

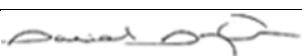


# Communications Policy and Strategy

## 2025-26

### *Commitment to Equality:*

*We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.*

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Chair of Board	Chris Izuka		22/5/25
CEO	Dr Daniel Doyle		22/5/25

***"Rooted in faith, we ignite a love of learning, foster inclusive education and empower every individual to achieve their utmost potential."***

At the Newman Catholic Trust, we stand united in our unwavering mission to nurture a transformative educational experience, where every child is seen, valued, and cherished as a unique gift from God. Rooted in faith, we ignite a love for learning that awakens curiosity, sparks imagination, and fuels a lifelong journey of discovery.

Guided by the teachings of Christ and inspired by the profound wisdom of our namesake, Saint John Henry Newman, we strive to foster a community where inclusion is lived, diversity is embraced, and every individual is empowered to fulfil their highest potential. As Newman said, *"To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."* We believe that education is a sacred journey of continual transformation—intellectually, spiritually, and personally. We believe that true education is not just about knowledge, but about shaping hearts and minds, cultivating resilience, and nurturing the whole person.

Our vision is simple yet profound: to be a beacon of hope and excellence, where students are not only academically accomplished but spiritually enriched and personally empowered to make a difference in the world. In all that we do, we strive to embody our core values:

- **Christ/Child Centred:** Placing the Gospel values, the teachings of Christ and the well-being of each child at the heart of every action we take.
- **Inclusive and Consultative:** Ensuring open communication and engagement with all members of our community.
- **Caring:** Showing empathy, understanding, and support in navigating any challenges that may arise.
- **Transparent:** Fostering openness and honesty in all our interactions.
- **Strategic:** Approaching all matters with careful planning and consideration for the wider community.
- **Professional:** Maintaining the highest standards of conduct and integrity in our decision-making.
- **Accountable:** Taking responsibility for our actions and fulfilling our commitment to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for all.

## **1. Introduction**

The Newman Catholic Trust recognises that effective communication is essential to the success, cohesion and flourishing of our Trust community. As a Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, we view communication not merely as information exchange but as an act of relationship-building, rooted in our Gospel mission to serve others with clarity, charity and truth.

This strategy sets out a robust, consistent and values-driven approach to communication across the Trust. It defines the principles that underpin our communication culture, outlines the channels through which we operate and clarifies the responsibilities of those entrusted with leading, shaping and sustaining our voice. The strategy recognises that effective communication must engage all stakeholders—from pupils and staff to parents, governors, clergy and the wider public—with professionalism, transparency and purpose.

It serves both as a strategic framework and a practical working policy to guide our daily communication practices across the Trust.

## **2. Purpose and Aims**

This policy ensures that communication within and beyond the Newman Catholic Trust:

- Embeds the Trust’s mission and identity in all messaging
- Enables consistent, reliable and timely dissemination of information
- Ensures key communications are accessible, inclusive and professionally delivered
- Promotes collaboration across schools and supports high-functioning governance
- Protects the reputation and integrity of the Trust and its constituent schools
- Ensures information is stored and distributed securely and efficiently
- Supports positive engagement with families, the wider Church and public partners

In a context of growing public accountability, our communication strategy also supports compliance with statutory requirements (including DfE and ICO guidance), and ensures that our schools and central team are equipped to respond to both opportunity and risk.

## **3. Principles of Communication**

All communication across the Newman Catholic Trust is guided by the following principles:

- Mission-Aligned: Communication must reflect our Catholic ethos and express our commitment to the dignity of each person, clarity of purpose and fidelity to truth
- Strategic and Intentional: All messaging should serve a purpose—informing, guiding, inspiring or shaping behaviour—and be aligned to Trust priorities
- Professional and Respectful: Communication should be courteous, timely, grammatically accurate and appropriate to audience and medium
- Inclusive and Accessible: We aim to communicate with clarity and remove barriers for all members of our diverse school communities
- Coordinated and Consistent: Internal and external messaging should be synchronised across channels and sites to avoid duplication, confusion or contradiction
- Confidential and Secure: Information should be handled in accordance with GDPR and Trust data protection policies, with platforms selected for their reliability and compliance

### **Plain English Standard**

All communications within and beyond the Trust should be written in plain English. This means using clear, direct language, avoiding jargon, writing in active voice where possible, and structuring content with the reader in mind. Our goal is to ensure that all stakeholders—families, staff, governors and the public—can understand our messages without ambiguity or unnecessary complexity.

