Electronic Communications Policy

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This policy is intended to ensure that:

- staff will be responsible users and stay safe while using the internet and other communications technologies

- school ICT systems and users are protected from accidental or deliberate misuse that could put the security of the systems and users at risk

- staff are protected from potential risk in their use of ICT in their everyday work

<u>Context</u>

The use of email within our schools is an essential means of communication for staff, parents/carers, governors and those involved with the schools in a wider sense (e.g. EMS teams, LA/ Alliance officials, CPD providers, NHS representatives). Educationally, email offers significant benefits including direct written contact between professionals on a wide range of matters. Members of staff need to understand how to manage electronic communications so that their professional and legal obligations are met and to ensure that the ethos and values of our schools and federation as a whole are upheld.

Follifoot & Spofforth CE Primary Schools promotes the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils in its care. All policies work alongside our Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Equalities Scheme, which sets out our strategy for ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Equality & Diversity

The Federation of Follifoot & Spofforth CE Primary Schools welcomes its duties under the Equality Act (2010). The Equality Act establishes nine protected characteristics

- Disability
- Race
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Age

Public Sector Equality Duty (2011)

Both schools have paid due regard to the need:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.

- To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- To foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

We value every learner as an individual who has an important part to play in our community. We encourage all learners to develop the skills, qualities and aspirations to become independent learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Our communications will always demonstrate and reflect our commitment to meeting our duties in relation to the Equality act as well as maximising opportunities to promote equality and diversity at every meaningful opportunity.

Legal Basis for Using, Managing and Retaining Electronic Communications.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in force since 25 May 2018, requires organisations to retain personal data for **no longer than necessary for the purposes they process it for**.

E-mail is primarily a communications tool, and e-mail applications are not designed for keeping e-mail as a record in a storage area meeting records management storage standards.

As a user of school e-mail, colleagues are required to ask themselves the following questions when managing their inbox and e-mail folders:

- Why am I holding this data? If there is no child protection/child causing concern, SEND or operational reason to save the e-mail, it should be deleted.

- Do I need to pass the information contained with the e-mail on to a colleague? Once I have passed it on, am I required to keep it? Do I still need to use it?

- Do I have a personal professional responsibility for storing this e-mail?

- Is the child/family to which the e-mail/s refer still attending the school? If not, all e-mails except those relating to child protection concerns/ SEND provision should be deleted. (never send child protection notifications/concerns via e-mail. This point refers to any communication with social workers/parents that may need to form part of a child's school record).

- All retained e-mail should be stored in a separate folder and not kept in an inbox. All stored e-mail kept in such folders are subject to subject access requests and can therefore be disclosed to parents/carers on request.

Sending emails

Before sending emails consider:

- The maintenance of the highest professional standards. Your e-mail may be read by people other than the recipient (e.g. if they forward the mail on or if - email communication is requested as part of a subject access request).
- Whether email is the correct medium for communication.
- The content and design and level of formality. E-mails using your @follifoot / @spofforth e-mail address should always be formal and use professional language throughout.
- Only copy in people who have an immediate need for the information. Do not 'cc' people into e-mail outside of our federation as you do not have specific consent to share their data (e-mail address). If the e-mail is being sent to more than one person, send it to yourself and 'bcc' all other recipients.
- The length of the email. All e-mail should be brief and to the point. Do not write long, protracted e-mails.
- The facts and consequences of the message. Be professional and careful about what you say about others, as email is easily forwarded. Only put in writing what you would say to someone's face.
- Copyright and libel issues e.g. when sending scanned text, pictures or information downloaded from the internet.

- Emails can have legal force, therefore care should be taken when expressing views so that these cannot be misinterpreted as belonging to the Federation or LA, as the email address will contain the school and LA name.
- Time required for the recipient to respond.

Always read and reflect upon your email before sending. If in any doubt about the content or phrasing of your email DON'T send it and seek advice from the Head Teacher.

