



Home-College Communication Policy

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Introduction

At Liberty, we believe that effective, consistent home-college communication is vital to the effective support of learners. It is proven to improve learner attendance, behaviour and learning.

However, parents/carers may find that working with the college will be slightly different from the way they may be used to working with a school. This is because Liberty aims to prepare young people for entry into work when they finish their course, so we encourage learners to be independent and to take responsibility for their learning. That means that most of our communication is direct with the learner (unless this is assessed as inappropriate due to the individual learners needs).

We believe that clear, open communication between the college and parents/carers has a positive impact on learners because it:

- Gives parents/carers the information they need to support their young person's education.
- Helps the college improve, through feedback and consultation with parents/carers.
- Builds trust between home and college, which helps the college better support each young person's educational and pastoral needs.

We believe this policy should be a working document that is fit for purpose, represents the college ethos, enables consistency and quality across the college.

We believe it is essential that this policy clearly identifies and outlines the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the procedures and arrangements that is connected with this policy.

Aims

The aim of this policy is to promote clear and open communication by:

- Explaining how the college communicates with parents/carers,
- Setting clear standards and expectations for initiating and responding to communication from parents/carers,
- Helping parents/carers reach the member of college staff who is best placed to address their specific query or concern so they can get a response as quickly as possible.

Responsibility for the Policy and Procedure

Role of the Head of College

The Head of College is responsible for:

- Ensuring that communications with learners and parents/carers are effective, timely and appropriate
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Regularly reviewing this policy
- Responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring & evaluation of this policy.

Role of College Personnel

All staff are responsible for:

- Responding to communication from parents/carers in line with this policy and the college's ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Working with other members of staff to make sure parents/carers get timely information (if they cannot address a query or send the information themselves)
- Staff will **aim** to respond to communication during core college hours, or their working hours (if they work part-time). In line with promoting staff wellbeing and helping our staff find a suitable work-life balance, staff may work around other responsibilities and commitments and respond outside of these hours, but they are **not expected** to do so.

Staff should refer to the Acceptable Internet Use Policy in conjunction with this policy.

Role of Learners and Parents/Carers

Learners and parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that communication with the college is respectful at all times
- Making every reasonable effort to address communications to the appropriate member of staff in the first instance
- Respond to communications from the college (such as requests for meetings) in a timely manner
- Checking all communications from the college
- Any communication from parents/carers that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be terminated immediately and if necessary, reported to the police (see Vexatious Parents section below).

Any communication from learners that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be dealt with in line with our Learner Behaviour Policy.

Parents/carers should **not** expect staff to respond to their communication during college holidays. If the matter is urgent, learners and parents/carers should call the office on 01843 446906 as the office is open during the holidays (apart from the Christmas shutdown period).

Learners and parents/carers should refer to the Learner Behaviour Policy in conjunction with this policy.

Why We Communicate with Parents/Carers

Staff may call parents/carers to discuss support or matters where they may need to intervene. We ask learners and parents/carers to provide accurate contact information, such as a mobile telephone number and email address. We endeavour to collect this information at enrolment, but it is the learner and parent/carer's responsibility to inform the college of any changes.

We may need to contact parents/carers because:

- Their young person is not attending college and we have not been advised of the absence in accordance with our absence procedure. This will usually be by telephone.

For persistent absence, when we have not been able to contact learners or parents/carers by telephone, we will write to them via email or letter. We may also carry out a welfare check by visiting their home.

- Tutors will contact parents/carers to let them know if their young person is entered into or won an award or competition and to recognise areas of praise that should be celebrated with the young person.
- Tutors may contact parents/carers with concerns about engagement with the course, persistent low level behaviour issues and unexplained absences.
- Senior Leaders may contact parents/carers to recognise areas of praise that should be celebrated with the young person.
- Senior leaders may contact parents/carers over serious academic achievement concerns, behavioural issues, attendance patterns that will affect or impact on achievement, and as part of the disciplinary process.
- The Safeguarding team may contact parents/carers in cases where concerns for the welfare or safety of the young person have come to light. They will only do this when it is deemed in the best interests of the young person and others. There may be occasions where the team is not allowed to do this because safeguarding legislation directs them to take other actions.

