

West Exmoor Federation



Email Protocols & Policy

Updated April 2026

West Exmoor Federation - Email Protocols & Policy

1. Who does this protocol and policy apply to?

- 1.1 It applies to all users of West Exmoor Federation email system, whether through a PC, laptop, personal digital assistant (PDA), or any other hardware device.
- 1.2 It includes pupils as well as staff and applies equally whether you are working from school, at home or from any other location. These groups of people will thereafter in this document be collectively referred to as users.

2. Protocol

This guidance aims to enhance the use of email as part of the portfolio of communication media and develop good practice in the use of email as a medium of communication.

2.1 Sending emails

Before sending emails consider:

- The maintenance of the highest professional standards.
- Whether email is the correct medium for communication.
- The content and design, consider level of formality.
- To whom should the email be sent, consider expected communication style.
- Only copy in people who have an immediate need for the information.
- The length of the email, avoid long detailed emails.
- Time required for the recipient to respond.
- The Header title ensuring that full names of pupils are not included in the Header

Always read and reflect upon your email before sending, double checking the recipient(s) address

Always send emails from an @westexmoorfederation.org.uk email address. Personal email addresses should not be used for professional communications.

2.2 Receiving and Managing emails

- Staff should become 'responsible communicators' i.e. they should check their emails at the start of each day as they currently would their pigeon trays.
- Always set time aside to deal with emails.
- Consider whether they need you to respond, retain print and/or delete.
- If they require retention, place emails and attachments in folders.
- If they require response consider carefully the use of the "reply to all" button.
- Delete unwanted emails promptly.

- Protect yourself from viruses when emailing from home.

2.3 Sensitive Information

- Emails are the electronic equivalent of a postcard. Anyone can read the content along the delivery path. Sensitive information should be sent by post or via a secure transfer system.
- Child Protection issues should not be reported via email unless using approved secure systems, eg, Egress.
- Never email in haste, consider the facts and consequences of the message.
- Be professional and careful about what you say about others, as email is easily forwarded. Only put in writing what you would say to someone's face.
- Be aware of copyright and libel issues e.g. when sending scanned text, pictures or information downloaded from the internet.
- An email can be contractually binding. Therefore, care should be taken when expressing personal views that these cannot be misinterpreted as belonging to West Exmoor Federation, as the email address will contain the Federation name.
- If an urgent email is sent, you may want to follow this with a phone call.
- Never send emails that are offensive, threatening, defamatory or illegal. Emails have been used successfully as evidence in libel cases.

2.4 Security

- Staff are responsible for the security of their computer, and for protecting any information or data used and/or stored on it.
- **When copying in external email addresses, the default should be blind carbon copy (bcc), unless there is a valid reason for not using this** [the most common GDPR data breach is using cc instead of bcc, with some serious errors made within the UK in recent times]
- Do not to leave a mailbox open and unattended, always keep it password protected. The account holder/s needs to strive to keep their passwords confidential; to prevent other users from accessing and sending emails from their account. Users may need to make their passwords known in the event of absence.
- Staff should be responsible for changing passwords on an agreed schedule to maintain security.
- Emails will only be monitored by the Headteacher in very exceptional circumstances.
- Absent staff are aware that their email account may be opened by another member of staff.
- Staff should not use email folders as storage of attachments and should regularly undertake cleansing activities deleting emails no longer required.

2.5 When to use other methods of communication

- Never discuss performance appraisal or review issues by email, always do it face-to-face.

- Human Resource issues (salary, job, career progression).
- Private or privileged client materials.
- Complex issues should be discussed at meetings.
- Topics that require interactive dialogue – or robust discussion on certain issues.
- When needing to vent frustration about a workplace situation particularly if you are angry wait to calm down so your response is more measured.

3. Policy

3.1 This must be followed by all users of the Federation email system.

3.2 Users must follow the points below. If there is evidence to suggest that users have not followed this policy it may result in an investigation leading to loss of email facilities or additional disciplinary actions

1. Staff should become ‘responsible communicators’ i.e. they should check their emails at the start of each day as they currently would their pigeon trays.
2. Ensure your email account is kept secure by changing your email password regularly and not giving it to anyone.
3. Users must only use email for business purposes in work time, unless agreed personal use has been sanctioned by line managers.
4. Any agreed personal use must not make significant demands on IT resources. Therefore, transferring or storing large attachments such as images, audio and video clips are not permitted.
5. Any personal or business use for illegal, threatening, offensive, obscene, pornographic or libelous purposes is strictly prohibited.
6. Never use your work email address when posting comments on public bulletin boards or chat rooms unless directly related to your work.
7. If you receive an email that is obviously spam or of an adult nature, do not open it, rather delete it immediately.
8. Never participate in chain emails where you are asked to forward an email to a number of others.
9. In legal terms, under the Telecommunications Regulations 2000, sending an email is as binding as sending a signed letter. Therefore, do not express personal views or information by email, because as an employer, West Exmoor Federation could be held vicariously liable for the opinions and views expressed.
10. This also applies to comments posted on public discussion boards if you use the Federation email address or state the opinions in a social media post.

Date	Details	Contact	Review
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