Communications Statement

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Intent

The Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) is committed to maintaining effective communication and relationships between staff, parents, pupils, its schools, Local School Boards (LSBs), Trustees, Central Support Hub Team and Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

This Statement sets out the aims of the Trust with regard to internal and external communication, and the responsibilities of the Trust, its staff members and parents. The Statement also outlines the Trust's marketing strategy and how this will be used to build positive relationships with all stakeholders and the wider community.

The Trust aims to promote effective communication between pupils, members of staff, parents and stakeholders through the following means:

- Having a clear and professional communication strategy in place to keep parents well-informed about their child's educational progress and any other matters related to their child's overall wellbeing.
- Improving the quality of education by ensuring there is a robust process in place for consultation between the school, parents, staff members and pupils on key areas.
- Monitoring and evaluating communication issues through regular meetings with staff, parents and members of the school community.
- Developing a strong marketing presence to build a positive reputation for schools within their wider community.

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1. Roles and Responsibilities

How the Trust Board works together with Local School Boards (Governors):

- Assurance reports from the Local School Boards (LSBs). The Trust Board is dependent on the reports the LSBs provide. Unlike many MATs, CIT has retained a local governance layer to ensure that governance decisions are informed by input from local stakeholders. The Trust Board values the work of the LSBs and the Trust works to support the assurance-related work of these bodies.
- Information provided by LSBs related to the 5Cs (Communications, Culture, Celebration, Concerns, Community) in their reports to the Trust Board.
- Assurance reports from the CIT Executive. The Trust Board Committees receive regular detailed school-specific reports on matters linked to quality of education, Safeguarding, behaviour, pupil attendance, Finance, premises, Health and Safety, HR and staff wellbeing.
- Education Scrutiny and Safeguarding Committee 'deep dives'. Each Committee meeting has a focus on specific schools which allows Trustees to look at the detail at the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement.
- Documentation. Trustees have access to a range of reports and data for each school in the Trust. We have access to heath check reports, the IDSR data report, safeguarding audits, Health and Safety reports, condition survey reports, budget reports, etc. This allows us to be able to connect with the detail as and when we need to.
- Each Trustee has one or more 'special interest schools for whom they are 'linked Trustees'. The expectation is that the linked Trustee gets to know the school, largely through the data reports, etc, in more detail than the other Trustees. The linked Trustees are expected to have an annual meeting with the Chair of their school's LSB at the school. Some LSBs invite their link Trustee to an LSB meeting.

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is responsible for:

- Ensuring that CIT's Values are clearly communicated and upheld across the Trust.
- Delivering on strategy and Trust-wide improvement and providing assurances and information to the various Trust Committees.
- Regular information sharing and communications where appropriate with CIT's leaderships teams and external networks.
- Consulting with appropriate stakeholders within the Trust and beyond to ensure CIT continues to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

Headteachers within Trust schools are responsible for:

- Placing key policies, documents and procedures in areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire school community, e.g. on the school website.
- Communicating important information, e.g. the curriculum, clearly to parents.
- Informing parents of all school events within appropriate timelines.
- Regularly keeping parents informed of their child's progress.
- Informing parents about the types of data that the school holds on pupils, who controls the data, why that data is held and who it may be shared with. This information will be concise, transparent and easily accessible, written in a clear and plain language and free of charge.
- Ensuring that parents understand their right to access information about their child that is held by the school.
- Ensuring that consent obtained from parents, and pupils where appropriate, regarding the processing of personal data is freely given, specific, informed and an unambiguous indication of the individual's wishes.
- Ensuring that individuals are informed of their rights to withdraw consent and are provided with easy ways to do so.