Receiving and Managing emails

- Staff should be 'responsible communicators' i.e. they should check their emails each of their working days as they may have previously checked a 'pigeon hole'.
- Always set time aside to deal with emails and aim to respond to e-mails that require a response (some emails will not require a response) within three working days.
- Consider whether they need you to respond, retain, print and/or delete. If an e-mail requires retention, place it in a designated folder.
- If an e-mail requires a response, consider carefully the use of the "reply to all" button.
- Delete unwanted emails and those that do not require retention promptly.
- Protect yourself from viruses when emailing from home.
- Immediately delete any e-mail that you believe could be a 'phishing' e-mail. Do not open attachments or click on links in e-mails from unknown or unexpected senders (e.g. an e-mail address masquerading as an official communication from the DfE).
- There is no obligation to open or read e-mail sent to your work e-mail account outside of contracted / directed hours.
- You should aim to respond to all e-mail contact requiring a response within three working days. Exceptions to this are your absence through sickness or unforeseen circumstances that make it impossible to respond within this timescale.
- Any correspondence that you deem to be inappropriate should be forwarded to the Headteacher before a response is sent. If it is determined that the correspondence is indeed inappropriate, I shall take the decision whether to respond directly or to retain on file should further action be required.
- Any correspondence requiring information to be sent must not receive a response until the Headteacher has seen a draft. This is to ensure that we meet GDPR expectations.
- Any correspondence to a contentious issue should not be sent until the Headteacher has seen a draft.
- E-mails to parents and carers and to outside agencies regarding a child should not be conversational or include anecdotal discussion. They should contain fact only, should not seek to justify or explain a decision beyond clear fact (as written explanation can often be misinterpreted) and should be proof read before sending.
- A child's name or other details that may identify a child should never be used in e-mail correspondence. If you send an e-mail to colleagues or outside agencies that refers to a specific child, only initials may be used.
- Staff should not contact pupils or former pupils via any form of electronic communication. If a colleague receives an interaction request (e.g. friend request on Facebook) it should not be accepted. If you are contacted via e-

mail by a pupil or former pupil, think very carefully about your response (if a response is required) before sending it.

- Keep the number and relevance of email recipients, particularly those being copied, to the minimum necessary and appropriate.
- Do not send whole school emails unless essential for school business.
- Do not send or forward attachments unnecessarily. Whenever possible, send the location path to the shared drive rather than sending attachments.
- With consideration to wellbeing, work life balance and security emails should be accessed from school devices and not personal devices that can access email.
- All work e-mail accounts of **classroom based staff (teachers and teaching assistants) should contain the following footer:**

Responses from this e-mail account will ordinarily be sent between the hours of 8am and 4pm only. I aim to respond to e-mails within three working days of receipt. More urgent matters should be addressed in person or, where this is not possible, via telephone.

This email is copyright of the Federation of Follifoot & Spofforth CE Primary Schools. If you receive this by mistake please inform the email originator immediately and delete from your inbox.

Non class based staff (currently HT & SENDCO) may use a variation of the first part as such as:

I work flexibly to meet the needs of the Federation and family life. I typically send and reply to emails later in the evening or early in the morning every other day. This suits my context but does not represent an expected model. If your contact is urgent please ring either school office.

This email is copyright of the Federation of Follifoot & Spofforth CE Primary Schools. If you receive this by mistake please inform the email originator immediately and delete from your inbox.

The administrator account (admin@spofforth.n-yorks.sch.uk) will use the following footer

The school office is typically staffed between 8.30am and 3.45pm daily during term time. If your contact is urgent please ring the school office. I/We aim to respond to

e-mails within three working days of receipt. More urgent matters should be addressed in person or, where this is not possible, via telephone.

This email is copyright of the Federation of Follifoot & Spofforth CE Primary Schools. If you receive this by mistake please inform the email originator immediately and delete from your inbox.

