The Meadows School

Remote Working and Communication Policy for Staff

Updated: June 2024
Date to be reviewed: June 2027
Ratified by Governors: July 2024

Amendment Register

Amendment Number	Date	Detail	Amended By	Approved By
0	April 2020	Initial Issue	SLT	Headteacher
2	29/4/2020	Policy Ratified	FGB	RGB
3	12/06/2024	Reference to CPOMS concerns and working times	AB	

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1. **Rationale**
   This policy has been adopted and written in relation to The Remote Working and Communication Policy for Staff at the Meadows School and should be read in conjunction with the LAs Policies and Procedures and any DfE Policy, Statements and Guidelines.

2. **Introduction**

   2.1. It is recognised that due to the nature of work in schools, remote working will only take place in circumstances where it cannot be reasonably expected for staff to be working on site due to school closure or health and safety considerations or other circumstances agreed by the Headteacher.

   2.2. This policy is closely linked to the support staff code of conduct, the seven principles of public life and the teacher standards and should be read in conjunction with each of these documents. It is imperative that staff adhere to the same standards of conduct when working remotely as they do when in school.

3. **Purpose**

   3.1. For the purpose of this policy "meeting" is defined as any of the scheduled virtual meetings and groups as communicated by the headteacher or any other member of the school leadership team.

   3.2. The rationale is to ensure each member of staff understands the necessary protocols and expectations for virtual or remote meetings and interactions and to effectively safeguard staff with regard to workload and potential risks inherent with remote working, social media and online communication.

4. **Equality impact**

   4.1. This policy sets out how The Meadows School will enable staff to attend meetings remotely on the occasions this is required, allowing them to have the ability to take part in meeting discussions and decisions.

   4.2. This policy will ensure no member of staff suffers from unfavourable treatment because of their disability, work or caring duties.

5. **Responsibilities of the school:**

   5.1. The school will ensure there will be provision of a secure method of virtual presence as required at whole staff meetings and meetings of various sub groups for example class teams or DSLs.

   5.2. The school will calendar and communicate to all staff dates and times of virtual meetings with a week's notice in the majority of cases. In exceptional circumstances shorter notice for meetings may at times be necessary.

5.3. Where additional needs or adaptations for staff are identified – the school will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that staff are able to access meetings and be able to participate in them.

6. **Staff Etiquette for Virtual Meetings**

6.1. Remote attendees must be aware of their surroundings. Confidentiality and sensitivity of information must be considered, and conversations must not be conducted in a place where they will be overheard, for example in an open public space. Staff members should ensure that they are in a different room to family members when engaging in virtual meetings from home. Confirmation of confidentiality should be declared at each meeting.

6.2. Staff in virtual attendance at any meeting must not, under any circumstances, make any form of electronic recording of any part of the meeting, without the express advance permission from those in attendance at the meeting. If advance permission is given, this should be recorded in the minutes.

6.3. Those in virtual attendance must ensure they give full attention to the matters being discussed and avoid undertaking other tasks that may cause distraction for example, watching television, listening to background music, etc.

6.4. Virtual attendees must agree to undertake full participation in the whole meeting.

6.5. Staff should be mindful to ensure their language is moderate and appropriate for a professional dialogue in the same way as one would in a face-to-face meeting

6.6. Staff should be aware of their own presentation and that facial expressions and gestures can/could be misinterpreted by those viewing

6.7. Chairs of virtual meetings should ensure the duration of any meeting should be commensurate with the number of staff involved and with awareness of guidance regarding screen time

6.8. Where possible, agendas, particularly where staff are expected to report on specific items, should be distributed via email prior to the meeting

6.9. Where attendance at a virtual meeting is problematic, staff should ensure that they communicate this to the meeting's chair in advance of the meeting

6.10. Where 'WhatsApp' or other social media platforms are used, staff should be mindful to maintain appropriate boundaries and expectations in terms of language in the same way as they would in a face-to-face meeting. For further guidance, see the 'Staff Code of Conduct' policy

7. **Email**

7.1. Staff should consider that daily log in and reading of emails is a significant and vital part of remote working. Best practice would see at least two checks and where necessary, responses on any given working day.

