

## **Talbot Heath Electronic Communication Policy: Staff**

**Date of last adoption:** 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Date of next adoption:** Autumn Term 2025

Talbot Heath School recognises that emails are a very efficient and effective way of exchanging information between individuals. However, the school is committed to ensuring that staff are able to achieve an appropriate work-life balance.

With regard to communication between colleagues, including the Governing Body, between staff and parents, and between staff and pupils, it is the expectation that communication takes place within each individual's designated work hours, except for exceptional circumstances relating to either crisis management or safeguarding.

### **Contractual hours**

There is a significant variation in the hours which individual staff are contracted to work, dependent on their job role, so it is agreed that members of the school community are therefore not obliged to respond to emails outside of their own working hours and whenever possible, should only send emails within their designated work hours.

The school offices are staffed during term time and as such, will respond to or forward messages as appropriate. However during school breaks (half terms, Easter and Christmas) office staffing levels are reduced and whilst messages will still be read and forwarded, as time allows, it should be appreciated that staff required for responses may themselves be unavailable until the start of the next term.

### **Suggested best practice**

Staff may wish to adopt an approach of saving any emails they write, outside of designated hours, as drafts, to be sent during the next working day. Most email providers (such as Gmail) allow the sender to "schedule" an email, so that its delivery will occur at a time of the senders' choosing.

Time needs to be taken to read and respond to emails and therefore, due to the nature/number of lessons during a typical teaching day, it is unlikely that a response to an email will be instant. Individuals should not expect an immediate response to any routine communication they send, particularly if it was sent outside of designated hours.

### **Communication channels**

It is recommended, for emergency purposes/urgent matters, that individual staff and line managers have a means of contacting each other, which is not email-based, such as the sharing of a contact phone number.

Staff must check their email prior to the commencement of the school day, as this is the time when important messages are often communicated to staff. It would be desirable to recheck emails before the commencement of the afternoon session. School iPads facilitate this process.

Staff, members of the Governing Body and pupils may only use official email accounts on their school devices (@talbotheath.org). Personal email accounts are not to be used on

school devices. Personal email accounts must also not be used by staff for communication with pupils or parents/guardians.

It is not appropriate to use other social media platforms to communicate about school matters. Whilst the school has both a Twitter and Facebook account, these are used to publicise events and acknowledge achievements. They are not appropriate as a means of communicating with staff and so queries should not be posted on these platforms.

EYFS and KS1 use SeeSaw and Tapestry platforms with students; but parents and pupils are aware that the communication tool within these programmes should not be used.

### **Etiquette and GDPR**

All emails sent must be professional in tone and content and comply with GDPR guidelines. As a formal means of communication, individuals should address their messages appropriately, with pupils and parents using a teacher's official title and surname. Whenever possible though, pupils should endeavour to speak to a member of staff in person.

It is recommended that the "subject line" of an email does not include the names of the individual(s) which the email pertains to.

If you are copied (cc) into an email for information purposes, it is not to be expected that a formal response is required.

Parents register their preferred email addresses with the school as part of the enrolment process and it is their responsibility to inform the school of any changes to these email addresses, so that communications sent by the School are received. Parents should also use these recognised email addresses when contacting the School.

Personal information (as defined in the GDPR Policy) must not be emailed to external email addresses from school email accounts, as emails are sent in an unencrypted format which is not secure.

Individuals should report immediately any offensive emails which they receive. In the first instance, pupils should report these to their tutors and staff to their line managers.

### **This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:**

GDPR policy

ICT, mobile equipment and digital citizenship policy