

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Policy type	Recommended
Review period	Every three years
Last reviewed on	Spring Term 2022
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Approval level	Executive Board

Approved by (Name, date, signature)

Executive Board, 3rd February 2022
Executive Board Chair, David Kreyling
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POLICY FOR COMMUNICATION

Mission

We believe in investing in people. As professionals in the teaching and training professions, we strive to provide a better future for the children, young people and home settings we work with. Success for us means unleashing the potential of each individual so they can grow, develop and reach the potential of which they are capable. Our values are grounded in our determination to be the change we want to see in the world, through passion, commitment and integrity. We strive to plant a seed of kindness and compassion in a generation that will produce resilience and hope and enable them to aspire and achieve productive and fulfilled lives. Our success is measured in the lives we changed.

At the Omnia Foundation, we create a secure and safe environment that encourages communication, self-belief, mutual respect and success. We provide a rich and balanced curriculum that develops every child, allowing them to achieve their true potential.

Aims of the policy:

- To provide clarity to foundation staff on the protocols and expectations around communication
- To provide clarity to home settings regarding how information will be communicated to them
- To provide a framework through which relationships with third parties can be effectively maintained and managed
- To mitigate the risk of communication being mismanaged
- To protect the reputation of the foundation and all those who work within and around it

The policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

Communication Management

Even in a small organisation, the risk of information being miscommunicated or mistimed is great. The impact of poorly disseminated information on all stakeholders can be damaging on several levels. It can lead to confusion, uncertainty, feelings of exclusion, of authority being undermined and ultimately in the worst-case scenario can result in mistrust and suspicion of the organisation as a whole.

Clarity, credibility and trust are included in the framework for the foundation's Core Values. Honesty, openness and clarity therefore are necessary components of communication management in order to preserve the integrity of 1) the messages that must be conveyed; 2) the personnel delivering those messages and 3) the stakeholders receiving them.

In addition, it is essential that all stakeholders respect the information that flows constantly through the organisation for it to be able to function and the boundaries of their role in that process.

It is helpful to adopt the principle of "all information shared is confidential unless told otherwise."

The Foundation Chain of Command

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for overarching organisational strategy including but not restricted to changes in all aspects of policy, staffing structure and use of premises. The vast majority of information that needs to be shared by the COO will be shared with the Head of Foundation in the first instance and sometimes the Senior Leadership Team. However, there are occasionally more personal matters which may influence organisational policy and it is necessary for the COO to hold discussions with individuals in order to inform decision-making at Executive level. It is important that the integrity of such discussions is preserved and therefore confidentiality is key.

The Head of Foundation is responsible for operational management and implementation of policy and strategy on a daily basis. Their experience and judgment forms part of the constant evaluation of operations carried out by the COO. The vast majority of information that needs to be shared by the HoF will be shared with the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance and sometimes the whole staff. As for the COO, there are often occasions when the HoF will need to engage in discussions with individuals and the outcomes may or may not be shared with other stakeholders.

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for operational management and implementation of aspects of policy that affect their strand of delivery. Their experience and judgment forms part of the evaluation of policy carried out by the Head of Foundation. The vast majority of information that needs to be shared by the SLT will be shared with their respective teams in the first instance and sometimes with the whole staff. As for other leaders and managers, there are occasions when members of the SLT will need to hold discussions with individuals and the outcomes may or may not be shared with other stakeholders.

The Learning and Teaching team is responsible for planning and delivering learning opportunities for the students in line with organisational policy. Their experience and judgment forms part of the evaluation of policy carried out by the Head of Foundation. The chain of command around matters relating to learning and teaching or the welfare of a student within a hub would usually follow the teacher > HLTA > SA route. Information that needs to be communicated to the HoF or to SLT should come from the SEN Teacher.

The Emotional Wellbeing team is responsible for planning and delivering interventions and support that provide opportunities for the social, emotional and mental health development of students in line with organisational policy. Their experience and judgment forms part of the evaluation of policy carried out by the Head of Foundation. The chain of command around matters relating to the welfare of a student would usually follow the Senior EWC/EWC > teacher > HLTA > SA route. Information that needs to be communicated to the HoF or SLT should come from the Senior EWC.

The Support team is responsible for the smooth running of the foundation on a daily basis. Their experience and judgment forms part of the evaluation of policy carried out by the Head of Foundation. Communication needs to take place directly with them from all levels of the organisation but the communication of strategic messages should come from the HoF or SLT.