- Ensuring that information regarding staff pay and conditions of service is made available to all who are employed at the school.
- Taking steps to ensure parents who do not have access to the Internet can still access the information that is included on the school website.
- Ensuring the communication of key messages and school values.
- Ensuring all platforms of communication are up to date with audience-appropriate material and are easily accessible by parents, the relevant Local Authority (LA) and the wider community.
- Identifying the promotional value of pupil achievements and school events and promoting them accordingly.
- Developing and managing networking and engagement programmes to enhance the school's relationship with parents, other schools, LAs and the wider community.
- Helping to shape school events which exemplify and communicate the school's values, e.g. prospective parents' evenings.
- Advising on event planning with the aim of improving audience experience.
- Targeting relevant professionals who may issue children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, e.g. education psychologists.
- Identifying and targeting specific groups to provide information relevant to them, e.g. information relevant to the parents of pupils with SEND.
- Working with the DPO to ensure that marketing material complies with Data Protection law and that consent is properly requested and recorded.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Ensuring the principles and procedures of this Statement are followed.
- Representing CIT in a professional manner and complying with this Statement and the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Communicating proactively with parents about pupil progress and helping parents to support their child's learning.
- Ensuring that their internal communication with other staff is strong, e.g. passing on relevant information to supply teachers and updating classroom planning files with specific pupil information.

Parents and Carers are responsible for:

- Reading the key communications circulated by the school and responding or acting on these communications where required, e.g. by attending meetings.
- Viewing the school app or website for detailed information about the school calendar, term dates, exam details, monitoring and assessments, school achievements and other useful downloads.
- Informing the school of important information related to their child, such as:
    - Medical conditions or allergies, supported by medical documentation relating to these conditions.
    - Any SEND or other needs their child has.
    - Child protection matters, legal issues or relevant duties with appropriate documentation.
    - Any changes to details originally given to school.
- Raising any issues or concerns they may have with the appropriate contact, e.g. contacting the class teacher with education-related issues.

The CIT Support Hub is responsible for:

<u>Safeguarding</u>

- Providing schools with support from a highly skilled Central Team specialising in Safeguarding.

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- Access to a Headteachers' Network that is always be on hand to advise and listen.
- Regular training and networking for DSLs to ensure they are kept updated with local and national Safeguarding issues.
- An online Safeguarding Hub to store all documents, policies and guidance you will need to help you get Safeguarding right in your school.
- Bespoke Curriculum support to enable your pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe.

School Improvement

- Providing support and challenge to the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team.
- Facilitating and running Headteacher Development Days.
- Communicating Health Checks' feedback to ensure that schools are appraised so that strengths can be shared and areas for development can be addressed.
- Training and coaching to Senior Leaders.
- Monitoring standards throughout the year using a range of evidence sources including learning walks, observations, book inspections, meetings with SLTs and desk top exercises when considering attainment and progress.
- Supplying Ofsted mentoring and guidance.

Finance

- Providing each school with a School Operations Manager and a Finance Administrator.
- Regular communication with the Headteacher on budgeting.
- Providing support and challenge to the School Operations Managers and Finance Administrators for Operations and Finance within their schools.
- Regular network meetings for all Schools Operations Managers.
- School review meetings for Finance and Operations as necessary.

Governance

- Providing advice and guidance to Local School Boards to ensure schools are well equipped to educate and care for their pupils.

IT

- Supporting schools with day-to-day technical issues.
- Training.
- Procurement, licenses and contracts.
- GDPR.

Communications & Fundraising

- Supporting schools to keep their website and social media pages up to date.
- Creating video tours and prospectuses for schools.
- Writing press releases for individual school stories.
- Engaging (when relevant) with the local community to enhance communications.

HR

- Collaborate and communicate effectively with all schools within the Trust to provide ongoing support and advice as and when needed.
- Ensure sickness absence management, disciplinary, capability, grievances, complaints and workforce change processes are managed fairly and effectively in line with policy, procedures and are legally compliant.
- Support with staff recruitment and retention.

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- Proactively identify, develop and implement improvements to systems and procedures to enhance service efficiently.
- Communicating the CIT employee's free helpline for: Family issues - medical information - lifestyle addictions - gambling - financial - relationships - domestic abuse - insurance claims - consumer issues - debt - legal - stress - childcare – housing.

LEARN

- Communicating the fully funded menu of training opportunities and professional networks available to schools.
- Supporting in the development of strategic leadership of SEND to ensure that SEND and inclusion are embedded into whole school provision with the aim of having a positive impact on outcomes for all pupils.

Projects & Estates

- Overseeing the maintenance of all the buildings within the Trust and supporting individual school site teams in providing an effective delivery.

