

# SOKE EDUCATION TRUST

## Communication Strategy



# Communication Strategy

## Introduction

Soke Education Trust wants all communication from the Trust and its respective schools to be consistent, accurate, honest, timely and relevant. The Trust places a high value on its ability to listen and react to comments and feedback both from its staff members and external stakeholders. This document sets out the Trust's communication strategy for internal (staff members, children) and external (parents, wider community, businesses, media, other schools and trusts etc.) stakeholders.

We strongly believe that effective communications in all aspects of our work helps us to:

- Build and maintain trust
- Prevent and resolve problems and avoid misinterpretation
- Provide clarity and direction
- Create new and improved relationships
- Build confidence and reassurance
- Increase engagement
- Increase productivity and wellbeing amongst our staff and children
- Create a recognised trust brand
- Raise the Trust's profile
- Maintain high standards and expectations

The Trust believes in the principles of ethical leadership and the values the qualities of fairness, accountability, trust, honesty, equality & respect and endeavours to implement them in all its work.

## Internal Communication

Effective internal communication helps ensure that everyone is working collaboratively towards achieving the Trust's strategic vision, values and objectives. It develops a cohesive culture and empowers staff to make the right decisions in line with those goals. This in turn leads to greater efficiency and productivity and improves outcomes for all of our children. There are many forms of internal communication and whilst our schools have their own structures of internal communications, Soke Education Trust sets out consistency in the following approaches which align to the wider strategic aims and objectives.

### Staff Forum

An annual Trust staff forum will be held which gives every staff member (from all schools) an opportunity to come together, share experiences and offer feedback to trustees. Annual staff forums are generally centred on a theme, e.g. wellbeing, in which important feedback is captured and utilised by the Trust board and leadership teams to shape future decisions. In between the annual forums, staff and trustees are able to engage on a more informal basis via Local Governor visits to schools.

### Open Door Approach

The Trust strives to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for staff to feed in their views and comments outside of the formal channels in place. The Trust and its schools also attempt

wherever possible to respond appropriately to suggestions and comments. Each school within the Trust will:

- Maintain feedback boxes in key school locations for staff.
- Ensure that opportunities for informal communications are in place including an 'open door' culture staff easily speak with the Headteacher and SLT members.
- Publish on their website a central email account for enquiries.
- Ensure there are ample opportunities and mechanisms for staff to raise comments, suggestions and feedback to the headteacher and Trust.
- Annually issue a survey to all staff that has been agreed by the trust to support a review of engagement and satisfaction.

### **Internal Emails**

Emailing colleagues is an effective and quick method of communication and is promoted by the Trust. However, effective and appropriate use is crucial. Particular care should be taken when writing emails to ensure that the principles of ethical leadership and the Trust's Code of Conduct are upheld. Staff should not write anything in an email that they would not want to be shared more widely. Staff should also note that any emails, even after deletion, remain on the server and may be used in a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request by a member of the public. Whilst some members of staff prefer to work at different hours and send emails during the weekend/evenings this is not an expectation and a reply outside of working hours should not be expected. Staff are encouraged to remove email notifications from their devices to support a healthy work/life balance. A response should be made within 24 hours of receiving correspondence on a working day, even if it is a holding email while further investigations/information is sourced.

### **Face to Face and Indirect Non-Verbal Communication**

Soke Education Trust promotes a culture of ethical leadership and we are committed to consistently applying these principles in everything we do. The Trust believes that every member of staff is in a position of leadership and can have great influence on colleagues. As such, the Trust's ethical leadership principles should be upheld at all times. This includes all forms of face-to-face communications with colleagues, be that informal or formal. Staff are reminded of the power of non-verbal communication in the form of body language, facial expression and behaviour. The Trust expects every staff member to be mindful of their own non-verbal communication and consider how this can affect (and be received by) others.

### **Parent Communications**

We aim to build good relationships with all our stakeholders and to resolve queries and concerns promptly. Each school recognises that their school community has people from different backgrounds, different cultures and different beliefs and as such we consider a wide range of views in developing our policy and practice.

Across our schools, we establish our policy and plans based on legal requirements, academically researched methodology and the publicised ethos of our school. Therefore, although we may not be able to align our practice with the wishes of every parent, we are committed to working with partnership. We are unable to discuss the plans, provision or differentiation used with any child other than the parents own but we are happy to make time, by appointment, to discuss and resolve anything relating to your child's needs. We are happy to listen and consider parents' views and very much value parental input into plans, provision or differentiation used with their child or children.

