commitment is that we will always aim to communicate in a timely, useful and respectful way. We ask that when communicating with the MAT/Academies you adhere to the same broad principles and start from the perspective that the MAT/Academies has your child's best interests at heart.

3.2 The MAT/Academies receive many different communications each day. With this in mind, they will always try to respond as soon as possible, as this is usually the quickest route to a resolution. We would ask for your patience if staff are not always as quick as you would like. This is usually to do with teaching commitments during the day, staff meetings and other commitments (see response times in section 2.4).

3.3 In the first instance, it is always preferable to start by talking to your child's class teacher, especially if the matter relates to class activities, your child's well-being or academic queries. Start with a quick conversation in the playground at the beginning or end of the day or contact the school offices to request the class teacher to make contact with yourself.

3.4 For more detailed or private communications, you can email the Academies offices '*For Attention Of*' your child's class teacher.

3.5 Reporting Absence: The most common reason for contacting the Academies is to report an absence. This should always be done by calling the main Academy's numbers and following the instructions on the automated message. This should be done before 8:30am, ON EACH DAY that your child is absent. Other requests for absence should be made in advance and through completion of the Holiday Request form which is available on request from the Academies offices. **The recording of phone calls is prohibited.**

3.6 General enquiries, including enquiries from the media, are best addressed to the Academies offices. The offices are staffed from 8:00am until 3:45pm Monday to Friday, during term time. The following email addresses are the best ones to use in the first instance:

St. Bede Academy: **information@stbedeacademy.org**
Tonge Moor Academy: **office@tongemooracademy.org**

Telephone calls are also welcome, especially to notify the Academies of any changes to collection arrangements, however we do ask for as much notice as possible to ensure we have time to relay the message to the appropriate member of staff.

3.7 Because the MAT/Academies offer many ways for you to contact us, contacting staff using personal emails, phone numbers, or other non-academy means is not allowed. Please ensure that the school offices always have up to date email and mobile telephone numbers.



3.8 Any complaint against the MAT/Academies will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution. Full details of our complaints procedure are available on Academy websites. Complaints about services provided by contractors or suppliers engaged by the Academies, or who use the Academies facilities, should be addressed directly to those contractors and suppliers.

3.9 The complaints policy also contains information about what you should do if you have concerns about SEN provision, safeguarding, abuse, grievances, disciplinary matters, exclusion and whistleblowing.

4. Social Media

4.1 In many ways, conversations on social media have replaced the face to face conversations that happen in the playground, and before and after school. The MAT/Academies use social media in a positive way, often to advertise upcoming events or to celebrate success.

4.2 Recognising that children's best interests are served when there is a strong bond between the home and the MAT/Academies, and given the multiple ways you are able to communicate with us, we kindly request that parents, families and others refrain from using social media to criticise the MAT/Academies. **Social media should never be used to criticise individual members of staff.** The MAT/Academies ability to deal with complaints in a timely and effective manner are significantly undermined when they are brought into the public eye on social media. The MAT/Academies reserve the right to request that inappropriate comments relating to individual members of staff are removed without delay.

4.3 Because we are Primary Academies, none of our pupils are legally old enough to have a social media account of their own. We strongly discourage parents from granting access to these platforms, sites and Apps until children are at the legal age. Please check the restrictions for each provider, as these may change from time to time.

4.4 We accept that some older children will have a mobile phone of their own. Children are permitted to bring these phones to Academies, as they are useful for parents to keep in touch at the beginning and the end of the day. Our policy of asking pupils to switch off their phones and hand them in to the class teacher for the duration of the Academy day works very well, and we will continue with this for the foreseeable future.

4.5 If you need to contact your child for any reason during the Academy day, please get in touch with the Academy offices on email, or via the telephone. A message can be passed on easily and reliably using this method. (See also section 3.6).

5. The MAT/Academies Websites

5.1 Our websites are: **stbedeprimarymat.org;**
www.stbedeacademy.org;
www.tongemooracademy.org



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MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

This the main way for pupils, their families and the wider community to get information about the MAT/Academies. The majority of the information you will need, and all of the statutory information the MAT/Academies is required to show, is easily accessible here, including important contact details, Academies policies and events.

5.2 The MAT/Academies make every effort to maintain their websites on a regular basis. If you spot any errors or omissions, please report them to the Academy offices via email.