Procurement

- Access to a Trust-wide framework for purchasing.
- Support to schools advising on tendering requirements, suppliers and services and procurement law.

2. Internal Communication

Communication between members of staff

Staff will ensure their internal communication with other members of staff is strong, effective, and abides by the procedures outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct.

It is the responsibility of Senior Leaders to communicate with staff to ensure the smooth day to day running of the school. This may include maintaining a timetable outlining weekly activities and a notice board for daily messages in the staff room. Written communications to specific staff members are delivered via email. All staff have to take personal responsibility to ensure they access the most effective method of communication regularly to perform their duties.

Communication between members of staff and pupils

Staff will not engage in any type of private correspondence with pupils (should staff think they have a valid reason to communicate with children they must gain permission from the Headteacher who will inform HR so that a record can be kept).

Communication between members of staff and home

Staff will communicate with parents only via the relevant channels through schools when providing information about pupil school life.

3. External Communication

Communication from schools to parents

Parents will be provided with information which may be in the following formats:

- Letters home
- Text messages (where in place)

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- Phone calls
- The school website
- School Newsletters
- In-person meetings

In line with the Social Media Policy, staff will not communicate or interact with parents or pupils via their personal social networking pages, except in the case of blogs or social media pages set up specifically for the purpose of teaching and learning (should staff think they have a valid reason to communicate with children/parents they must gain permission from the Headteacher who will inform HR so that a record can be kept).

CIT schools subscribe to electronic communication systems which are used to achieve effective and consistent communication with parents. Schools will ensure that:

- Only the Headteacher, and other staff authorised by the Headteacher, can access and use the messaging system.
- Parents are asked to provide their consent and details for the use of the system and will inform the school if they wish to withdraw from the process.
- If any changes are made to the service, or manner in which data is processed on the system, parents are informed, and consent is renewed.
- Any parents who cannot be contacted via a messaging system will receive a paper version or other reasonably requested format.

If a pupil is absent from school and the school has no indication of the reason for the absence, the school will contact the pupil's parent via telephone on the first day of absence in order to find out the reason for the absence.

Communication from parents/stakeholders/external bodies to Schools/Trust

Parents/stakeholders/external bodies will be required to email or telephone the school office or Trust office, which is open from Monday to Friday during school hours. Every effort should be made to respond to all enquiries within a timely manner.

Communication between teachers and parents

Teachers update parents of pupils' progress, the curriculum content being covered, and how they can support pupils' development and progress through activities to be completed at home.

4. Emergency Communication

All parents will ensure that schools have their latest contact details, including their address, telephone number and email address, so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency. Parent are required to have at least one additional emergency contact this will be used should the first point of contact be unavailable in an emergency.

If a pupil is seriously ill or injured, schools will attempt to contact the pupil's emergency contacts via telephone. In the event of a larger serious incident requiring evacuation or lockdown, schools will follow the Business Continuity Plan.

Where an incident affects the whole school community, such as power failure or snow, schools will send all parents an email or text message (where available) with information on how the school will be operating. If the school is closed for more than one day due to adverse weather or similar problem, an update will be posted on the school website. Schools will also ask the local radio station to broadcast a closure announcement.

5. Email Communication

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Email and Internet access will be used in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy and the school's Online Safety/E-Safety Policy.

All staff will have their own Trust or school email account, which will be used to conduct all work-related communication – staff will not use their personal email addresses.

The Trust and its schools will aim to respond to all email enquiries within a timely manner.

Staff members will be advised not to subscribe to any junk-type email chains, in order to reduce emails received.

Email Signatures

Email signatures are assigned to employees via the Trust Support Hub. Only email signatures provided by the Support Hub are to be used for Trust and school email accounts.

Email Etiquette

When it comes to email etiquette for CCing (Carbon Copy) and BCCing (Blind Carbon Copy), it is important to understand the appropriate usage and considerations to ensure effective communication and respect for privacy.

Use CC and BCC thoughtfully. CC: Include people who need to be informed, directly involved or have a stake in the conversation. Use BCC considerately. It should be used when it is necessary to include someone without disclosing their identity to others. Be mindful of privacy concerns and avoid using BCC for personal or sensitive information.

