Media Relations Policy

East Anglian Schools' Trust

Approved by:	EAST Trust Board	**Date:** 8 February 2021
Next review:	February 2022	
Next review due by:	Under regular review subject to statutory changes. Formal review will be undertaken annually	

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Contents

1. Overview 2
2. Aims 2
3. Principles 3
4. Communications 4
5. Data Protection 4
6. Reactive media handling in response to a school closure 4

1. Overview.

Overarching Trust Rationale on Media Relations:
It is in the best interest of East Anglian Schools' Trust (EAST) for schools' media relations to be nurtured and managed directly by each of the Trusts' schools to develop awareness of their activities and enhance each schools' reputation. The scope of Trust involvement in the management of media relations and activity is set out below.

1.1 This policy sets out the principles all MAT staff and volunteers, including central trust staff, directors, school staff and governors should follow when dealing with the media.
1.2 The policy covers both proactive and planned press activity and reactive media in response to an incident and / or emergency.
1.3 In the case of an incident or emergency this policy should be read alongside the relevant school continuity plans

2. Aims.

2.1 To ensure that clear lines of communication and accountability are observed between EAST, schools and media when dealing with an incident or emergency.
2.2 To ensure that requests for information from the media are handled properly and professionally.
2.3 To ensure that the principles of data protection and confidentiality are observed.
2.4 To ensure families whose students are on the 'no publicity list' have their privacy protected.
2.5 To ensure that only those that are permitted make formal statements representing the views of a particular school or EAST.
2.6 To ensure all schools are supported in handling the media and gain maximum publicity for positive news coverage.
2.7 To ensure EAST's reputation and ethos is consistently communicated and protected.

3. Principles.

3.1 Proactive media handling.

- At times the Trust or school may wish to proactively seek media coverage to advertise or promote a school opportunity, success or event. This is very much encouraged and should be managed by the school.
- If a school is aware of a positive news opportunity and would like support drafting a press statement or engaging with the media, please contact the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

3.2 The scope of Trust (rather than school) involvement in media activity is defined as:

- Issues relating to trust activity (e.g. acquisition of new schools, negative publicity about a Trust employee or volunteer).
- Any official position on broader educational issues (e.g. govt policy, local educational need).
- Response to major incident / emergency in a specific school. The CEO will be informed by the Headteacher to determine and agree how best to manage the response – this may ultimately be dealt with by the Headteacher.

3.3 Media handling in response to an incident or emergency.

- The Headteacher will liaise with the CEO at the earliest possible opportunity to seek support for communication and to agree how best to manage the response in the event of a serious incident. If early contact compromises dealing with the incident, the Headteacher will nominate a member of the senior leadership team to initially communicate with the CEO.
- In the event of a Trust-wide incident or emergency all press enquiries should be managed through the EAST CEO who will manage and coordinate the media response in conjunction with the appropriate headteacher/s, in consultation with the LGBs and Chair of EAST when possible.
- For school-based serious incidents or emergencies, headteachers will discuss and agree planned press responses with the EAST CEO, in consultation with the LGBs and Chair of EAST when possible. Unprecedented emergencies will mean that it is possible that Headteachers will need to work with the media independently in the immediate aftermath of an incident. The Trust supports the principle that Headteachers will lead in press-community communication when it is relevant to their school, unless in exceptional circumstances when the CEO would decide on an alternative approach.
- It will be at the EAST CEO's discretion who should be involved in the response, but routinely the chair of the board, or other trustees will be informed as appropriate. In the case of a school level query all responses will be agreed and coordinated by the CEO in consultation with the headteacher and chair of governors as appropriate.
- The decision on whether to seek legal or professional advice will also be determined by the EAST CEO and / or Chair of EAST, and will be coordinated by the Trust central team.

3.4 Media handling in response to a press enquiry.

- Any staff member or volunteer who receives an enquiry from the media should report this to their school headteacher who will determine the appropriate course of action.
- For school related enquiries (e.g positive attention, for information etc.) the Headteacher may choose to inform the CEO of the school's response. Staff or volunteers receiving the initial communication should take a note of:

    - The date, time and contact details of the media enquirer, a summary of the query and any information on timing for a response.

- Staff and volunteers should not:
    - Comment on individual media enquiries or promise a response.
- If the enquiry relates to a serious incident or emergency the Headteacher should in turn notify the CEO immediately as per point 3.3.

4. Communications.

- All other school staff, volunteers and governors should not enter into discussion with the media and should refer the media to the headteacher in the first instance. Failure to comply appropriately with this guidance may be a disciplinary offence for staff and volunteers.

5. Data Protection.

- Details of students / staff addresses and personal details should not be released to the media.
- All staff and volunteers must ensure that no student on the school 'no publicity' list is included in a media photograph, video or in any form of communication with the media.

6. Reactive media handling in response to a School closure.

- In the event of the closure of the school e.g. in case of snow, lack of heating, the headteacher should follow the school processes for informing parents (text and phone trees etc).
- The School website will be the first main point of reference.
- The CEO should be notified of a decision to close and the reason.
- It is expected that in unexpected circumstances, the situation is discussed with the CEO prior to a decision being made if time allows and it does not compromise safety or communication.