



Communications Policy

May 2024

Review: May 2027

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Effective communication is of critical importance. However, this can sometimes be a problem within a College, where staff may be teaching, running activities, completing administrative functions or otherwise working with students. Parents, students and other stakeholders may be exasperated if they feel as though a message is not immediately responded to. The fact is that often there has been no opportunity for a member of staff to respond to the communication.
- 1.2 This policy is designed to outline expectations to/of students, parents and staff in relation to communications with the College. All communication should be open, honest, ethical and professional. Communication should be taken within a reasonable time, using the method most effective and appropriate to the context.
- 1.3 Throughout this policy, 'working days' refers to Monday to Friday during term time only.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any personnel's contract of employment and the Reigate Learning Alliance reserves the right to change this policy at any time. All personnel are obliged to comply with this policy at all times.

2 General Communications

- 2.1 The College holds a commitment to fostering a positive and respectful environment for all members of our community. In alignment with this ethos, we request that parents communicate with our staff members in a manner that reflects mutual respect, professionalism and understanding. The College reserves the right to adjust our communication approach with parents who do not uphold this standard of respect.

3 Email

- 3.1 Parents and students who contact the College via email should expect an initial response within three working days. Often enquiries require investigation or information to be obtained. Therefore, a more detailed response may need to be subsequently provided within a reasonable time.
- 3.2 There is no expectation for staff to monitor/reply to email outside of working hours. However, it is recognised that some staff may wish to do this if it enables them to achieve a work/life balance. Where reasonably possible, staff should avoid emailing colleagues outside of working hours. If this is necessary, there is no expectation of a response during this period. Senior members of staff (Director and above), have a reasonable expectation to monitor their email during holiday periods to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.

- 3.3 There are times when copying in staff is a good idea. However, there are other occasions when it is not advisable, as it may add unnecessarily to the workload of the recipient. Staff should avoid copying in other members of staff into emails, unless there is a good reason to do so. This does not mean that a CC is never appropriate, only that careful thought should be given as to whether the copied recipient really needs to know this information. If the recipient is expected to act upon the information received, then they should be added to the TO section of the email.
- 3.4 Staff should consider the whole chain of emails when copying in recipients and be confident that senders of all emails within the chain would accept their emails being shared with new recipients.
- 3.5 There are many occasions when staff need to contact pastoral managers regarding a student. In most cases, the ILP is a more effective method of communication with staff. This is critical in the case of a disclosure from a student, in line with our Safeguarding procedures.
- 3.6 When email communication about a student is necessary, the subject of the email should be the initials of the student and student ID. Information in the body of the email should not identify the email, using terms such as “the above student”.
- 3.7 If a student is R3 or R4 category, staff can contact home **without** liaising with the relevant Pastoral Manager. It is advised however, that beforehand, staff should check the ILP (or ILP emails) for the latest updates. If a student is R1, staff **must not** contact home without liaising with the Pastoral Manager and/or Pastoral Monitor. If a student is R2, staff must check the ILP (or ILP emails) for updates and may have to liaise with the Pastoral Manager before proceeding depending on recent history.
- 3.8 Text in emails should always be polite and professional.
- 3.9 When staff are absent due to sickness an Out of Office message should be set to prevent confusion as to whether the email is likely to be acted upon.
- 3.10 There is no expectation for staff to use personal devices to access College communication systems, such as Outlook. In many cases, this will disrupt work/life balance. However, staff can choose to do so, if they feel it is more efficient to do so. Where staff are using the software such as Outlook or Authenticator on personal devices, such as mobile phones, laptops and PCs, devices must be secure with passwords and passcodes and staff must be the only user of the device.

- 3.11 Staff must ensure particular care when sending emails, ensuring correct recipients are entered, particularly when the autofill on devices is enabled. Staff are advised to switch off the autofill function within email applications where it is possible to do so.
- 3.12 When mass emailing staff or students, it is important to consider firstly whether this is necessary and secondly whether email is the most appropriate form of communication. If it is deemed necessary and appropriate, then the BCC function must be used to prevent all recipient responses by replying to all and to guard against data breaches.

4 Telephone

- 4.1 Where possible, parents and students should communicate with the College via email, as it is often impractical for teaching staff to answer telephone queries during the College day. Parents and students who contact the College via telephone should expect their query to be forwarded to the relevant member of staff and to expect an initial response within three working days.
- 4.1 If the query is urgent or an emergency, this should be made clear at the time of calling and the College will endeavour to respond appropriately.
- 4.2 Staff are required to terminate a telephone conversation when parents, students, members of the public or any stakeholder who is communicating in an aggressive, insulting or abusive manner. Staff should report incidents of this nature to the Assistant Principal (Development and Operations) immediately following the conversation.
- 4.3 We will not disclose individual staff email addresses over the phone, as we are not always able to verify the caller. Requests for such information should be directed to the enquiries@reigate.ac.uk email address or other relevant generic email addresses (such as exams@reigate.ac.uk, studentservices@reigate.ac.uk).

