

Email Guidelines for Good Practice

At Esher Church of England High School we recognise that email is an important tool to be used responsibly and with respect for everyone. All communication should be positive and professional, reflecting our principles and ethos.

These guidelines apply to all individuals who use EHS email facilities. Individuals should endeavour to:

- **Always use the most efficient and appropriate way of communicating.** Email, telephone, fax, memos, letters, and face to face discussion all have their place, but think about which one fits the purpose, is most effective and which one the recipient would prefer. Bear in mind that an email is not necessarily an instant communication. If the matter is important or urgent consider whether email is the most appropriate means of communication.
- **Exercise care when using email .** Personal information relating to other staff, our pupils and their families is confidential. Be aware that the person you send the email to may not be the only person to see it. For operational reasons other employees may view colleagues' emails. Email can also be forwarded by the recipient, inside or outside EHS. These copies could still be disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- **Use EHS e mail facilities as a professional communications tool.** Ensure that the same principles of accuracy, tone, clarity and content that are applied to formal written communications are also applied to e-mails. It is good practice to re-read and check an email before sending to reduce the chances of misinterpretation (see Appendix A Guidance on creating email and appropriate use)
- **Check** and respond to emails at least once every school day. Set up an 'out of office' reply if not going to be in.
- **Confidential or sensitive information should not be sent by email.** Email is not a secure medium. Email which is sent via the web can be routed via a number of different ISPs, which may be hosted in a number of different countries. Even on the secure internal email system email can be mis-sent.
- **If in doubt, do not email it.** Under the Data Protection Act, people can ask for access to their personal information. (see Appendix B for further information)
- **Keep messages brief and consider who really needs to be copied in.** Email can cause stress in the workplace. (see Appendix A Guidance on creating email and appropriate use)
- **Agreements entered into by email form a contract.** Individual members of staff should not enter into agreements either with other members of staff internally or with external contractors unless they are authorised to do so.
- **Any email created using EHS facilities is an official record and must be managed accordingly.** See Records management policy for further details, available on the intranet.
- **It is unacceptable to create or send messages that could be construed as harassment or criticism of others** based on their sex, marital status, age, colour, racial origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, personal characteristics or religious or political beliefs.

Personal Use

We accept that you may sometimes want to use EHS email facilities for your own personal purposes, you must ensure that your personal email use:

- does not interfere with the performance of your duties or take priority over your work responsibilities;
- is minimal and limited to taking place substantially outside of normal working hours (i.e. during any breaks which you are entitled to or before or after your normal hours of work);
- is lawful and does not have a negative impact on EHS in any way;

You are strongly discouraged from providing your EHS email address when using public websites for non-business purposes, such as online shopping. as this results in you and EHS receiving substantial amounts of unwanted email.

Misuse of EHS email facilities will be treated seriously and dealt with in accordance with disciplinary procedure.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action being taken against you under EHS disciplinary procedures. If there is anything in this guidance that you do not understand, please discuss it with your line manager

These guidelines have been drawn up within the context of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and should be read in conjunction with:

Professional Standards Policy
Fairness and dignity at work policy
Equal Opportunity Policy,

Creating and sending e-mail

Appendix A

Is email the appropriate method of communication? It may be that it is more appropriate to use the telephone or to speak with some one face to face.

Examples of appropriate use of email	Examples of inappropriate use of email:
Simple messages that only require a short straight forward response.	Confidential information or child protection matters
Routine requests for action. (Give full details and indicate if you need confirmation).	Complaints or criticism.
Meeting requests	Complex sets of instructions that must be acted upon*
Reminders	Significant requests for action*
Items for information	New deadlines and timescales*
	Requirements to operate new systems*
Confirmation of items marked* in the inappropriate column.	Drawing attention to colleagues omissions or errors

Ensure the email is only received by the right people

Limit the recipient list to the people who really need to receive the e-mail.

Bulk e mail should be kept to a minimum. There are a number of distribution groups setup on the exchange server to allow email to be targeted to a specific group e.g. All Support Staff, Heads of School, All members of the Science department, ICT Strategy group, etc. The full list is available on the intranet.

Additional groups can be set up by the ICT department if requested.

It is rarely appropriate to send a routine request for action to both a member of staff and their line manager. Trust staff to fulfill their responsibilities. If you have concerns about the complexity or size of the task don't make the request by email.

Ensure that the e-mail is clearly written

- Do not use text language or informal language where this is not appropriate.
- Always start the e-mail with a greeting and sign off with a name (and contact details).
- Make it clear how you need the recipient to respond. This will enable the recipient to respond more quickly.
- Ensure that you read the e-mail through as though you were the recipient to ensure that you have made yourself clear and always spell check the e-mail before you send it. Remember that the person receiving the e-mail will form an impression of you from that e-mail that may make a difference to the way in which they respond to you.
- Never write a whole e-mail in capital letters. In e-mail terms this is the equivalent of shouting at someone.
- Never write an "angry" e-mail. Write the e-mail, go away and leave it, and then come back and re-read it as though you were the recipient.
- Do not use the urgent flag unless it is absolutely necessary, recipients will not respond to the urgent flag if they perceive that you use it routinely.

Sending attachments

Sending large attachments (e.g. graphics or presentations) to a sizeable circulation list can cause considerable storage problems on a network server (especially if everyone keeps a copy

of the e-mail in their inbox). Where possible put the attachment in an appropriate area on a shared drive and send the link round to the members of staff who need to access it.

Data Protection

Appendix B

All EHS staff who use our communication facilities, are inevitably involved in processing personal data. Data protection is about the privacy of individuals, and is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act defines, among others, terms as follows:

"data" generally means information which is computerised or in a structured hard copy form;

"personal data" is data which can identify someone, such as a name, a job title, a photograph;

"the data subject" is the individual you hold the data on

"processing" is anything you do with data – just having data amounts to processing; and

"data controller" is the person who controls the purposes and manner of processing of personal data – at EHS this will be the Headteacher

Whenever and wherever you are processing personal data for EHS you must keep it confidential and secure. You must take particular care not to disclose information to any other person (whether inside or outside EHS) unless authorised to do so. Do not use any such personal data except as authorised by the school for the purposes of your job. If in doubt get help from your line manager.

If you plan to copy or forward an email that contains personal data to anyone outside Esher High School, obtain the consent of the data subject first. If the email contains sensitive personal data, you will need to get explicit consent from the data subject. If you contravene the Data Protection Act, a criminal offence will have been committed, by you or by EHS. This may lead to disciplinary action.

Be security conscious. The Data Protection Act requires you to maintain adequate security to protect personal information when using electronic communications resources. Store laptops securely, keep passwords confidential and change them regularly (at least every three months).