



Media Policy

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1 – Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees across the Transforming Lives Educational Trust.
- 1.2 This document sets out the roles, responsibilities and procedures for dealing with the media by the Transforming Lives Educational Trust (TLET) and our academies.

2 – Policy Statement

- 2.1 TLET recognises that good working relationships with the media are an important means of communicating with the Trust's audiences. Co-ordination, integration and consistency in handling the media are essential for developing and maintaining a positive and open image of the Trust and our academies.

3 – Principles

- 3.1 The procedures have been established against the following principles:
 - To develop a positive, pro-active, two-way relationship with the media.
 - To respond to all media enquiries quickly, efficiently and within a realistic target deadline.
 - To gain media coverage of our successes, activities and events.
 - To rebut false or inaccurate information as soon as possible.
 - To track media coverage relating to the Trust.

4 – Definition of Terms

- 4.1 The Trust – Transforming Lives Educational Trust
- 4.2 Pupil – any school aged child in attendance at an academy in the Trust (0-19 years old)
- 4.3 School – educational setting in the Trust including an academy

5 – Procedure

Staff working in a specific academy

Any member of staff receiving a request for comment or interview from the media about any aspect related their academy must refer all such enquiries to the Principal in the first instance. On receiving this information, the Principal must contact the **TLET Press Office on 07713 517393**. The Principal must also contact the CEO to inform them of the media contact.

In addition, all staff are required to:

- Inform the Principal either directly or through their line manager of issues that may result in media interest.
- Make the Principal, or designated individual, aware of positive news stories including events and achievements.
- Direct media enquiries to the Principal or a designated individual.
- Supply background information to help the Principal and/or the designated individual to speak to the press to help manage any enquiries received as a result of a press release/reactive issues
- Assist in the production of press statements

Please note, staff are not permitted to liaise with the media about Trust/academy events without prior authorisation from the Principal and/or the designated individual.

Staff working for the wider Trust

Any member of staff who works for the wider Trust and is receiving a request for comment or interview from the media about any aspect related to the Trust must refer all such enquiries to the CEO in the first instance.

Trust wide staff are also required to comply with the additional requirements, as outlined above.

The Principal, or an individual designated by the Principal, is required to:

- Act as the first point of contact for The TLET Press Office.
- Research and feedback responses to the TLET Press Office in consultation with appropriate members of staff.
- Work with the TLET Press Office to produce press statements as and when required.
- Brief staff who are asked to speak to the media, following guidance from the TLET Press Office.
- Supervise the media whilst on Trust premises, following guidance from the TLET Press Office.
- Confirm the authenticity of all media requests. This may include confirming e-mail addresses and phone numbers, securing written confirmation of the nature of the request and verifying the identity of the journalists through social media and online searches, in conjunction with the TLET Press Office.
- Follow the escalation process, outlined below.

For Trust wide enquiries, responsibility falls to the CEO and/or an individual designated by the CEO rather than the Principal.

Signing off statements and escalation

As the Trust grows, it is important that engagement with the media does not occur in isolation. What happens in one academy, for example, may impact on other academies, and it is important that we are as transparent with each other as we are with the media.

As such, the following should be reviewed before any engagement with the media.

At an academy level

1. There may be occasions, on matters of a minor/operational nature or issues that have already been covered in the press, where the Principal and/or designated individual (after receiving guidance from the TLET Press Office) can respond directly to the media without further consultation. This includes confirming to the press issues such as school closures because of inclement weather.
2. Proactive and positive press statements should be prepared by the academy. They should, however, be shared with the TLET Press Office and the TLET CEO and/or a delegated individual prior to distribution for comment and approval.
3. If the school receives a reactive media enquiry that has the potential to impact on the reputation of the academy, then the enquiry must be shared with the TLET Press Office and the TLET CEO and/or the delegated individual immediately. No response can be issued without the approval of the CEO.

