

Central Policy:

Trust-wide, applicable at trust and school levels. Schools may not make any changes or adaptations

Media Policy

BURCHETTS GREEN CE INFANT SCHOOL

Approved by:	Estates & Safeguarding
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Aim

The aim of this document is to provide the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) and its schools with a consistent approach to their engagement with the media.

By creating a structured approach, we aim to:

- ensure that Trust and school leaders are supported in the event that they/their schools are approached by the media
- work with the press to ensure that coverage is, as much as possible, fair and balanced
- build in processes to ensure that stakeholders, such as staff, governors, Trustees, and the Diocese are aware of potential media issues prior to anything appearing in the press.

Core understanding

ODST believes that it is beneficial to have a positive and proactive relationship with the media. This is because:

- In a society of changing demographics and birth rates, it is important that we take every opportunity to protect and showcase the positive work that happens in our schools
- We also recognise that there are times when difficult decisions have to be taken, and we want to ensure that the rationale and values that sit behind those decisions are articulated
- As a publicly funded organisation, we recognise that we have a responsibility to be open and transparent – whilst also recognising that we have to be respectful of laws such as GDPR and employee rights.

Types of engagement with the media

Typically, there are four types of communications issues with the press that need to be considered.

- Responding to a reactive media enquiry that has potentially negative implications for an individual, a school or the Trust
- Responding to a reactive media enquiry that has potentially positive implications for an individual, a school or the Trust
- Proactively approaching the press with a positive news story
- Official correspondence received from a journalist, such as a Freedom of Information Act request.

The role of a spokesperson

Throughout this document, the role of a spokesperson is referred to.

Please note, this does not mean that we intend for that person to necessarily be interviewed. Instead, this is the individual whose name will go on any statement and/or at the bottom of any letters reassuring/informing the community. This will ordinarily be the Headteacher for a school and a member of the Senior Leadership Team for the Trust.

There may also be times when it is advisable to attribute something to a school/Trust spokesperson.

Our best advocates are the children. They provide an authentic and unspun voice that presents a positive image of a school. However, no child under the age of 16 shall give a media interview or participate in filming or photography without consent from their parent/carer/guardian, keeping in line with GDPR guidance.

1. Responding to a reactive media enquiry that has potentially **negative** implications for an individual, a school or the Trust

In the event that a journalist contacts a school directly with an enquiry that may potentially challenge the reputation of a school/ the Trust.

Initial response:

- Every school/the Trust should have this statement added to their website:
 - For media enquiries, please contact 07713 517 393
- If a call is received, in the first instance, any staff member should direct the journalist to this number.
- If an email is received, this should be forwarded to ben@diddu.co.uk and emma@diddu.co.uk
- The person receiving the call/email should also alert the Headteacher/Senior Leader.

The Communications Team will then speak to the journalist and the relevant school leader and triage the nature of the enquiry so it can be RAG-rated. The criteria for how the enquiry will be graded is below:

Green	Amber	Red
Relatively minor issue that is reactive but has no significant reputational risks. For example, this may include things such as an air ambulance landing on school property to attend a non- school related emergency or an enquiry about a low-level community event.	A more significant issue that has reputational risk within the local community. For example, this may include low level safeguarding concerns, uniform issues or an issue linked to pupil behaviour – such as playground incident.	A more significant issue that has reputational risk on a regional/national level. This will include any enquiry from a press association/national outlet and high-level safeguarding concerns – such as inappropriate relationships.

Professional judgement will also need to be applied. For example, an enquiry for a school that has recently faced a significant amount of negative media attention may be graded more highly than if the same enquiry was received for a different school. Context will always be considered. Each enquiry will then be handled as below:

Green	The Communications Team will develop a response with the Headteacher and issue it to the relevant journalist. A decision will also be made as to whether a reassuring communication also needs to be sent to staff/parents/local governance. This can be done pre/post the statement being issued. The Trust's CEO, or a delegated individual, will be notified by email/text – but only as an FYI. The Headteacher will be the spokesperson for a school enquiry.
Amber	The Communications Team will develop a response with the Headteacher and send to the CEO, or a delegated individual, for final sign-off. Before the Communications Team issue any statement to the press, a decision is made as to whether communications are issued to staff, parents, governors and potentially wider stakeholders such as the Diocese and Trustees. It is highly likely that the Headteacher will be the spokesperson for an enquiry linked to a school.
Red	The Communications Team will develop a response with the Headteacher in partnership with the Trust's CEO and/or a delegated individual. Additional legal/HR advice is more likely to be sought for an enquiry of this nature. The CEO/Trust representative is more likely to be the spokesperson in this scenario.