For practical guidance, staff should refer to the Plain English Campaign’s official guide: [www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf)

## **4. Trust Communication Channels: Structure, Systems and Best Practice**

A Trust-wide communications system must be structured, professional and intentionally designed to support high-quality collaboration, operational excellence and inclusive engagement. The Newman Catholic Trust operates a tiered and interdependent model of communication that combines secure digital platforms with clear routines, defined responsibilities and human relationships built on trust and shared mission.

Our communications infrastructure is designed to enable five core functions:

- Strategic leadership and alignment
- Day-to-day operational efficiency
- Accessible and inclusive engagement
- Security, compliance and record-keeping
- Celebratory and mission-driven storytelling

#### **4.1 Strategic Communications Infrastructure**

The Trust operates a suite of digital systems that underpin communication across all schools and central functions. These are selected to ensure consistency, scalability, data security and ease of access:

- Microsoft SharePoint (Secure Document Portal): The Trust's central document management platform. It provides structured access to live policies, compliance documents, statutory returns, strategic plans, governance documentation and working resources. Permissions are role-specific and reviewed annually. SharePoint is the definitive repository for Trust documentation and supports version control and audit trails.
- Microsoft Teams (Collaboration and Messaging): Used extensively by the Central Team and across Trust networks, Teams supports day-to-day communication and collaborative working. Channels are created for governance, operational groups, curriculum networks and project teams. Announcements, meeting agendas, recordings and shared planning documents are managed through Teams. Its integration with SharePoint ensures seamless workflow across settings.
- Microsoft Outlook (Email): The primary tool for formal communication. Outlook is used for direct correspondence, issuing decisions, clarifying accountabilities and managing diary functions. Group mailing lists support rapid and consistent dissemination of information to defined roles (e.g. Principals, DSLs, SBM network). All emails reflect the Trust's professional standards, tone of voice and expectations around confidentiality.

#### **4.2 Scheduled Communication Routines**

Strategic and operational communications are supported by a set of well-established routines to ensure all stakeholders are informed, aligned and supported.

- The Trust Strategic Calendar: Hosted on SharePoint the Trust Strategic Calendar outlines the Trust's annual business in advance as well as clear guidelines and expectations linked to aspects of the Trust's work or annual activities e.g School Improvement (visits and framework) or Governance (the role of the LGC and annual calendar of responsibilities).
- Termly Principal Committee Meetings, Termly Chairs' Forums and Termly Clerks' Briefings/Forums Briefings: Led by the CEO, Chair of the Board and Trust Lead Governance Professional respectively. These briefings share Trust priorities, policy updates and improvement strategy direction. They ensure schools are operating within a shared strategic horizon and that there is consistency in communication, practice and adherence to policy.
- Regular Operational Bulletins: Issued by the Central Team, these cover deadlines, procedural updates, funding opportunities and compliance reminders. They ensure that no operational change or expectation is missed. These are supplemented by operational bulletins supplied by our safeguarding consultant and provider and our Health & Safety Coordinator and consultant.
- CEO Updates (where appropriate): Used flexibly to respond to national developments, celebrate success or set an organisational tone. Distributed via SharePoint, email and Teams.
- Annual Strategic Planning Dialogue: One-to-one or team-based meetings between each school and the Trust leadership, supporting integrated planning and forward resource mapping.
- Policy Circulation and Version Tracking: Updated policies are uploaded to SharePoint and communicated with a covering statement highlighting changes, implications and timelines. Schools are given clear deadlines for implementation.