At a Trust level

1. On matters of a minor/operational nature in the Trust, or issues that have already been covered in the press, the CEO and/or designated individual (after receiving guidance from the TLET Press Office) can respond directly to the media without further consultation.
2. The CEO and/or a designated individual should be notified of any proactive, positive releases from either the Trust or its academies.
 - a. For key events and successes, such as results, Ofsted outcomes and the implementation of Trust wide initiatives, these should be shared with the CEO for approval.

- b. All other press releases, such as announcements about trips and individual student successes, should be shared with the CEO and/or the designated individual so they can be shared on the trust's social media.
3. Any reactive media enquiries that have the potential to negatively impact on the reputation of either an academy or the wider Trust should be shared with the Chair of Trustees prior to issuing.
4. In addition, any enquiries from the national or education trade press should be shared with the Chair of Trustees also.

If the media approach the Chair of Trustees directly, then the Chair of Trustees will share the enquiry with the TLET Press Office and the with the TLET CEO before a response is issued to ensure consistency of approach.

Processes

Handling reactive enquiries

Responding to written requests

- Approved statements may be read out over the phone or emailed if the spokesperson is clearly identified.
- It is accepted that e- mailing press statements is often more appropriate especially if any further follow up action/ rebuttal is required.

Responding to interview requests

- As a general rule only senior leaders will be asked to undertake radio/TV broadcast or press interviews. This will, however, depend on the subject matter and only ever under the guidance of the TLET Press Office.
- There may, however, be instances where it is more appropriate for another member of staff with more relevant experience and knowledge to undertake an interview.
- The Principal, CEO and/or a designated individual will make appropriate interview arrangements and help with preparations and briefings, under the guidance of the TLET Press Office. Where possible, there will always be another staff member present while interviews take place.
- No staff member can provide an interview without the prior written consent of the CEO or Principal.

Making rebuttals

Where there is felt to be unjustified information in the public domain, or where untruths have been printed or facts interpreted wrongly, appropriate members of staff will be consulted and a rebuttal statement issued from the TLET Press Office. Personal contact, briefing notes and letters to the editor are rebuttal tools that can be used.

Handling proactive media relations

- Press Releases are probably the most commonly used tool in securing media coverage. Press releases will be issued by the CEO, Principal and/or a designated individual, under guidance from the TLET Press Office, to provide information on events, achievements, plans etc.
- A record of all Press Releases issued is kept on file by the TLET Press Office.

Use of quotes

Quotes in press releases will generally only be given by the Chair of Trustees, the CEO, academy Principal or relevant member of SLT.

All quotes will be agreed with the TLET Press Office as necessary prior to issue. Time is the essence and where the quoted member of staff is not available the next most appropriate person will be contacted so as not to delay the release of information.

Distribution

Press releases will be distributed by e-mail from the TLET Press Office to targeted media contacts on the media distribution list. The distribution list includes all local press, radio and TV contacts. Selected releases MAY also be sent to targeted magazines/journals as requested and as appropriate e.g. corporate releases giving news of major events/developments.

Press releases can also be shared by social media when it is deemed appropriate by the TLET Press Office.

Photography

Photography should only be issued to accompany a release if:

- Consent has been sought to use any images involving pupils and students
- The image is clearly linked to the story being promoted
- The image is of the appropriate quality
- The pupils/students full name is not connected with the photo

If a photographer is coming to the school so that the press can take their own photos, all children and young people must have the relevant signed consent forms for their images to be shared.

Staff should be asked in person if they are comfortable with their images being shared.

Embargo

An embargo is a request to the media to delay publishing or broadcasting information provided until after a specified date and time. However, it is not binding and should be avoided whenever possible.

6 – Equality Statement

- 6.1 This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any individual (with due regard to their protected characteristics), and it helps to promote equality across the Trust.

7 – Monitoring

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, and those they delegate authority, to ensure that the principles and procedures of this policy are adhered to. The use of this policy will be subject to routine monitoring to ensure its fidelity in practice. The evidence gathered from monitoring at regular intervals shall inform any reviews and future revisions to the policy, and no later than that stated on Page 1 of this policy.