Email Communication Policy

Adopted by CEO: 11.11.2019
Next Review: Autumn 2021

Outstanding Achievement for All

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1. Background:

The use of email within a school is an essential means of communication for both staff and students. Educationally, email offers significant benefits including direct written contact between schools on different projects, be they staff-based or student-based, within school or in an international context.

Members of staff need to understand how to style an email in relation to good network etiquette and need to teach students to handle email in the same way.

2. Introduction:

The use of email, both within Ambitions Academies Trust (AAT) and with the wider community, is an essential means of communication for both staff and students. In the context of school, emails should **not** be considered private and staff should assume that anything they write or email could become public. Therefore they should ensure that they are professional, maintaining a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives.

Any data exchanged with an external agency must comply with the AAT's data protection policy and GDPR principles.

3. Objectives:

This policy outlines the procedures and protocols to be implemented when staff use emails.

4. Managing Emails:

All staff are given their own email account to be used as a work-based tool. The email account must be used for all business to minimise the risk of receiving unsolicited or malicious emails and to avoid the risk of personal contact information being revealed.

For the safety and security of users and recipients all mail is filtered and logged by AAT's IT provider and if necessary, email histories can be traced.

Staff must comply with the following:

- Under no circumstances should staff contact students, parents or conduct any school business using any **personal** email addresses.
- It is the responsibility of each account holder to keep their password/s secure.
- All external emails, including those to parents, should be constructed in the same way as a formal letter written on academy letter headed paper (ie. use of Dear, Mr/Mrs/Ms).
- If any issues/ complaints are involved then staff sending emails to parents, external organisations, or students are advised to cc. their line manager/s and other relevant individuals.
- AAT requires a standard disclaimer to be attached to all email correspondence - *"This email and any attachment to it are confidential, intended for the recipient only and should not be used without the permission of Ambitions Academies Trust. Unless you are the intended recipient, you may not use, copy or disclose either the message or any information contained in the message. If you are not the intended recipient, you should delete this email and any copies and notify the sender immediately. Ambitions Academies Trust cannot accept liability for any damage sustained as a result of software viruses. You should ensure that it is virus free before opening it.*

Think before you print!"
This disclaimer is added automatically to all emails.
- All emails should be written and checked carefully before sending.
- Emails created or received as part of a staff member's role will be subject to disclosure in response to a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Staff **must** manage their email account in an effective way, namely:

- Delete all emails of short-term value.
- Organise emails into folders and carry out frequent house-keeping on all folders and archives.
- Respond to emails in a timely fashion. A holding email should be sent as soon as possible and responded to within three days.
- In the event of non-compliance of responding to emails in a timely fashion staff should report this to their line manager.
- However, staff email accounts are accessed (whether directly, by webmail or on non-academy hardware) all academy and Trust ICT, e-safety, email and data protection policies will apply.
- Staff must inform AAT's IT provider immediately if they receive a suspicious email. This **must not** be opened.
- Staff **must** inform their line manager immediately if they receive an offensive email.

5. Sending Emails:
- When composing an email to a parent or non-staff member always use formal language.
- If sending emails containing personal, confidential, classified or financially sensitive data to external third parties or agencies follow guidance "Emailing personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information".
- Use own AAT email account so that it is clear who the originator of the message is.
- Keep the number and relevance of email recipients, in particular those who are being copied in, to the minimum necessary and appropriate.
- Do not send whole school emails unless essential for academy business.
- Do not send or forward attachments unnecessarily. Wherever possible, send the location path to the shared drive rather than sending attachments.

6. Receiving Emails:
- Check emails regularly.
- Activate "out of office" notification when away for extended periods.
- Never open attachments from an untrusted source. If unsure, always consult AAT's IT provider.
- Do not use the email systems to store attachments. Detach and save business-related work to the appropriate shared drive/folder.
- The setting to automatically forward and/or delete of emails is not allowed. Individuals are required to "manage" their accounts.

7. Emailing Personal, Sensitive, Confidential or Classified Information:

Assess whether the information can be transmitted by other secure means before using email. Emailing confidential data without the use of encryption is strictly prohibited.

Where the conclusion is that the AAT email must be used to transmit such data, then exercise caution when sending the email and **always** follow these checks **before** releasing the email:

- Verify the details including the accurate email address of any intended recipient of the information.
- Verify the details of the requestor before responding to email requests for information.
- Do not copy or forward the email to any more recipients than is absolutely necessary.
- Do not send the information to any person whose details you have been unable to separately verify.
- Send the information as an encrypted document **attached** to an email.
- Provide the encryption key or password by a separate contact with the recipient(s).
- Do not identify such information in the subject line of any email.
- Request confirmation of safe receipt.
- When sending an email containing personal or sensitive data the name of the individual is not to be included in the subject line and the document containing the information must be encrypted.
- If a data breach occurs staff **must** follow the data breach notification policy.

8. Students and Email:

- If students are issued with an email account when joining the Academy that is active for the time they attend, staff should make students aware of the following when using email:
  - o Student email users are required to use the appropriate formal language in their messages.
  - o Students should not reveal any personal details about themselves or others in email communication.
  - o Students should not use email to arrange to meet anyone.
  - o Students must ensure that any email attachments they receive are checked for viruses before opening.
  - o Students must immediately inform a trusted member of staff if they receive an offensive email.
  - o Students should inform other relevant staff if they become aware of any student misuse of emails.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The policy will be monitored and evaluated regularly considering any incidents which occur or technological developments which might lead to a change in policy.

10. Email Protocol:

In 2018-19 academic year SAA piloted an email protocol as part of their work/life balance strategy. The Trust would now like to roll out this protocol to all staff from September 2019:

- From 7.00pm Friday until Monday morning 7.00am, no emails should be sent.
- During half term from 7.00pm on the day in which the academy closes for the holiday until the Monday morning 7.00am the academy reopens, no emails should be sent.

- During Christmas, Easter and Summer, from 7.00pm of the day the academy closes until 7.00am of the morning the academy reopens, no emails should be sent.
- Secondary Sector and Tregonwell PC – during the summer holiday, from 7.00pm of the day the academy closes until the day prior to the exam results being received, no emails should be sent. Between the day prior to the GCSE results until the third day after the results, emails may be sent. Following this, emails should not be sent until the first day that the academy reopens.
- Support staff who have 52week contracts should expect normal email communication outside of term time unless they are on holiday.

It is recognised that during the week we all work different hours to reflect our personal circumstances. However, it is expected that when emails are sent after 7.00pm that an email delay is added to ensure the recipient does not receive it until the following morning at 7.00am.

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