#### **4.3 Website and Digital Public Communications**

The Trust is currently transitioning to a unified website platform for all schools. This transition will ensure brand consistency, compliance with statutory requirements and integration with digital communication tools. Key features include:

- Trust Website: Houses strategic documents, governance information, key contact details, centralised news and stakeholder-facing messaging.
- School Websites: Aligned in design and structure, with Trust governance, policy and safeguarding information embedded or linked.
- News and Updates: Major communications from the CEO or Board are published here alongside celebratory content and public consultation materials.
- Accessibility Standards: Sites meet or exceed WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards and are tested regularly for usability.

This infrastructure ensures that families, governors, clergy and wider stakeholders receive timely, transparent and accessible information.

#### **4.4 Newsletters, Publications and Consultation**

- Trust Newsletter (Termly): Curated by the Central Team and celebrating Trust-wide achievement. Showcases school stories, strategic updates and educational insight.
- Curriculum and Leadership Bulletins: Issued at planned moments during the year to subject leaders, senior teams and improvement networks, highlighting resources, policy changes and research links.
- Annual Governance Report: Published to all LGCs and the Board, summarising governance performance, impact and development needs.
- Stakeholder Consultations: Used for major policy changes, admissions arrangements or strategic planning. All consultations are planned with clarity, fairness and adequate timeframes. Feedback is summarised and published where appropriate.

#### **4.5 Stakeholder Feedback and Two-Way Engagement**

Listening is a core component of our communications model. We seek structured feedback across all major stakeholder groups:

- Staff Surveys: Conducted annually or as needed to evaluate organisational culture, wellbeing, communication efficacy and engagement.
- Pupil Voice: Facilitated through school councils and via Trust-led themed surveys (e.g. curriculum relevance, inclusion).
- Parent Surveys: Used to understand satisfaction, confidence and parental insight into school improvement. All data is analysed and shared with schools.
- Governor and Chair Forums: Provide feedback on governance communication, expectations and strategy.

These engagement mechanisms feed directly into planning cycles and Trust-wide development priorities.

#### **4.6 Communication Responsibilities and Expectations**

All staff and leaders are responsible for upholding high standards of communication. This includes:

- Using correct branding and consistent language across all channels
- Ensuring professional tone, clarity and purpose in all messages
- Escalating issues through appropriate channels and avoiding informal or public commentary on sensitive issues
- Responding to queries within published service standards (typically within 48 hours)
- Protecting confidentiality and ensuring no breach of GDPR or safeguarding expectations

The Central Team, led by the CEO hold strategic oversight. School leaders are accountable for local communication within Trust frameworks.

Together, these systems and expectations ensure that the Newman Catholic Trust is a highly communicative organisation—efficient, transparent and committed to partnership at every level.

### **5. Media Relations and Reputation Management**

The Newman Catholic Trust recognises that its reputation is a public asset built on the integrity of its mission, the outcomes of its pupils and the conduct of its leaders and staff. Managing media relations and safeguarding reputation requires strategic coordination, clarity of message and organisational discipline.

The Trust's approach to media relations is guided by the principles of truthfulness, transparency and timeliness, underpinned by the Gospel imperative to communicate with integrity and humility.

### **5.1 Managing Media Enquiries**

All media enquiries—whether local, regional or national—must be directed in the first instance to the CEO. No staff member should engage with the press or broadcast media on behalf of the Trust or any school without prior authorisation.

The CEO or delegated spokesperson will:

- Assess the nature and context of the enquiry
- Identify appropriate internal sources of information
- Liaise with key external stakeholders and consultants e.g the Diocese and Delegated Services
- Coordinate, advise, draft or approve an official response
- Coordinate timing and release across platforms

Media statements will be concise, accurate and framed to promote clarity and confidence without speculation or defensiveness. Where necessary, legal or diocesan guidance will be sought before release.