If you receive an email with CC or BCC recipients, do not hit "Reply All" unless it Is necessary and appropriate.

If an email is of high importance, send using the 'Importance' option. The default for this option is set to 'Normal'. This can be changed to 'High' if an urgent response is required.

Be mindful of sending emails out of normal working hours. We encourage email scheduling. Do not expect colleagues to read or respond to emails outside of these times. We encourage everyone to manage their own work life balance in a way that suits them best.

6. Meetings

Meetings between members of staff

A programme of regular staff meetings will be set out so that staff can plan accordingly. Additional meetings will be added to the calendar as required, with appropriate notice to prepare, and due regard for well-being. Time will be set aside for structured opportunities for staff to engage in team working and to contribute to the Trust's/department's/school's reflection on priorities, activities and future plans.

We recommend for all formal meetings, the final agenda item will always be: 'Do we need to communicate anything from today's meeting elsewhere?' and 'Who is responsible for this communication?' and 'How will it be delivered?'

We also recommend that minutes are taken, action points progressed and feedback/communications passed on/given to relevant staff.

Meetings between staff and parents

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When parents wish to organise official meetings with members of staff, they should follow the individual school's booking arrangements. Parents will be required to organise meetings with members of staff with adequate preparation time. Lessons will not be interrupted to accommodate parents needing to speak to a teacher (unless an emergency and time-critical).

If parents urgently need to meet with a member of staff, they will phone the school office as soon as possible – the office staff will aim to find a senior member of staff to see parents before the end of the school day. For non-urgent meetings between parents and staff, the school will aim to meet parents within a timely manner. The school will determine the level of urgency in requests for meetings.

7. Data Protection and Consent

Schools will abide by the Trust's Data Protection Policy and related documentation in all its communication and when carrying out marketing activities.

Staff members' personal details will not be shared with other members of staff or external agencies without a lawful basis for data processing as outlined in the UK GDPR. Under no circumstances will staff members' personal details be shared with parents.

Consent

Consent for the use of pupil images will be requested when a child first joins a school. It is up to the parent/carer to inform the school if they wish to remove the consent thereafter. Where necessary, the school will request that individuals refresh their consent in light of any changes to data processing.

CIT schools will ensure consent mechanisms meet the standards of the UK GDPR in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy. The school will ensure a record of consent is kept, documenting how and when consent was given.

For pupil images, consent will always be sought for the following:

- Written marketing material, including emails, text messages, and letters home.
- The use of images and/or videos of pupils, e.g. in the school prospectus, website, other promotional materials and the media.

The Trust reserves the right to use any data, e.g. photos, that was processed before consent was withdrawn, as consent was given at the point of processing. However, the Trust will take all reasonable measures to remove any data for which consent was provided before the consent was withdrawn, e.g. photos on social media.

As an employee of CIT image consent is assumed. If there is a reason you do not wish to have images of yourself shared, please contact the Head of Communications & Fundraising for further confidential discussions.

Right to object

In accordance with the UK GDPR, all individuals have the right to object to receiving direct marketing correspondence. The school will make the individual's right to object clear when requesting consent.

Where an individual exercises their right to object, the Trust will stop processing personal data for direct marketing purposes as soon as the objection is received. The Trust will not refuse an individual's objection regarding personal data that is being processed for direct marketing purposes.

Right to erasure

In accordance with the UK GDPR, all individuals have the right to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing, e.g. where a parent's child has left school.

In requests for consent, the DPO will ensure the reasons for processing are clear, e.g. by ensuring they are not obscured by lengthy procedures or small print. In its requests for consent, the school will make it clear all individuals have the right to erasure in the following circumstances:

- Where the personal data is no longer necessary in relation to the purpose for which it was originally collected or processed.
- When the individual withdraws their consent.
- When the individual objects to the processing and there is no overriding legitimate interest for continuing the processing.
- The personal data was unlawfully processed.
- The personal data is required to be erased in order to comply with a legal obligation.

Right of access and SARs

In accordance with an individual's right of access under the UK GDPR, personal information, confirmation of data processing and other supplementary information will be shared with individuals who request access.

