



The Flourish Federation Staff Communication Policy

Ratified	1 st October 2025	Review	September 2026
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Staff Communication Policy

At The Flourish Federation, we have developed a Staff Communication Policy containing communication guidance as part of our commitment to staff wellbeing, professional respect, and sustainable work-life management. The initial policy was finalised following consultation with staff and is underpinned by the principle of a *Right to Disconnect* — the belief that all employees have the right to disengage from work-related communications outside of reasonable working hours without pressure or expectation to respond. By embedding this approach, we aim to support a culture where professional dialogue thrives during the working day, while personal time is protected and respected.

Background

For some, the receiving of communications at night or over weekends and holidays can cause an additional level of stress and anxiety; this is not supportive of staff (of all levels) wellbeing and the capacity to 'switch off' from the pressures of work and enjoy family or home time.

Research supports a link between organisational after-hours communication expectations and emotional exhaustion, which hinders work-life balance and the irony that modern workplace technologies may be hurting the very employees that they were designed to help. (*Liuba Belkin, Lehigh University, 2016*).

This can be for various reasons:

Feeling pressured to reply; alerting you to another task or role that needs completing.

Working together, we have decided to set recommendations for staff to limit the use of communications to within reasonable limitations, allowing for productivity, stakeholder engagement and positive communication, whilst limiting impact on both wellbeing and workload.



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Procedures and Guidelines:

Emails:

- Where possible, staff are encouraged not have email apps/notifications set-up on their personal mobile devices.
- Emails should not be sent between 7pm and 7am and only with prior agreement at weekends.
- Leadership at all levels will not send management-focused emails outside of the agreed hours unless it is an exceptional circumstance. For example, in the instance of OFSTED, critical safeguarding, school closure, etc.
- Emails should not be labelled as 'URGENT'. If they are urgent then a face-to-face meeting or phone call may well be more appropriate.
- Emails should not be accessed or written/sent during lesson times (unless you are out of class).
- Emails should be sent to the considered, relevant people; blanket emails should not be sent unnecessarily, nor should people be cc'd in unless it is appropriate for their role.

If you want to complete email work 'Out-of-Hours', then there are other options that do not impact on other people.

Options include:

- Saving as a draft ready to send in the morning
- Sending to self, ready to send on in the morning
- Sending using time specification
- Consideration of whether it is actually a necessary email or would be better as a discussion in the workplace

If you are sending emails via the office.com outlook platform, there is a **schedule send** option embedded in the send button. It is very straightforward to use.

If you are using the Outlook app on a desktop, then it is accessed by going to the **options** tab on the email body page (The one that you are writing the email on). On there is a **Delay Delivery** option. Click this and go to the **Delivery Options** section and choose the **Do not deliver before** option and add your settings. If it works then the Delay Delivery option will be shaded a colour to show that it is active.



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Email Expectations: Reading and Responding

As part of our commitment to realistic workload management and professional trust, it is important to recognise that:

- Staff cannot be expected to read or respond to emails within a short timeframe, especially during teaching hours, when their priority must be with the children.
- There should be no assumption that an email sent during the school day will be seen or acted upon immediately.
- If a matter is urgent or time-sensitive, a conversation is often more appropriate than an email. In such cases, a quick face-to-face conversation or polite verbal prompt, supported by a short, emailed reminder if needed, is the most effective approach.
- This also applies to follow-ups — repeated or pressurised messaging can create unnecessary stress. A courteous conversation or clarification is usually far more constructive.

Leadership Requests: Monitoring, Pupil Engagement & Pupil Groups

To support a respectful and well-managed professional culture, leaders at all levels — including subject leaders and those with wider responsibilities — must provide appropriate prior notice when requesting access to books, lessons, or pupils.