Please be aware that we will only contact the next of kin as listed on the admissions form. Learners and parents/carers should ensure where possible that two contact names are recorded on our college system and that the contact details are up to date.

If a learner is 18 years or older, we may need the learner's permission to contact parents/carers unless there is a serious safeguarding concern where the learner may be at risk of significant harm.

How We Communicate with Learners and Parents/Carers

Liberty College will always address matters with learners directly in the first instance before involving parents/carers. As a 16+ provider, we are passionate about involving our learners in our communication to empower them and promote independence (unless this is assessed as inappropriate due to the learners needs).

Information about a learner's education (such as attendance and behaviour) will be shared with parents/carers for learners through phone calls, emails/messaging, Parents' Days and other meetings as appropriate.

All general written communication (emails, letters, texts) will be sent to both learners and parents/carers. This written communication should start with "Dear Learners, Parents and Carers".

The sections below explain how we keep parents/carers up-to-date with their young person's education and what is happening in college.

Parents/carers should monitor all of the following regularly to make sure they do not miss important communications or announcements that may affect their young person.

Email

We use email to keep learners and parents/carers informed about the following things:

- Upcoming college events

- Scheduled college closures (for example, for staff training days)
- College surveys or consultations
- Class activities or tutor requests

Text messages

We will text parents/carers about:

- Short-notice changes to the college day
- Emergency college closures (for instance, due to bad weather)
- Attendance concerns
- Reminders e.g. for trips & events

College calendar

Our website www.libertygrouppltd.co.uk includes a full college calendar for the year as well as visual timetables for learners.

Phone calls

Liberty College encourages staff to call parents/carers regularly to discuss learners' progress, performance, behaviour and attendance. They will also call to give praise and recognition.

If a staff member calls and is redirected to a voicemail account, they will leave a message giving their name, contact number and the name of the college and will ask for their call to be returned. They will not leave the learner's name or any confidential information due to GDPR. If they do not receive a response, staff will continue to try to call again and then attempt contact by email, text or social media message.

Letters

We send the following letters via email regularly:

- Letters about trips and visits
- Consent forms
- Our termly newsletter

Reports

Parents/carers receive reports from the college about their young person's learning, including:

- An end-of-year report covering their achievement in each part of the curriculum, how well they are progressing, and their attendance
- Progress reports twice per year
- Information about vocational qualifications gained (or credits gained towards these)

Meetings

We hold 1 Parents' Day per year. During these meetings, parents/carers can talk with tutors about their young person's achievement and progress, the curriculum or schemes of work, their young person's wellbeing, or any other area of concern.

The college may also contact parents/carers to arrange meetings between Parents' Days if there are concerns about a learner's achievement, progress, or wellbeing, or to address their additional needs.

College website

Key information about the college is posted on our website, including:

- College times and term dates
- Important events and announcements
- Curriculum information
- Important policies and procedures
- Important contact information
- Information about before and after-college provision

Parents/carers should check the website before contacting the college.

Staff Procedure For College Communication With Parents/Carers

Liberty staff will contact parents/carers as follows:

Reason for contact	Frequency & Type of Contact	Staff member Responsible
Positive behaviour	Daily phone calls as necessary. Send a positive postcard for positive behaviour as appropriate.	Tutor
Negative behaviour	Daily phone calls as necessary- discuss strategies for improvement	Tutor
Changes in behaviour/friendship issues	Daily phone calls as necessary- discuss strategies for improvement	Tutor
Learning concerns	Daily phone calls as necessary- discuss strategies for improvement	Tutor
General feedback	Calls or emails as necessary	Tutor
Unauthorised absence	If not attended by close of registration and no absence has been reported	Admin Team
Not attended for the week	End of week	Tutor
On absence plan	Follow instructions on absence plan	Tutor
Disciplinary action	As required	Senior Leadership

Where contact is a Tutor's responsibility, the TA may assist where it is appropriate to do so, but the Tutor should remain the main point of contact.