5 Face-to-Face

- 5.1 Some discussions are more effective face-to-face than via other methods of communication. Parents and students have opportunities to discuss progress in detail at Parent Consultation Reviews. These are held online to provide more parents and students with the opportunity to join the conversation, which would not be possible if the meetings were face-to-face. However, on occasion, it may be necessary to arrange face-to-face meetings, particularly when it more effective to do so.

5.2 Face-to-face meetings are not always possible during the regular College day due to the availability of staff. Face-to-face meetings with parents and formal meetings with students must be booked in advance, either with the relevant member of staff or through the Student Services team (studentservices@reigate.ac.uk). To ensure that the College complies with lone worker guidelines, the College is unable to arrange face-to-face meetings after 4.45pm without exceptional prior agreement.

5.3 Face-to-face meetings can include virtual meetings through Teams or SchoolCloud.

6 College Portal

6.1 The College Portal (www.reigate.ac.uk/reigate-portal) is the main source of information for current parents and students. All essential information is available here including: policies, procedures, careers, progression, extra-curricular opportunities, exam information, student welfare and support and the College calendar. Parents and students can also view any correspondence with the College/teachers via the Portal.

7 Personal Information Portal (PIP)

7.1 Parents and students can log in to the PIP to see key performance information such as attendance, punctuality, interim reports and key assessments. This should be checked regularly by parents and students to ensure they keep up to date with information relating to the student's ongoing progress and development.

8 Student Email

8.1 Email is the College's main, regular method of communication with students. Students are expected to check their College email several times, on a daily basis.

9 Tutorial

9.1 Each week, students are provided with details in Tutorial of upcoming activities and events that are applicable to them.

10 Careers Bulletin

10.1 The Careers Bulletin is emailed to students on a weekly basis. This contains comprehensive information about employment opportunities, work experience and progression options. This bulletin is posted on the College Portal each week: www.reigate.ac.uk/latest-careers-bulletin.

11 Parent Bulletin

11.1 The Parent Bulletin is emailed out roughly once a half term. This provides parents with key information and details of upcoming activities and events.

12 Notification of Absence

12.1 Absences can be notified on the Parent Portal. Parents can report absence **before 8.45am** on the day of absence. This is subject to the following limitations:

- Absence notifications can only be for full day absences. For shorter appointments or half day absences please contact the College directly
- A maximum of 15 days sickness can be notified on the Portal in one Academic Year
- A maximum of 3 days sickness can be notified on the Portal within any two-week period
- A maximum of 5 days for University Visits can be notified on the Portal in one Academic Year

13 Emergency Communications

13.1 In the event of an emergency, the College will use one or more of the following methods to communicate with parents and students:

- Email
- Text
- Website announcements
- Social media (Facebook and Instagram)

13.2 This could include announcements regarding adverse weather conditions, College closures or trip updates.

14 Social Media

14.1 The College uses social media (Facebook and Instagram) to promote events and activities for prospective and current parents/students. The College also uses LinkedIn to keep in touch with Alumni.

15 Staff Briefings

15.1 Staff Briefings are directed time and all staff are expected to attend each week on a Tuesday break-time, provided it is in their normal working hours and they are not required to conduct specific duties during this period e.g. Reception, Premises etc.

15.2 The Staff Bulletin is emailed to all staff following Briefing to ensure all staff are aware of announcements and ongoing developments.

16 College Meetings

16.1 The College timetable makes the provision for Department meetings each week on a Tuesday or Thursday during Block 7A/D between 12.00pm and 1.00pm. These meetings are included in staff directed time.

16.2 Other meetings that take place after College hours include:

- Pastoral Faculty Meetings (all Tutors)
- Curriculum Faculty Meetings (all Heads of Department and extended to Course Leaders)
- Teaching and Learning Spaces (all teachers)
- All Staff Meetings (all staff)
- SMT (all Senior Management Team)

16.3 Meetings should not be convened to convey information, unless it is deemed the most appropriate method of communication for a particular topic.

17 Pigeonholes

17.1 All members of staff have a pigeonhole, either individual or by function. Staff are expected to check their pigeonhole at least twice a day.

17.2 Tutors also have a Tutor pigeonhole. This should be checked at least twice a week, prior to each Tutor period.

18 Complaints

18.1 All complaints will be forwarded to the Principal's PA for action in accordance with the College's Complaints Policy.

19 Interim Reports

19.1 The College issues four Interim Reports per year (five for Lower Sixth students). Interim Reports provide a snapshot of performance and can be viewed on the Portal.

19.2 Students are expected to set targets for improvement following each Interim Report window. These targets are then reviewed at subsequent windows following discussions with teachers.

19.3 If a student's Interim Report expresses cause for concern, this will normally be supported by additional communication with students/parents.

19.4 If an Interim Report highlights underperformance across the board, pastoral staff may make an appointment to see the student to discuss an appropriate action plan.

20 College Website

20.1 The College website contains all the statutory information required including minutes of governor meetings.