In the case of safeguarding and child protection concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads hold authority over any other leader or manager. Concerns must be reported immediately in line with the Child Protection Policy.

In the case of whistleblowing, the chain of command is suspended and stakeholders should address their concerns to the most senior member of the organisation immediately above the person to whom those concerns relate.

How information is communicated

The volume of information that is processed at any one time within the organisation is significant so management systems must be efficient and effective. It is impossible to avoid all situations where communication is mismanaged but the following measures will help to minimise the chance of that happening.

Confidentiality

All members of the organisation are contractually bound by professional confidentiality. Serious breaches of confidentiality can result in disciplinary action.

On an informal level, it is important to be aware of the difference between valuable information sharing and gossip. Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times.

Verbal communication and feedback

“Team” meetings and feedback from meetings – minutes are a helpful tool in recording outcomes and actions from meetings. Minutes of Executive Board meetings and SLT meetings are kept as a matter of course. Where minutes are not confidential, they are available to view.

Whole staff meetings – in addition to professional development meetings, a weekly business meeting is recommended for communicating the shared calendar of events for the following week. Individual staff should add to the calendar to ensure that all planned events are made known to all parties, especially the support team who may have practical arrangements to make.

WhatsApp – WhatsApp is an effective and secure platform for information sharing among staff. Sometimes communication is best delivered via video as written communications are open to interpretation. WhatsApp enables this to be shared easily.

Facebook – Facebook is an effective and wide-reaching platform for information sharing via video with home settings and the wider community. All communication via Facebook must be in line with the Use of the Foundation Facebook Page Policy.

Performance Management Review meetings – regular meetings take place within the performance management process and information can be shared between staff and their line managers. Any matters arising that need to be raised with SLT or HoF or COO will be passed on by the line manager.

Meetings with third parties – the Omnia Foundation is part of a wider group of companies and as part of this structure, meetings take place that will affect life in the foundation without impacting on operational policy and procedure. Matters arising from such meetings will be communicated back to the foundation by the COO or the HoF depending upon the nature of the meeting.

In addition, as part of their roles and responsibilities, all members of staff will participate in meetings with third parties at some point, eg outside providers, outside agencies, home settings, transport companies, construction companies etc. Matters arising from these meetings will invariably need to be communicated to the Head of Foundation and/or reported in line with policy (eg CPOMs). The HoF will decide how the information should be shared, with whom and when.

It is recommended that formal meetings with home settings are followed up with a letter that summarises the matters and actions arising. These should be kept in the student’s folder on the hub.

Telephone calls – where telephone calls are made and the outcomes need to be recorded, these should be followed up with an email confirming the matters and actions arising from the call.

Written communication

Email – this is of course the preferred method of written communication and is very useful to provide an audit trail of discussion where parties cannot meet in person either due to time constraints or availability. When sending emails, it is important to copy in parties who need to be aware of the discussion but not necessarily part of it and to take care that those included in the thread have the appropriate level of clearance for that information to be shared under information sharing protocols. Copying in the wrong person constitutes a data breach under the Data Protection Act 2018 and associated regulations and should be recorded on the company register of data breaches.

Letters – formal letters are essential for communication outside of the organisation. Whilst these may be sent as attachments, it is important to use headed paper and sent as a PDF as these cannot then be altered or tampered with.

WhatsApp – WhatsApp is a useful and secure tool for communicating informally among the whole staff and team groups. Initials of parties that need to be identified in-message should be used in place of full names.

SMS – text messaging is a useful and secure tool for communicating with individuals either formally or informally. As with any messaging platform, initials of parties that need to be referenced should be used in place of full names.

Facebook – Facebook is a great platform for sharing narratives around activities that are taking place within the foundation. All written posts should comply with the foundation’s Use of Facebook Page Policy.

Who, where, when, what, why and how

With the significant volume of information being handled constantly within the organisation, it is sometimes difficult to decide who should deliver the messages, to whom and how that is best communicated. If a stakeholder is unsure of whether certain information should be shared, it is important to ask a line manager. Similarly if information is shared with you by someone who potentially does not have the authority to share it then it is important to direct them to their line manager or to the Head of Foundation.

Implementation & Monitoring arrangements

The Head of Foundation has responsibility for implementing the policy with the support of the Senior Leadership Team

It will be monitored by the Chief Operating Officer on behalf of the Executive Board

The Head of Foundation will review the policy every three years and any changes will be ratified by the Executive Board