### **5.2 Crisis Communication and Reputational Risk**

In the event of a crisis—such as a safeguarding incident, critical health and safety breach or sudden operational failure—a structured communications protocol will be activated. This ensures consistency, containment and compliance with regulatory expectations. A full outline is included in the Trust's Business Continuity Planning.

The Trust's Crisis Communication Protocol includes:

- Immediate notification to the CEO and Chair of the Board
- Formation of a Trust Incident Response Team
- Development of a holding statement within two hours where appropriate
- Coordination with local authorities, the Diocese and other statutory bodies
- Internal communications to staff and governors within affected schools
- Post-incident review and documentation of lessons learned

All crisis communication is led by the CEO and documented in accordance with Trust risk management policy.

### **5.3 Celebrating Success and Shaping Perception**

Proactive engagement with the media and public platforms is equally important. The Trust will continue to develop:

- Positive relationships with local journalists and community media outlets
- Regular press releases highlighting innovation, pupil achievement and Trust-wide initiatives
- Strategic storytelling through digital channels including website, video and newsletters
- A communications calendar that aligns celebrations with key liturgical and educational milestones

Each school will contribute to this public narrative by sharing stories of success, inclusion, creativity and mission in action.

## **6. Evaluation, Governance and Review**

Effective communication must be continuously evaluated and refined in response to organisational learning, technological developments and feedback from stakeholders. Governance and accountability are central to this process.

### **6.1 Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

The Trust Central Team, led by the CEO, will monitor communication quality, effectiveness and consistency through:

- Spot audits of school and Trust websites
- Evaluation of internal messaging workflows (e.g. policy updates, briefing delivery)
- Monitoring engagement analytics from newsletters, surveys and digital platforms
- Feedback from Principals, governors and key user groups

Where gaps, delays or inconsistencies are identified, prompt action will be taken. Training or templates may be provided to support improvement.

## **6.2 Stakeholder Voice and Perception**

Communication effectiveness is measured not only by accuracy but by impact. The Trust will use:

- Annual stakeholder surveys to measure trust, engagement and understanding
- Termly school review processes to assess alignment of local messaging with Trust values
- Consultation feedback loops to evaluate public understanding and satisfaction

This ensures communication is not only transmitted but received and understood.

## **6.3 Strategic Oversight and Policy Review**

The Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring effective communication across the Trust. Oversight is delegated through:

- The Governance and Risk Committee
- Annual review of the Communications Strategy and Policy
- Integration of communication priorities into the Trust Strategic Plan

Revisions to this policy will be prompted by:

- Significant organisational growth or structural change
- Legislative or regulatory updates
- Learning from incident management or stakeholder feedback

This strategy will be reviewed annually and re-approved by the Board to ensure it remains fit for purpose and aligned with the mission of the Newman Catholic Trust.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

Excellence in communication across the Newman Catholic Trust is sustained not by systems alone but by people. It is critical that each individual and group understands their specific responsibility in ensuring communications are accurate, aligned and mission-led. This section outlines the layered responsibilities that underpin our communications framework, ensuring coherence, clarity and professionalism across all channels and contexts.

### **7.1 Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO serves as the principal voice of the Trust and holds overall responsibility for the quality, tone and impact of all strategic communications.

Key responsibilities include:

- Setting the vision, narrative and tone for internal and external communications across the Trust
- Issuing major strategic messages to all stakeholders, including public statements, policy launches and organisational updates
- Acting as the primary spokesperson in all matters of reputation, strategy and critical incident response
- Ensuring the Communications Strategy aligns with the wider Strategic Plan and evolves in line with Trust growth and stakeholder needs
- Leading the communication aspects of crisis response planning and management

### **7.2 Chief Financial Officer and Central Team**

As senior operational leaders, the CFO and Central Team contribute to the consistency and professionalism of communications relating to finance, HR, estates, governance and compliance.

