# The Royal School
*Wolverhampton*

# Electronic Communications Policy

| Author | |
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| Job title | |
| Signed | |
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## Introduction

The Schools' electronic communications systems and equipment are intended to promote effective communication and working practices throughout the business and are critical to the success of our provision of excellent service..

## Scope

This Policy describes the requirements for the monitoring and use of the schools' electronic communications and internet use to meet legal obligations. It applies to anyone within the school who uses electronic communications and the Internet through devices based at the school. This policy also explains how the use of computers, electronic communications, and Internet facilities will be monitored.

## Responsibilities

All staff have responsibility for familiarising themselves with this policy. Compliance is compulsory. Anyone who fails to comply may be subjected to action under the school's disciplinary policy. It is the responsibility of the subject leaders/line managers to ensure that teaching staff, and the Head of HR to ensure support staff, are made aware of the existence and content of this policy.

## Electronic Communications

The use by staff and monitoring by the School of its electronic communications systems is likely to involve the processing of personal data and is therefore regulated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and all data protection laws and guidance in force.

The school understands the importance of electronic communications and encourages all staff to use them in the performance of their duties. In the light of this, staff should be aware that all correspondence sent via the School remains the property of the school.  The School has the right to monitor all aspects of its systems, including data which is stored under the Schools' computer systems in compliance with the GDPR.

Staff should:

- Ensure devices are not left unattended or unlocked. Staff will be held responsible for all activity using their account.
- Keep passwords confidential and not made available to anyone else. Anyone who logs onto a computer using another member of staff's password may be liable to disciplinary action.
- Not assume that electronic communication is private; electronic messages can be intercepted or wrongly addressed, and they are easily forwarded to third parties.
- Use the parent contact details in SIMS and the address books in Outlook to target communication to the relevant audience.
- Do not send 'all staff' messages unless the matter concerned is relevant to all staff. There is a 'Daily Staff Bulletin' for messages to all staff. Items should be mailed before 4 pm the day before the bulletin to jkh or je@theroyal.school.
- Be aware that electronic communications constitute records that are admissible as evidence in a court of law.
- Regularly discard any unsolicited or non work-related documents or attachments received by electronic communication.

- Not use electronic communications inappropriately as it may result in action under the school's formal procedures. If you receive an inappropriate electronic message, please report the details to the subject leaders/line managers.
- Remember at all times that whatever you write using the school's electronic communication means you are corresponding on behalf of and representing the school.
- Be aware that other colleagues may have access to either yours or others' emails and their content.
- When sending emails relating to a confidential matter, it is good practice to limit the amount of information on the subject line. Mark these emails as sensitive or confidential.
- Never read or open an email marked confidential or sensitive that is not addressed to you without good reason.

Acceptable and Unacceptable use

Staff are expected to use electronic communication for school purposes in the best interest of The Royal. Never communicate, download, upload, or access anything that could damage the schools reputation or your own. You may face disciplinary action if this occurs.

Acceptable use is subject to:

- Not interfering with the performance of duties
- Not incurring unwarranted expense
- Not engaging in illegal activity
- Not carrying out personal business transactions
- Limited use for personal interest, recreation, research and studies

Defamation

Electronic communications and the Internet are a form of publication and their wrongful use may constitute a libel contrary to the provisions of the Defamation Act 1996. Staff must not put any defamatory statement onto the Internet or on the school's computer system. As well as staff being personally exposed to potential legal action for defamation, the school can also be exposed both for the actions of its staff and also as an online provider. Staff must not send messages or post information on the internet that shows the school in an unprofessional light.

Discrimination and Harassment

The school does not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form. This principle extends to any information distributed via School systems including electronic communications, the internet or telephone. You may not put on any system any material that discriminates or encourages discrimination or harassment on racial or ethnic grounds or on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, religion or disability.

Data Protection Issues

Under the terms of the GDPR, staff are required to ensure that personal information (including contact details and references to individuals in e-mail correspondence) is kept securely for no longer than necessary, is accurate and up to date.