2. Responding to a reactive media enquiry that has potentially **positive** implications for an individual, a school or the Trust

There may be times when a journalist contacts the school about a positive story that they have heard about from other sources. For example, there may be a noteworthy school event, a fundraising activity, or national data has been published that is favourable for a school. In this scenario:

Initial response:

- Every school/the Trust should have this statement added to their website:
 - For media enquiries, please contact 07713 517 393
- If a call is received, in the first instance, any staff member should direct the journalist to this number.
- If an email is received, this should be forwarded to ben@diddu.co.uk and emma@diddu.co.uk
- The person receiving the call/email should also alert the Headteacher/Senior Leader.

Once any potential risks have been discussed, all such enquiries will be RAG-rated as green using the matrix in the previous section.

3. Proactively approaching the press with a positive news story

Schools and the Trust are encouraged to produce press releases in conjunction with the communications team.

Story ideas can be submitted to the Communications Team at emma@diddu.co.uk or becky@diddu.co.uk, who will then work with the schools to develop a press story. The kinds of ideas that might make a story include:

- Student achievements
- Staff achievements
- Academy initiatives, such as partnerships in the community and with business organisations
- Academy trips
- Ofsted inspections
- Charity days

The Communications Team will draft press releases, taking a lead or advisory role on the activity.

For local coverage:

Press releases will be issued to the media only after approval has been granted by the Headteacher and anybody referenced in the document. For example, when quoting a teacher, a child, or Trust representative in the release, they will approve their specific quote.

For stories that may attract national coverage:

The above principles will apply, but ultimate sign-off will sit with the CEO and/or a delegated representative from the Trust.

Working with third parties

From time to time, PR opportunities will arise out of partnerships. For example, construction companies/IT companies may want to showcase the work they are doing in your schools. These organisations are likely to have their own PR function, either internal or external.

There is no obligation to participate in a PR request from a third party, but consideration should be given to the implications of accepting or rejecting. Any such request should be shared with emma@diddu.co.uk or becky@diddu.co.uk so appropriate advice can be given.

Partner organisations must not take photographs of children for media (including social media) consumption without prior consent.

Partner organisations producing press releases about activities relating to ODST/our schools should seek approval from the Communications Team. Final drafts will be shared with the Headteachers for final sign-off.

4. Official communication from journalists

ODST recognises that journalists are also able to make requests using official approaches such as Freedom of Information Act requests.

Any such request should be handled in line with the policies that the Trust are developing, but the final draft of any response should be shared with the Communications Team prior to it being issued.

The role of social media

We recognise that interactions with the press are inherently linked with social media, as nearly all stories will be shared online as well as in printed publications. This means that there might be times when a positive or negative story attracts positive or negative comments.

Responding to negative comments

ODST takes responsibility for responding to any negative comments on social media. Staff should not make any public defence of the school/Trust in the face of negative social media comments, as these could easily be misinterpreted, making matters worse, particularly if picked up by journalists.

Please inform the Communications Team if you see any negative comments or accounts that could bring the school into disrepute.

Comments containing threatening behaviour, obscene language and advocacy of any illegal action appearing on any social media account should be immediately reported to the Communications Team and the Trust. Screenshots should also be taken.

When employees or advisors join or engage with social networking groups, they do so as employees and have the responsibility to monitor content and display appropriate behaviour and activity on these networks.

In the event where accounts have been created or display content which aims to damage the reputation of the school.

In summary

The Communications Team are here to help. If you have any questions or comments, please do get in touch using the contact details included in this paper.