Their responsibilities include:

- Issuing timely operational updates and compliance alerts to schools
- Coordinating documentation and communications via SharePoint and Teams
- Supporting school leaders with guidance communications (e.g. on procurement, audit, statutory returns)
- Monitoring the effectiveness of communication platforms and implementing improvements where needed

### **7.3 Trust Communications Lead (where appointed)**

The Communications Lead, when in post, supports the delivery of communications strategy by:

- Developing communication plans for Trust-wide initiatives and campaigns
- Curating and managing content for newsletters, social media, press releases and websites
- Advising school leaders on branding, tone, presentation and audience targeting
- Leading on quality assurance of public-facing content
- Supporting the CEO and Central Team in high-profile communications and consultation events

#### **7.4 Principals and School Leadership Teams**

School leaders are the key communicators within their own communities and the essential bridge between Trust strategy and family engagement. They are responsible for:

- Communicating school-level updates, successes and strategic direction clearly and consistently with staff, parents, pupils and governors
- Ensuring their school website remains up to date, compliant and aligned to Trust standards
- Implementing Trust communication policies locally, including staff expectations and escalation protocols
- Coordinating with the Trust on public statements, crisis response and media enquiries
- Sharing school achievements and stories for Trust-wide publications and public celebration

#### **7.5 Local Governing Committees (LGCs)**

As the stewards of local accountability, LGCs play an important role in evaluating and supporting school communications. Their responsibilities include:

- Monitoring the quality and clarity of communication between the school and its stakeholders
- Promoting high expectations for community engagement and public reputation
- Reflecting back to the Trust on how communications are received and perceived locally
- Championing the values and mission of the Trust through their interactions with families and parish communities

#### **7.6 All Staff**

Every member of staff represents the Trust in their professional interactions. All are expected to:

- Use approved channels and professional language in their communication with pupils, families and colleagues
- Maintain confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding in all communications
- Direct any media interest or reputational concern to the Principal or CEO without delay
- Adhere to Acceptable Use and ICT policies regarding digital communication
- Engage with Trust communications and updates as a routine part of professional responsibility

By embedding these responsibilities within our daily practice, the Trust builds a culture where every voice is aligned to our shared mission, and every message builds trust, clarity and community.

### **8. Policy Dissemination, Implementation and Training**

To ensure this Communications Strategy becomes embedded in the daily culture of the Newman Catholic Trust, its implementation must be purposeful, sustained and integrated into professional development. All stakeholders will have access to this policy and will be supported in its practical application.

#### **8.1 Dissemination**

- The strategy will be published on the Trust SharePoint and Trust website
- All Principals, governors and school communication leads will be directly issued with the final policy
- A simplified overview will be made available for all staff as part of internal communications briefings
- A summary version will be incorporated into new staff induction and governance onboarding packs

#### **8.2 Implementation**

- The Central Team will lead initial implementation through termly briefings and Heads' Forums

- Communications expectations will be reinforced through policy updates, project planning templates and digital asset sharing
- Operational support and model materials (including templates for parent letters, social media posts and newsletter layouts) will be provided via SharePoint

### 8.3 Training and Capacity Building

- School leaders will receive regular updates and briefings on communication best practice
- Communications will be embedded in leadership development programmes (including coaching and NPQ programmes/support)
- Staff and administrators will be offered CPD on digital communication, parental engagement and crisis response

Through these actions, communications excellence becomes not just an expectation but a sustained organisational habit.

### 9. Review and Quality Assurance

This strategy will be subject to an annual formal review, led by the CEO in partnership with the Trust Governance and Risk Committee. The review will assess:

- The continued alignment of communication systems with the Trust Strategic Plan
- The impact of communication on stakeholder engagement and clarity
- Feedback from schools, families, pupils and governors
- Compliance with evolving statutory guidance and DfE expectations

Any significant revisions or updates will be approved by the Board and shared promptly with all schools. Interim changes may be issued throughout the year in response to operational needs or changes in risk profile.

As with all Trust-wide processes, evaluation is continuous and improvement is iterative. The Trust commits to sustaining a communication culture that not only informs but inspires, invites dialogue and builds trust.