Across our schools, we use digital communication systems (Google Classroom, DoJo) to share information with parents. Classteachers aim to respond to queries promptly, however we recognise that there are a number of tasks that teachers complete outside the school's core hours. In normal circumstances, a response from the classteacher or school office will be given within 24 hours of receipt, except where a query has been sent and received over a weekend/school holiday, even if this is a holding responding pending further investigations. We understand that it is sometimes easiest to send communication while we are thinking about it but in the interests of everyone's wellbeing and work life balance, we encourage the use of 'schedule send' facilities when sending emails.

In the first instance we would encourage all queries to be directed to your child's classteacher because they know your child best. If you feel you have not had a resolution to your query the next step is a member of the Senior Leadership team this would be Phase leader/Assistant Head/Deputy Head. Our Complaints policy can be found on our website if you feel this is needed. If parents/carers feel they need to escalate their concerns they need to do this through the school's procedures before contacting other external organisations e.g. Ofsted. External agencies will expect the school's policy and procedures to have been exhausted before they will make any enquiries themselves.

On occasions, to ensure smooth communication and a positive relationship between all parties, we may direct queries through one point of contact or through written communication only.

To ensure good communication about school life, we provide regular newsletters which contain information about the school's recent activity and key dates & messages.

Each school has a website that is an important source of information about day-to-day school activity and is the best and first place for parents, carers and stakeholders. We provide a search facility to make accessing information even quicker. If, after looking on the school website, you are still unsure, the school office will be able to support you.

## **Social Media**

The Trust and its associated schools make use of social media to promote its activity and to attract prospective pupils and staff. All communication should adhere to the Trust's ethical approach.

To ensure social media use is effective we set clear guidelines for the use of social media by staff, pupils and parents and address issues such as acceptable content, privacy settings, online behaviour, and consequences for misuse.

### **Internal Parties**

- If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the organisation in a social media environment, you must still seek approval for such communication from your manager.
- Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet. On personal social networks and messaging services— even closed ones like Facebook and WhatsApp – you should be aware that posts can be shared outside of your network.
- On professional and personal social networks, you should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.

- Professional posts and communications should follow the brand guidelines and voice of the organisation
- All communication should be proof read
- Social Media comments should not bring into disrepute the organisation or school, whether directly or indirectly.
- Social media must not be used to harass, bully, defame, disparage or discriminate the organisation, our staff, pupils or any third party.
- Communication should never be used to make derogatory comments, use offensive or inappropriate language or impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- You should avoid exposing yourself to a situation where your personal advice or views could potentially be interpreted as those of the Soke Education Trust
- You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics

In addition, we provide training and support for online safety and we regularly monitor social media accounts to ensure that posts and comments adhere to the our guidelines. We will always ensure we have consent before posting pictures or videos of pupils, staff or third party visitors on social media platforms.

#### External Parties

- Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet. On personal social networks and messaging services– even closed ones like Facebook and WhatsApp – you should be aware that posts can be shared outside of your network.
- Social Media comments should not bring into disrepute the organisation or school, whether directly or indirectly.
- Social media must not be used to harass, bully, defame, disparage or discriminate the organisation, our staff, pupils or any third party.
- Direct communication with the school should always be made rather than using social media for communication.

#### **Review and Monitoring**

Through regular evaluation and review of our communication practices we will ensure that communication remains effective, relevant and enhances staff and parental engagement. As a result, we anticipate continuous improvement, improved collaboration, increased morale, and a greater sense of ownership of our organisation. This will lead to a more positive and productive environment, ultimately benefiting pupil outcomes. The success of the strategy will be quantified by increased positivity in stakeholder surveys, an annual reduction in staff absence and increased retention of staff.

Example Calendar

**Trust Communication Calendar**

Month	Activity		
	Internal	Social Media	Editorial
September	Staff Newsletter	Welcome to New Staff Celebrate partnerships with New School	Soke Debate
October		Strategic direction for the year	
November			
December	Code of Conduct Expectations		
January	Staff Newsletter	Welcome to New Staff Celebrate partnerships with New School	
February			
March	Staff Newsletter	Ofsted outcomes	Ofsted outcomes Soke Science Week
April		Welcome to New Staff Celebrate partnerships with New School	Success of CIF bids
May	Staff Forum		
June	Code of Conduct Expectations		Soke Maths Challenge
July		SAT results	Soke Olympics