If a staff member is unable to contact a learner or parent/carer by phone, they must then attempt to establish contact via email, text message and social media message (using the College's social media accounts).

Where a learner or parent/carer is uncontactable for a period of 3 weeks, the staff member will alert the safeguarding team and a home visit will be carried out.

How Parents/Carers Can Communicate With The College

The sections below explain how parents/carers can communicate with the college:

Email

Email addresses for the college can be found on the 'Contact' page of the college website [Contact \(libertygrouppltd.co.uk\)](http://libertygrouppltd.co.uk)

Email addresses for individual staff members can be found on the 'Meet the Team' page of the website [Staff Team \(libertygrouppltd.co.uk\)](http://libertygrouppltd.co.uk).

Advisors can be contacted at advisors@libertygrouppltd.co.uk

Parents/carers should always email the college, or the appropriate member of staff, about non-urgent issues in the first instance.

We aim to acknowledge all emails within 2 working days, and to respond in full (or arrange a meeting or phone call if appropriate) within 5 working days.

If a query or concern is urgent, and parents/carers need a response sooner than this, they should call the college.

Phone calls

If parents/carers need to speak to a specific member of staff about a **non-urgent** matter, they should email the relevant member of staff will contact them within 2 working days.

If this is not possible (due to teaching or other commitments), someone will respond to schedule a phone call at a convenient time. We aim to make sure parents/carers have spoken to the appropriate member of staff within 5 days of request.

If the issue is urgent, parents/carers should call the college office. Urgent issues might include things like:

- Family emergencies
- Safeguarding or welfare issues

For more general enquiries, please call the college office on 01843 446906.

Meetings

If parents/carers would like to schedule a meeting with a member of staff, they should email the appropriate email address or call the college to book an appointment.

We try to schedule all meetings within 5 working days of the request.

While tutors are available at the beginning or end of the college day if parents/carers need to speak to them urgently, we recommend they book appointments to discuss:

- Any concerns they have about their young person's learning,
- Updates related to pastoral support, their young person's home environment, or their wellbeing.

Who Should Parents/Carers Contact?

If a parent/carer has questions about any of the topics in the table below, or would like to speak to a member of staff:

- Email the most appropriate address,
- Include the young person's full name in the subject line.

We try to respond to all emails within 2 working days.

Remember: check our website first, much of the information you need is posted there.

I have a question about...	Who you need to talk to...
My young person's learning	The young person's tutor
My young person's wellbeing/pastoral support	Wellbeing Team wellbeing@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Bursaries and Grants	Finance Team financeteam@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Trips and activities	Admin Team adminteam@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Attendance and absence requests	If you need to report an absence or to request approval for term-time absence, call 01843 446906 <i>Please note that we expect learners to report their own absence where possible to prepare them for the workplace & independent living.</i>
Bullying and behaviour	Senior Leadership Team (SLT) slt@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Safeguarding	Safeguarding Team safeguarding@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
College events/the college calendar	Admin Team adminteam@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Special educational needs (SEN)	Wellbeing Team wellbeing@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Advisory board	Advisors advisors@libertygrouppltd.co.uk
Catering/meals	Admin Team adminteam@libertygrouppltd.co.uk

Complaints

If you would like to file a formal complaint, please follow the procedure set out in our complaints policy, which is available on our website [Policies \(libertygrouppltd.co.uk\)](https://www.libertygrouppltd.co.uk/policies).

Inclusion

It is important to us that everyone in our community can communicate easily with the college.

We currently make whole-college announcements and communications (such as email alerts and newsletters) available in English.

Parents/carers who need help communicating with the college can request the following support:

- College announcements and communications translated into additional languages.
- Interpreters for meetings or phone calls.

We can make additional arrangements if necessary. Please contact the college office to discuss these.

