Lornshill Academy

Communication Strategy

Draft

Policy and Practice 2018

Rationale

Communication is complex. Sometimes we do it naturally, other times it feels more forced and deliberate. Sometimes it is very effective and leads to a successful outcome, whilst other times we are left feeling frustrated that we did not achieve what we set out to achieve. It is difficult to predict when it will work well and when it won't, which in turns makes the outcome of the process feel slightly unpredictable.

We can have a great meeting where the group reaches an agreed consensus and leaves with a sense purpose and direction, or we can have a very frustrating meeting where the person chairing the meeting ends up in despair, the attendees feel like they have wasted their time and nothing is agreed or actioned. Likewise, we can feel motivated and enthused by a brilliant idea and share it with the rest of the team, only for it to be met with a range of apathy, ambivalence and sympathy.

Why is this? There are a range of factors, but often it's not **what** we are trying to communicate, but the **method** we use to do so.

Components of communication

The difficulty with communication in a large organisation lies in the number of factors involved. Firstly, the communication can be with an individual, a group or a whole organisation; to complicate that further, it can be with other professionals, with children, with parents and carers and with the wider learning community. This is the **audience** for our communication and in a large organisation like Lornshill Academy the number of different potential audiences is vast.

Secondly, there are many different ways that people communicate in a large organisation. The primary method of communication between staff is traditionally face to face, but often due to time or location restrictions this has been replaced in part by electronic communication. Communication with pupils can be face to face, in assemblies, via the tannoy or through electronic mediums such as Twitter. Likewise, a multitude of options exist for engaging with parents, carers and the local community, incorporating the more traditional, like letters home or termly newsletters, through to the more modern, like a school website, an app and various social media platforms. The multitude of communication **methods** available for both internal and external communication in a large secondary school is both an opportunity and a challenge.

The final complication in achieving effective communication is identifying the **purpose**. Sometimes our purpose is simply to pass on information that others need, but other times our purpose may be to persuade others of the usefulness of the same information. This is particularly the case in a large educational establishment: as we strive to improve and develop as professionals and as a school, we will often have to share with colleagues our own thinking, or enable parents and carers to support a new initiative. Knowing what the **purpose** is and tailoring our communication towards that **purpose** is crucial in achieving the outcome we want to.

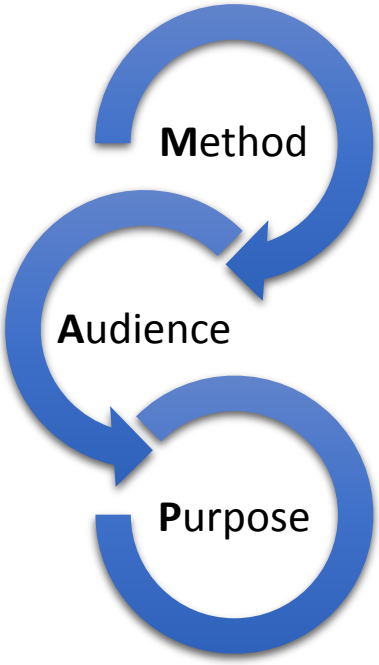
Summary

When we communicate effectively, we use the correct **method** to suit our **audience** and **purpose**. This will be borne from experience. For example, when dealing with a challenging context, it would be inappropriate to do so through electronic communication, where subtleties of meaning can often be lost. Likewise, if explaining complex information to a large number of people individually, it could be beneficial to produce a written summary of key points. We develop as communicators through these experiences, which is why at the same time we do not appreciate the complexity of what we do subconsciously every day.

The aim of the Communication Strategy is to ensure a consistent approach across our organisation, increase the effectiveness of our working practice, and ultimately enable us to achieve our organisational aims.

Communication MAP

Effective communication is achieved by selecting the best **method** of communication for the **audience** we are addressing and the **purpose** we are trying to achieve.