7.2. The working day in terms of email is defined as 8.30am to 3.10pm or 4pm depending on job role and contracted hours. It is not expected that staff respond to emails outside these hours, however they may do so. Expectations in turn for replies to these should take into account the recipient's own window for reply.

7.3. Staff should ensure that any email communication with students abides by the existing expectations as defined in the school's 'Staff Code of Conduct' policy – with regard to maintaining professional boundaries and distance in communication with students.

7.4. Further, in any email to a student, staff should ensure they cc a colleague for their own security and safety and that of the student. In most cases this should be a member of a class team or in other circumstances, one of the school's designated safeguarding leads would be an appropriate co-recipient.

8. **Telephone calls**

8.1. Staff should consider that daily telephone calls can be a significant and vital part of remote working and should make sure that the school has up to date contact numbers for them on record. It is the individual's responsibility to notify the school of any changes to their contact details.

8.2. The working day in terms of telephone contact availability is defined as 8.30am to 3.30pm or 4pm depending on job role and contracted hours. It is not expected that staff respond to calls outside these hours, however they may choose to do so.

8.3. Staff should ensure that any telephone communication with students abides by the existing expectations as defined in the school's 'Staff Code of Conduct' policy – with particular regard to maintaining professional boundaries and distance in communication with students.

8.4. Further, to this in any phone call to a student or parent, staff members should ensure that their personal number is withheld and never shared with students or parents. If a student or parent gets hold of the telephone number of a staff member, it is the responsibility of the staff member to report this on 'Safeguard' as soon as possible. A DSL will then provide advice on how to ensure this is resolved in a way that protects all parties.

8.5. Staff should ensure that records of telephone contact are recorded on CPOMS and shared with a colleague; in cases of remote working, this will be a named DSL.

9.   **WhatsApp and Other Media Platforms**

9.1. Staff should be mindful of their own conduct, language and content in WhatsApp group discussions or similar.

9.2. Care should be taken to ensure that communications around student or staffing issues in particular are not communicated through these channels typically but are confined to the school's secure email system

9.3. Staff should be conscious that the sending of videos, pictures or other content primarily for entertainment may not always be appropriate within an email group largely dealing with work issues

9.4. Staff should be mindful that multiple 'conversations' may exist within their WhatsApp logs and that they should be careful to ensure the correct group is used for work issues

10.   **Creating Online Learning Content and Communication Guidance**

10.1. If recording videos for the school's website or taking photographs of learning activities as part of the home learning curriculum, they must be filmed or shot in a neutral area where nothing personal or inappropriate can be seen or heard in the background.

10.2. When communicating with students online, this should be limited at this time to the use of school email as detailed above. No other form of social media or online communication is permitted to ensure the safety of staff and students.

10.3. School accounts are set up any online platforms used – for example the school's 'Twitter' feed. Staff must never use personal accounts. This also applies to communication via email.

10.4. If it is appropriate to communicate with a student on an individual basis – for example, to give feedback on a piece of work – use parents' or carers' email addresses or phone numbers, when it is safe to do so.

10.5. Make sure any phone calls are made from a blocked or withheld number so teachers' personal contact details are not visible.

10.6. Schools should check that everyone is able to contact a DSL if they have any concerns about a student and record the concern on CPOMS. The DSL should keep a note of any contact numbers they may need while the school is closed, for example, Sandwell Children's Trust, CASS and the local police.

10.7. Talk to students regularly about the benefits and risks of the online world and give them space to ask questions. This will form part of the home learning/remote curriculum offer and provide stimulus and resource for parents to discuss and talk about online safety with their children.

10.8. Tell students where they can go if they are worried about anything or need to talk to someone while the school is closed. For example, Childline can be contacted for free on 0800 1111, or students can [get support online](#).