Monitoring

The School reserves the right, without notice, to access, listen to or read any communication made or received by staff on its computers for the following purposes:

- to establish the existence of facts
- to ascertain compliance with regulatory or self-regulatory practices and procedures
- to investigate or detect unauthorised use of systems
- to prevent or detect crime
- to intercept for operational purposes, such as protecting against viruses and making routine interceptions such as forwarding e mails to correct destinations
- to check electronic communications systems when you are on holiday or on sick leave.

If an issue arises where there may be a case to monitor such usage, the relevant line manager will explain the concerns to the Principal who will determine if monitoring is recommended. The Principal and Chairman of the Governors will then make the decision to monitor a member of staff's email, telephone or internet usage before monitoring is actioned.

The School also reserves the right to monitor time spent by staff accessing the internet for browsing. The school may monitor sites visited, the content viewed or information downloaded where necessary. This will be done to ensure the school computer network is not unnecessarily tied up with non-work related activities.

The school also reserves the right to make and keep copies of telephone calls, electronic communications and data documenting use of the telephone, electronic communications and/or the Internet systems, for the purposes set out above.

Reporting misuse

Staff who suspect misuse of the school electronic communications, internet or telephone systems should in the first instance advise the subject leaders/line managers, Deputy Head or HR.

Evaluation and Review

The performance of this policy will be reported on annually and it will be formally reviewed every two years by the appropriate committee.

**Appendix**
**Email Etiquette**
We appreciate that staff are busy during the day and do not expect you to reply to emails instantly. While you are teaching, staff should not be sitting at their computer replying to emails. School's guidelines to parent are that emails will be acknowledged within 24 hours.  If you cannot respond within this timeframe, please let the parent know when to expect a response.

Emails should be checked before each school day to check for cover, when you are free in case you have been allocated emergency cover, and at the end of the working day to ensure messages are being received. However, email should not be used to replace face-to-face conversations and ideally should be used to set up meetings rather than deal with the issues.  Please avoid sending emails after 6.30pm in the evening and limit emails sent during weekends and holidays. All staff should set-up their Email footer using the school template.  Please see Jaemi Hodgson or Concero (the School's present IT service provider support@concerouk.com ) for further help.

A few reminders are below:
- Think carefully about whether you actually need to send that email. Sometimes we are just shifting work from ourselves to others. Can the answer be found through some other means? Could you go and speak directly with the person? Would waiting until you can speak in person actually be more effective?

- Try to decide if you are sending this email for the purposes of information giving, or some other reason: information giving is definitely the best use of email- but be careful with any other purpose, particularly with any that involve emotion!
- Avoid sending emails to staff to whom it is not relevant. It is easy to set up email groups if you regularly send emails to specific groups of staff. Ensure you use cc appropriately to reduce unnecessary volume of emails.  Remember, if you cc someone in not to expect a response as it is for information only.
- Avoid using email for complaining or venting- that is not an appropriate use of the medium and may backfire. Don't use email as an excuse to avoid personal contact. A simple 'rule of thumb' is to ask yourself if you would say what you have written to the person's face.
- Humour can also be easily misinterpreted, especially sarcasm- so try to avoid it unless you know the recipient very well.
- Try to keep the email as a whole brief, and include a **clear subject line** as a header so people can identify swiftly if it is relevant to them.
- Double-check everything you write, as errors are harder to spot at certain times of the day, or in the heat of the moment.
- Check who you are sending it to before doing so. Bear in mind that the 'Reply to All' option should only be selected if you really need everyone on the distribution list to see your reply.
- If you are writing about more than one subject, do so in separate emails- or it could prove confusing, and messages are more easily missed when embedded in a wide-ranging missive. The best approach is to re-read your email before you send it- a basic thing, but easy to forget.
- Make sure that it is clear in your email what the purpose of the email is- do you require specific action, or is the email for information only?
- Please note that defamatory or abusive emails should not be responded to.
- Messages for the daily bulletin need to be with Jaemi Hodgson by 4pm each day for inclusion the following morning.