Method	Audience	Purpose
Face to face	Staff	describe – to give details about a person, place, event or thing
Email	Pupils	inform – to tell someone about something
Letter	Parents/carers	explain – to make clear why or how something works
Newsletter	Community	instruct – to tell someone how to do something
Tannoy		advise – to help people decide what to do
School App		persuade – to change someone's opinion
Twitter		argue – to make the case for something
Groupcall		entertain – to make someone enjoy something
Website		analyse – to break down something to help people to understand it better
Telephone		

Audience	Purpose	Methods of communication		
Staff *Face to face* *Email* *Meetings* *Podcast* *Sharepoint*	**Describe** **Inform** **Explain** **Instruct**	Face to face – if communicating with one member of staff.	Email – if communicating with a group of staff.	Sharepoint - if communicating detailed instructional information that all staff need to know for their day to day business, a summary document should be put on Sharepoint. A brief podcast should be created if appropriate.
	Advise	Face to face – if communicating with one member of staff.	Collegiate meeting time – if communicating with a group of staff.	Whole staff meeting – if communicating with the whole staff body.
	Persuade **Argue**	Face to face – if communicating with one member of staff.	Collegiate meeting time – if communicating with a group of staff.	Whole staff meeting – if communicating with the whole staff body.
	Analyse	Face to face – if communicating with one member of staff.	For a group of staff or the whole staff, detailed analysis should be summarised on a one page summary document on Sharepoint and accompanied by a brief podcast.	
Pupils *Face to face* *Classroom visit* *Assembly* *Website* *School App*	**Describe** **Inform** **Explain** **Instruct** **Advise** **Persuade** **Argue** **Entertain**	Face to face – if communicating with one pupil.	Group of pupils or a reminder/key message to a year group – a meeting or assembly, depending on size of group. For shorter messages, a tannoy	If it is information that all pupils need, such as a change in policy, it should be written as a one page summary document and published on the website and School App.

	Analyse		announcement is also an option.	
Audience	**Purpose**	**Methods of communication**		
Parents/carers *Face to face* *Telephone* *Website* *School App* *Letters* *Twitter* *Groupcall* *Newsletter*	**Describe** **Inform**	If contacting a parent specifically about their child, the appropriate person (Pupil Support, SLT) will telephone a parent and may set up a face to face meeting. Routine information – attendance etc will be sent out via a letter.	If communicating short information (reminders, times, dates) to all parents/carers, this should be sent out as a Push Notification through the School App and Groupcall.	At the beginning of each term, the Lornshill Quarterly will be published through the School App and on the website. This will provide important information and key messages.
	Explain **Instruct** **Advise** **Analyse**	If communicating with one parent about more substantial information (SQA procedures, course choice information etc) then direct the parent towards the location of the relevant summary document.	Information that requires explanation, provides detailed instruction or provides detailed advice should be presented in a summary document and placed on both the School App and the website.	
	Persuade **Argue**	For this type of communication, it is best to meet face to face to have open and honest conversations in person. Depending on the size of the audience, this may be through an information evening, a smaller meeting or even one to one.		
	Entertain	School trips or events will be followed up with a short written piece and a photograph on the News section of the School App and on Twitter.	The school newsletter, the Lornshill Quarterly, will be published at the beginning of each school term (August, October, January, April/May). This will have a selection of news from the previous term.	

Wider community *Twitter* *Website* *Newsletter* *School App*	**Describe** **Inform** **Explain** **Instruct**	If communicating short information (reminders, times, dates) to the whole learning community this should be sent out as a Push Notification through the School App and through Twitter.	At the beginning of each term, the Lornshill Quarterly will be published through the School App and on the website. This will provide important information and key messages.
	Persuade	With the wider community, the more methods of communication that are used the better. For this type of information, both Twitter and the School App should be used.	
	Entertain	School trips or events will be followed up with a short written piece and a photograph on the News section of the School App and on Twitter.	The school newsletter, the Lornshill Quarterly, will be published at the beginning of each school term (August, October, January, April/May). This will have a selection of news from the previous term.