

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust's

Communication Guidance

For parents and carers



**OUR LADY
OF LOURDES**

CATHOLIC MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

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Our Mission Statement

We are a partnership of 36 Catholic schools that form Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (OLOL CMAT).

Our aim is to provide the very best Catholic education for all in our community and so improve life chances through spiritual, academic and social development.

By placing the person and teachings of Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do, we will:

- Follow the example of Our Lady of Lourdes by nurturing everyone in a spirit of compassion, service and healing
- Work together so that we can all achieve our full potential, deepen our faith and realise our God-given talents
- Make the world a better place, especially for the most vulnerable in our society, by doing 'little things with great love' St Thérèse of Lisieux

Principles and aims

OLOL CMAT is committed to the promotion of effective communication between all members of Trust community and beyond.

Our objectives are to:

- Have clear communications guidance which will help our Trust community keep parents/carers and staff well-informed.
- Make our written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible by being open and honest using jargon-free, plain English which can be easily understood by everyone.
- Ensure that there is a robust process in place for consultation between the schools, parents/carers, staff members and pupils on key areas.
- Ensure that the methods in place are fully aligned to the Trust's mission and vision of providing an 'Outstanding Catholic education for all.'
- Regularly monitor and evaluate communications to ensure the best possible methods are used to communicate to our Trust community.

Why do we need communications guidance?

The first step to balancing the needs of our staff with the requirements of our parents/carers for frequent, useful and relevant communication, is to introduce clear communications guidance.

As we are all part of the Trust, it is our individual responsibility to ensure that we engage in communication activity that does not seek to damage the reputation of the Trust.

Parents/carers, directors and pupils also have a part to play in reflecting their school's reputation.

Good communication is clear, professional, timely and appropriate. It should be useful and relevant to all parties, with a clear purpose as to the reason for the correspondence.

Our responsibilities

School responsibilities

It is the responsibility of our schools to:

- Ensure all key policies, documents and procedures are kept up-to-date and are accessible to the school community.
- Inform parents/carers of all school events with realistic timelines.
- Keep parents/carers informed of the progress of their child at regular intervals.
- Make reasonable adjustments to the way it communicates with staff, students, parents and carers.
- Communicate with young people following agreed procedures in the Child Protection Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education guidelines.
- Ensure that all staff receive clear and consistent communications.
- To consult with and work in partnership with parents/carers on the wellbeing and education of their children.
- To seek the views of parents/carers and students on their education and learning environment and ensure that their ideas and feedback are always treated with respect and built into planning and development. (for example, regular circulation of parent and student questionnaires).
- To seek creative ways of making key messages relevant to the communities served by each school.
- To remind staff of OLoL CMAT policies, Code of Conduct etc. and the relevance to the school. Manage any data it collects from staff, students and parents/carers in accordance with the relevant Trust data policies.

Parent/carer responsibilities

It is the responsibility of our parents/carers to:

- Provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication.
- Report child absence as soon as possible on the morning of the absence, for full details please refer to the school's attendance policy (copy under 'Policies' on the school website).
Schools will not send acknowledgements out regarding an absence communication.
- Staff who are also parents/carers must follow the same procedures as they would either contacting the school or parent.

Methods of communication

Emails, letters and other written communication

All written communication should be polite, professional, grammatically correct and spell checked.

Email

OLoL CMAT value the importance of work/life balance, and our staff are not expected to write and respond to emails outside of working hours.

Best practice

- It is expected that all legitimate emails are acknowledged.
- Make email subject lines clear and straightforward for the recipient.
- Emails should be short and clear and should not be used to discuss sensitive information.
- Font colour **red** and FULL CAPITAL WORDS should only be used to highlight key content and avoid using exclamation marks. These styles are often used to convey anger so be mindful how you use them. Capital letters can be interpreted as 'shouting' so consider how these are used.

Letters

Any letters received from a parent/carer that require a response, should be acknowledged by telephone, letter or email within two working days and then responded to within a reasonable time frame.

Copies of correspondence with parents/carers will be placed on pupil files on MIS.

Any letters of concern or complaint should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy (copy available on the policy page of the school website).

Newsletters

Whole school information will be issued to all parents/carers via a newsletter.

A link to an electronic copy of will be emailed to all parents/carers and carers as well as being published on the school website and on your school communications app (Arbor etc).

Hard copies of newsletters should be available from the school upon request.

Parents/carers are encouraged to provide the school with a current email address for prompt and effective communication. However, if we are unable to obtain a current email address for any parent or carer, communications will be delivered home in hard copy by their child or sent by post.

Automated texts

Automated texts from school communications apps are sent to parents/carers (including in the event of an emergency closure of the school) but are not used for general communications from staff.

Any text message replies received from a parent/carer will be responded to using an alternative means of communication such as email or telephone.

Telephone calls

When staff are teaching full-time, running clubs, working with pupils at lunchtime or after school, telephone communication can sometimes be difficult to schedule. Parents/carers may not get an immediate verbal response because of this.

In a non-emergency, a return call should be made within two working days, with any follow up action from the request /query/problem being dealt within a reasonable time frame.

If calling a parent/carer and there is no answer, staff will always try to leave a message, making it clear who the parent/carer should then contact in school. No personal or sensitive information will be left in the message.

If, at any time, a member of staff believes that the language or tone of the conversation has become unacceptable (for example, by the other person being rude or aggressive) parents/carers will be issued with a warning. If the behaviour continues, staff have the right to end the phone call.

We do not give consent for parents/carers to record telephone calls with school or trust employees; in the event of a telephone call being recorded without consent, we may need to politely end the phone call. Recordings obtained covertly without consent of all parties will not be accepted as evidence in relation to a complaint. Instead, we suggest a meeting in school to resolve your concerns; the meeting can be minuted and the minutes will be shared with you after the meeting to ensure they are an accurate representation of the meeting.

Please refer to your school's Home School Agreement on the policies page of the school website for further information.

Social media

All schools are encouraged to maintain regular social media channels with a view to keeping family members and communities up to date on school developments and important news.

The most popular channels owned and used by schools in our Trust are Facebook, X and Instagram. On these channels we will follow relevant figures, organisations and companies who fit with our values and interests. We will not follow families or pupils (whether currently on roll or not).

The primary use for social media is to share content based on curriculum, school values and to communicate messages to families and champion the work and successes of all of our young people.

Only children whose families have given explicit consent will be used in photographs on social media and only the first name of the child will be displayed.

Staff will not communicate or accept friend requests from pupils or parents/carers on social networking sites/personal accounts such as Facebook, X and Instagram.

Additionally, school social media channels will not be used as a communication channel for personal messages to parents/carers.

School/class blogs may be set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning and will be carefully managed and monitored.

How to contact your school with a query

Query	Who to contact	Contact information
Absences	Use the Arbor app or telephone the school office	See school website contact details on homepage
Complaints	Telephone or email the OLOL Trust complaints team	T: 0115 8515454 E: dpo@ololcatholicmat.co.uk
Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SAR)	School office	See school website contact details on homepage
Safeguarding concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead	See school website, Information tab
General queries	School office	See school website contact details on homepage



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