Vexatious Parents/Carers

Liberty College enjoys very good relationships with parents & carers. The college welcomes the opportunity to receive positive comments from parents/carers and others when services are appreciated, but is also keen to know when and where there are concerns.

We are committed to dealing with concerns or complaints fairly and professionally and there is a complaints policy in place outlining the agreed routes through which concerns can be raised, recognised and resolved.

The vast majority of complaints and concerns are managed very successfully in an informal but thorough manner. However, a very small minority of parents/carers raise concerns or complaints that are vexatious or unreasonably persistent or conduct themselves in such a way that it is extremely difficult for the college to operate effectively or to maintain a safe and secure environment for staff, learners, visitors and parents/carers alike.

Complainants may make what we consider unreasonable demands on the college for example through:

- the amount of information they seek;
- the nature and scale of service they expect;
- the number of approaches they make.

Examples of vexatious parents may include:

- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff e.g. excessive telephoning or sending emails, writing lengthy complex letters or emails regularly or expecting immediate responses;

- Being abusive, intimidating, passive aggressive or threatening to staff, either by telephone, in writing (including emails and social media) or in meetings;
- Arriving at college without an appointment and demanding to see staff (including the demand to see particular members of staff);
- Refusing to leave the college premises when requested;
- Expecting or demanding return telephone calls or responses within an unreasonable timeframe;
- Refusing to accept the requirements or process outlined in the Complaints Policy;
- Refusing to accept the outcome of the Complaints Policy

The Head of College and SLT deal with specific concerns or complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the college. The majority of concerns or complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the college and directly or indirectly on the overall wellbeing of the staff and learners. In these exceptional circumstances, the college may take action in accordance with this policy.

Parents expectations of the College

Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either concerns with the College can expect the College to:

- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means
- Ensure that the Complaints policy and this policy are available on the College's website.

The Colleges' expectations of parents/carers/members of the public

The College can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise concerns with the College to:

- Treat all College staff with courtesy and respect;
- Respect the needs and well-being of learners and staff in the College;
- Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- Avoid any aggression, verbal abuse or other intimidating behaviour;
- Avoid being threatening or passive aggressive in tone either verbally or in writing;
- Ensure that written communications state the facts surrounding the concern without using threatening or unpleasant language;
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in Colleges work and allow the College a reasonable time to respond;
- Use the appropriate channels to make contact with the College;
- Avoid contacting the Head of College constantly for small matters that can be dealt with by other members of staff;
- Avoid being derogatory about the College or members of staff on social media;
- Avoid using social media to rally other parents to their cause;
- Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

Who is a persistent complainant?

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who constantly complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the College, and whose behaviour is unreasonable.

Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern/s or complaint/s;
- Constant and prolific correspondence or excessive e-mails or telephone contact about various issues
- Uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- An insistence upon pursuing concerns or complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- An insistence on only dealing with the Head on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the College to deal with such matters;
- An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the College because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions above, in such a way that they:

- Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of College staff and/or;
- Cause on-going distress to individual member(s) of College staff and/or;
- Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the College community and/or;
- Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

The Colleges' actions in cases of persistent or vexatious complaints or harassment

In the first instance

The College will communicate either in writing or verbally (confirmed with a letter) to inform the complainant that their behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable/unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.

If the behaviour is not modified

The College will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the College community:

- Inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is now considered by the College to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;

- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the College should be by letter only;
- Any physical, or verbal aggression or other forms of intimidating behaviour, reported to the police. The College will then take appropriate advice and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the College site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- Consider taking appropriate advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledged and responded to, but will be kept on file
- Requiring any face to face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
- In the event of extreme situations or events, the College may take the decision to implement one of the above steps immediately. In this situation, the complainant will be informed in writing.

Any communication from parents/carers that is considered disrespectful, abusive or threatening will be terminated immediately.

Ultimately, If a parent is continually and constantly unhappy with the College, they may consider if Liberty College is in fact the best choice of College for them or their children.

The Head and SLT will keep the Chair of Advisors informed at all times. If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the College may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these circumstances, advice may be sought from HR/Legal Services.