Setting Up Email Footer Instructions

1. Click on the settings 'cog' icon (usually top left corner when in email)
2. Click on Your App settings
3. Click on Mail
4. Click on Layout
5. Click on Email signature
6. Cut and paste logo and wording
7. Click on save
8. Send yourself an email to check it has worked correctly

Direct Email Contact between teachers, Teaching Assistants and Parents

• All staff are provided with an @follifoot or @spofforth email address work email purposes
• Each school also has an admin@ address
• Parents would typically email the admin address for emails to be forwarded
• Staff can send their reply to admin to forward on or can email the parent directly. When replying directly this will then provide the parent with the staff members individual email address. As this is a work address this is acceptable practice. The use of the agreed footer and any appropriate support/intervention from the Head Teacher aims to 'protect' staff from any inappropriate quantity or frequency of email communication from parents or any other source.

Security

- Staff are responsible for the security of the devices on which their e-mail account is accessible, and for protecting any information or data used and/or stored on it.
- Do not to leave a mailbox open and unattended and always keep it protected with a strong password that contains numbers, letters and special characters.
- The account holder/s needs to strive to keep their passwords confidential; to prevent other users from accessing and sending emails from their account. Users may need to make their passwords known in the event of long term absence.
- Staff should be responsible for changing passwords when required to maintain security.
- Emails will only be monitored by the Headteacher in very exceptional circumstances.
- Absent staff are aware that their email account may be opened by another member of staff. (e.g. maternity leave, long term absence).
- If absent for a period of more than 3 working days an appropriate automatic reply should be set up such as;

I am currently on maternity leave please direct enquiries to the school office.

Or

I am currently not at work please direct enquiries to the school office

Emailing personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information

Assess whether the information can be transmitted by other secure means before using email. Do not send confidential information without encryption. This is done by writing [secure] in the subject bar. Only send confidential information to parents/carers in response to a specific and reasonable request (as it is not possible to encrypt e-mails sent to personal e-mail addresses).

Staff should ensure that they have read and are aware of the GDPR Policy when processing data by sending attachments. Where the conclusion is that your school email must be used to transmit such data, then exercise caution when sending the email and always follow these checks before releasing the email:

- Verify the details, including accurate email address, of any intended recipient of the information.
- Verify (preferably by telephone) the details of a requestor, if unknown, before responding to email requests for information.
- Do not copy or forward the email to any more recipients than is absolutely necessary and never where there are doubts over consent (in line with GDPR policy).
- Do not send the information to any person whose details you have been unable to separately verify.
- Send the information as an encrypted document attached to an email. If you are unsure as to how to encrypt a file please speak to the ICT technician.
- Provide the encryption key or password by a separate contact with the recipient(s)
- Do not identify such information in the subject line of any email.
- Request confirmation of safe receipt.
- When sending an email containing personal or sensitive data, the name of the individual is not to be included in the subject line and the document containing the information must be encrypted.

Other means of electronic communication

Text message

It is possible to send messages to parents/carers via the texting services programme. Such communication must be used sparingly, where there is no better option (face to face, newsletter, separate letter, e-mail) and never for the following purposes:

- To communicate confidential information.
- For marketing purposes.
- To replace face to face, written or e-mail communication.

Marvellous ME

Please see the separate additional policy guidance in relation to the use of Marvellous ME.

Monitoring and evaluation

The policy will be monitored and evaluated regularly taking into account any incidents which occur or technological / legislative developments which might need a change in the policy.

Communicating With Parents

This policy will be available to parents via the school website and upon request. The following information (below in *italics*) will be included on home school agreements, new starter information and newsletters as appropriate.

Email can be a simple and efficient way to communicate information between home and school. Parents may find it a quick and simple way of;

- *Requesting a meeting with a member of staff*
- *Notifying in advance of changes to end of school arrangements for your child*
- *Updating school with new contact information*
- *Notifying school of their child's absence; this can also be done through parent mail which is our preferred option*

If you need to email school please email the admin account

admin@follifoot.n-yorks.sch.uk or admin@spofforth.n-yorks.sch.uk

We aim to respond to emails within three working days of receipt where a response is necessary. If your communication is regarding a more urgent matter this should be addressed in person or, where this is not possible, via telephone.