The procedure below will be followed for SARs:

- The requests will be made in writing to the Trust's Executive Leadership Team and will be responded to within one month of receipt.
- The period of compliance may be extended by a further two months where the requests are complex or numerous. If this is the case, individuals will be informed within one month of receipt of the request, with an explanation of why an extension is required.
- A pupil, or the parent of a pupil, will have the right to access the information that the school holds about the pupil in question.
- Individuals have the right to access their personal data free of charge.
- Where requests are manifestly unfounded or excessive, a reasonable charge for the administrative costs of providing the information will be applied, or the request will be refused.
- If any request is refused, the individual will be informed of their right to complain to the supervisory authority and to a judicial remedy without delay within one month.

Under the UK GDPR, remote access to a secure self-service system will be given to provide individuals with direct access to their personal information.

Freedom of Information requests

In line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, private data and public records can potentially be accessed through lodging a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The procedure below will be followed in terms of FOI requests:

- The requests will be made in writing to the school or Trust, stating the name and address of the requester and a description of the information requested.
- Successful FOI requests will be responded to within 20 working days from receipt of the request, unless the request does not comply with the procedure set out in the Trust's Freedom of Information Policy.

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- The Trust holds the right to charge the requester a fee if complying with the request would cost the school in excess of £450.
- Certain information will not be shared, such as that explained in Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. Marketing

All official written correspondence from schools where practically possible must to be sent out using an official letterhead. All school letterheads must include the school logo* and CIT logo* and be stored centrally on the shared drive*. The Trust-wide font to use in official written correspondence is 'Arial' in size '11' (this font is globally recognised as Dyslexic-friendly, aligning with our Trust Value of 'Inclusivity'). This also applies to all official presentation materials* from schools and the Trust. School Newsletters should include the CIT logo. *Templates/logos and other marketing materials are all stored centrally on the shared drive for staff use within the 'CIT Marketing Suite' folder.

The Head of Communications & Fundraising is responsible for creating suitable marketing materials which fit the needs and aims of the Trust. Marketing materials can be targeted at parents/carers/stakeholders and used to communicate the Trust/school's ethos, values and vision, with a clear link to the local area and wider community.

Marketing correspondence sent by the school will solely pertain to Trust-run or school-run events and causes. The school will not pass any personal data on to its suppliers or third parties for marketing purposes.

For the purposes of this statement, **'direct marketing'** is defined as the communication of any advertising or marketing material which is directed to individuals. The school will only directly market to parents and/or stakeholders through written correspondence, e.g. emails and letters home, and only where explicit consent has been provided for the school to do so (in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy). Only the parents of current and prospective pupils will receive direct marketing.

Schools will endeavour to ensure that parents will cease to receive marketing materials from the school six months after their youngest child has left the school. If marketing continues, we ask parents to please inform the school office.

School Prospectuses and Videos

A school prospectus and video tour may be used to communicate information regarding the following:

- Clubs and activities
- School hours
- School uniform
- Term dates
- The school calendar
- Ofsted reports
- Exam information

CIT school prospectuses and videos may be updated each academic year. The content of these mediums will complement the work of the school and contain information about the most recent activities and successes of the school, including progress, priorities and performance.

CIT school websites and social media

Schools will ensure their websites meets the requirements of the UK GDPR.

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The Headteacher at each CIT school will delegate to specific staff members the responsibility for creating and uploading the content of the school's website and social media accounts. The Head of Communications & Fundraising will routinely monitor and review the use of school social media accounts, developing the school's social media presence to achieve maximum optimisation.

Passwords for all websites and social media accounts will be held securely, centrally, by CIT. If a password is updated, the Head of Communications & Fundraising must be informed. The Support Hub may update school websites if needed in consultation with the Headteacher.

All school news, press releases and announcements will be regularly uploaded to the school website, posted on social media, and, where necessary, sent to local news outlets. The school's website and relevant social media accounts will also be used to connect with the wider community, for example through advertising enrichment activities.

9. Monitoring and Review

The efficiency of this statement will be continually monitored throughout the year and reviewed triennially by the Executive Leadership Team of the Trust. The next scheduled review date is February 2027.

10. Appendix – Communications Flowchart