



**TRENT
ACADEMIES
GROUP**

**Contact Between Staff
and Pupils**

Document Owner:	M Beaumont
Review Date:	March 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy applies to any form of contact outside the usual work context between staff and pupils or their families. This includes non-direct contact such as telephone, via text message, email or on social networking sites. It also includes contact outside the usual work context between staff and former- pupils, including those who have grown to adults.

This policy cannot cover all situations. Staff at times will be required to exercise their professional judgment and should seek guidance and support from their headteacher, the Executive Headteacher, or from the Chair of the TAG Board in the case of the Executive Headteacher.

Depending on the circumstances, inappropriate contact and/or a failure to follow advice will be treated seriously and could lead to the initiation of the TAG safeguarding procedures and to disciplinary action.

1.2 It is the policy of the Trent Academies Group (TAG) that there will be no personal contact other than in certain exceptional or unavoidable circumstances, between staff and current or former pupils outside the normal working environment. Examples of such circumstances could include attendance at organised social/ sporting events or clubs/activities where the contact is coincidental. Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. The reasons for this are:-

- Such contact can blur the professional boundaries between the staff member and pupil
- Such contact can compromise confidentiality
- Such contact can place both the pupil and the staff member in a position of vulnerability
- Pupils may struggle to differentiate between the role of staff member and friend resulting in them having expectations which the staff member cannot fulfil.
- Such contact could be considered rightly or wrongly as grooming.

2. INTENDED CONTACT

2.1 In many cases contact outside the working environment is normal. For example, where staff have their own children at school; their friends are visiting or where private tuition is provided.

2.2 Any proposed work-related contact, outside of the normal working environment, must be agreed in advance by the headteacher, (for example private tuition). If agreed, a record of this must be kept on the staff member's personal file and the pupil's file. The record must set out reasons for the proposed contact.

2.3 All such contact must also be monitored by the member of staff's line manager and the headteacher,

3. UNPLANNED CONTACT

3.1 Unplanned or unexpected contact with pupils, with whom a member of staff may or may not have on-going professional contact, is inevitable at some point and this should be of a minimal nature (e.g. a brief greeting in the street).

4. CONTACT WITH CURRENT PUPILS WITHIN THE TRENT ACADEMIES GROUP

4.1 Copies of any correspondence received by a member of staff from a pupil should be drawn to the attention of their line manager and the headteacher and filed with any response in the appropriate schools' records system.

4.2 The TAG's internal email system and computer equipment should only be used in accordance with the I.T. policy and the internal email system shall be the sole means of email contact between staff and pupils.

4.3 Staff should not give their personal details, such as home or personal mobile phone number; home or personal email addresses to pupils, unless the need to do so is agreed in advance with the headteacher. Any ongoing contact from the pupil outside of the agreed contact should be reported immediately to the headteacher by the staff member involved.

4.4 There will be times, for example during school trips, when, exceptionally, it will be appropriate for a member of staff to temporarily share their personal mobile telephone number with pupils, perhaps in an emergency situation. This should be reported by the member of staff concerned to the headteacher as soon as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure that in such circumstances numbers are stored for the limited period of the trip.

Every effort should be made by the TAG to provide staff with school mobile telephones, as necessary, and whether temporary or permanent, such mobile telephone should be used on school business only.

4.5 Staff should also be mindful that requirements in relation to maintaining the confidentiality of pupils, their families, colleagues and the TAG apply to all forms of communication, including that which takes place on social networking sites.

4.5 Staff should be cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing, or allowing to be published, any material, including comments or images that could damage their professional reputation and/or bring the TAG into disrepute.

4.6 Staff should be strongly advised to set their profile as 'private' and not allow access to pupils, their families and or carers.(See Appendix 1)

5. CONTACT WITH FORMER PUPILS

5.1 In some circumstances, former pupils may make contact with a member of staff. This may occur even when they have grown to adults. For example, situations where staff remain in contact with former pupils who have moved on to secondary school or 6th form studies, who attend university or who have been placed in care or adopted.

5.2 In these situations, members of staff must take account of the fact that they are TAG employees and therefore have a responsibility as a member of staff and that young people may struggle to differentiate between the roles of staff member and friend.

Staff members must always discuss any such significant contact with their current line manager and the headteacher and seek advice on how to manage any future contact.

The sole means of email contact between staff and former pupils should be through the TAG email system for the member of staff and not through personal email address.

5.3 If a former pupil requires assistance or some form of help that lies outside the school/academy they should be signposted to relevant services. However, if the headteacher agrees that further contact with the staff member is relevant and appropriate, a clear plan of involvement, including outcomes expected and timescales must be drawn up and agreed by the headteacher.

5.4 In these circumstances, the headteacher must ensure that adequate support/supervision is available to the staff member and ensure that all such contacts and plans are recorded and that other appropriate agencies are involved.

5.5 Where a close relationship develops between a member of staff and an ex-pupil which may raise concerns about the member of staff's suitability to work with children, the headteacher should contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice and guidance.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Further guidance can be found in the documents:

- "Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings" www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscb
- NEOST Guidance on Conduct for Teachers, Education Staff and Volunteers September 2002.
- TeacherNet: www.teachernet.gov.uk
- Becta: www.schools.becta.org.uk

APPENDIX 1

THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

- Members of staff should not be in contact with current pupils via social networking sites such as Facebook.com. This is in accordance with current safeguarding practice.
- Members of staff with Facebook or other social networking profiles should ensure that they set the privacy levels on their accounts to maximum i.e. only people on their friend's list should be able to view their pictures/private information, status etc.
- Staff should be aware that if they share information with "friends of friends" there is a potential for literally thousands of people to view their profile, information, pictures and status, most of whom they will not know. This leaves the potential for current pupils to then still be able to access their profile.
- Failure to set the appropriate security options this may result in pupils or parents seeing private photographs or reading comments that could potentially compromise a member of staffs position as a role model and a responsible member of staff and in the worst case and possibly bring the, others or the TAG into disrepute.

If a message from a pupil or former pupil is received, staff should take the following action

- Do not reply to the message. Replying to a message could allow the recipient to view the profile in its entirety and may circumvent other privacy settings on the account.
- Do not delete the message.
- A senior member of pastoral staff should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and informed of the contact made.
- If the content or language used in the pupils contact to the member of staff is inappropriate the senior member of pastoral staff should follow this up.
- At this point a print out of the communication should be provided to the member of pastoral staff dealing with the incident.

If an invitation to a person's friends list is received, staff should take the following action

- Reject the request and consider blocking that person or hiding your profile to avoid searching by people not on your friends list.
- If the pupil has made several attempts to "be your friend" inform a senior member of the pastoral team who should then speak to thepupil, if in school, on your behalf, about the reasons that this contact is inappropriate.
- The senior member of the pastoral team will report the incident to the headteacher at the earliest opportunity.
- If you are already friends with any current or former pupils these should be reported to the headteacher immediately and then removed.
- If you are unsure how to set privacy settings on your social networking accounts please speak with the IT Services team who will be able to point you towards the appropriate guide.