Expectations for Leaders:

- Provide a minimum of 48 hours' notice (wherever possible) before:
 - Requesting books for monitoring or moderation
 - Asking to speak to pupils for pupil-voice or conferencing
 - Visiting lessons to observe or collect evidence
 - Requesting children to attend School Council or other pupil leadership activities
- Ensure all requests are:
 - Purposeful and aligned with the Federation's improvement priorities
 - Communicated clearly, with professional courtesy
 - Accompanied by thanks and/or feedback where appropriate



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- Requests are made with a minimum of 48 hours' notice, or with reasonable notice appropriate to the type of request
- Avoid making evidence or pupil-related requests at short notice or during teaching hours, unless previously agreed and unavoidable

This approach supports staff wellbeing, reduces avoidable stress, and strengthens a collaborative leadership culture.

ClassDojo & Reach More Parents (RMP):

- We strongly recommend that staff do not have ClassDojo or RMP apps/notifications set-up on their personal mobile devices.
- On ClassDojo, there is the option to silence notifications for specific times – we recommend both this setting is applied, alongside disabling read statuses (Accessible in personal profile settings).
- Posts and messages should not be sent to parents between 7pm and 7am, and not at all over weekends.
- If the subject is regarding consequences/poor choices or anything that could be misconstrued, a face-to-face meeting or phone-call is necessary.
- Messages should be neutral or positive – as per the above, a face-to-face meeting or phone-call is our policy if there is any chance of misinterpretation. Problems confronted in this manner are usually resolved quickly and efficiently whereas written messages sent regarding issues often further complicate matters and allow them to escalate unnecessarily.
- Messages should not be accessed or sent during lesson times (unless you are out of class).
- Messages sent regarding illness or welfare should be passed by the class teacher or HLTA first prior to sending, and should be conveyed to the school office.

Social Media/Communication Platforms:

We live in a world where social media/communication platforms (inclusive of pure messaging services) have crept in to become a valued form of communication – it is quick, easy and effective in many respects. However, it can also be intrusive to some and further create a sense of never being able to switch off and detach from work. So please, when using them, consider the following:



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- Are messages social or work-related?
- If it is work related, can it wait until the morning, or would it be better as an email/in-person?
- If it is an update regarding health and absence, where possible, please inform before the end of the school working day, or at an appropriate time in the morning – Advanced warning for cover is helpful but what is sent in the evening can be dealt with in the morning
- We have a duty to act professionally, as per the Code Of Conduct to avoid getting involved in gossip or communicating both with each other, or other stakeholders, in a negative manner
- Please be mindful, when sending messages to peers, of how it comes across and the impact comments and views can have on your colleagues – linking back to the point above regarding the Code of Conduct and professionalism

Breaches of Policy

While the guidance in this policy is designed to be supportive and reasonable, consistent failure to adhere to the agreed expectations may lead to a professional conversation with line management or senior leadership. Examples of potential breaches include:

- Repeated emailing or messaging outside of agreed hours without prior agreement.
- Sharing inappropriate or unprofessional messages via school channels or social platforms.
- Failing to use appropriate methods for sensitive or confidential communications (e.g. messaging instead of phone call for safeguarding issues).
- Disregarding guidance on communication tone, audience, or platform use.

In these instances, staff will be supported to reflect on workload habits and reminded of the Federation's shared commitment to wellbeing and professional standards. Where appropriate, further action may be taken in line with the Staff Code of Conduct or wider HR policies.

Exceptional circumstances:

We recognise that there may be occasions where communication outside of the agreed hours is necessary. These exceptional circumstances are rare and should be handled with sensitivity and professionalism. Examples include, but are not limited to:



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- **Safeguarding** concerns requiring immediate action, particularly where a child's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- **Critical incidents** (e.g. fire, break-in, serious injury on site, or other emergencies impacting the school premises or community).
- Unexpected **school closures** (e.g. severe weather, heating failure, health and safety risks) requiring rapid coordination.
- **Notification of OFSTED** or other external inspections that necessitate timely preparation and updates.
- **Medical emergencies** or bereavement notifications where support or awareness is needed.
- **Staff absence alerts** that impact cover for the school day, where notice needs to be given urgently.

In all such cases, staff are expected to use their professional judgment and choose the most appropriate and sensitive method of communication (typically via a phone call to a member of SLT). If in doubt, prioritise safeguarding and escalate promptly.