



BDMAT
Birmingham Diocesan
Multi-Academy Trust

Media Handling Policy

Issued: June 2019
Reviewed: June 2022
Next Review Due: Summer 2025



1.0 Overview

- 1.1 This policy sets out the principles all BDMAT staff and volunteers, including central trust staff, directors, school staff and governors should follow when dealing with the media.
- 1.2 The policy covers both proactive and planned press activity and reactive media in response to an incident and / or emergency.
- 1.3 In the case of an incident or emergency this policy should be read alongside the relevant Trust or School Business Continuity Plan.

2.0 Aims

- 2.1 To ensure that clear lines of communication and accountability are observed between the Trust, schools and media when dealing with an incident or emergency.
- 2.2 To ensure that requests for information from the media are handled properly and professionally.
- 2.3 To ensure that the principles of data protection and confidentiality are observed.
- 2.4 To ensure families whose students are on the 'no publicity list' have their privacy protected.
- 2.5 To ensure that only those who have the Trust's permission to speak to the media do so.
- 2.6 To ensure all schools are supported in handling the media and gain maximum publicity for positive news coverage.
- 2.7 To ensure the Trust reputation and ethos is consistently communicated and protected.

3.0 Principles

Reactive media handling in response to an incident, emergency or press enquiry

All media enquiries should be directed to the Director of People and Communications.

- 3.1 In the event of an incident or emergency all press enquiries should be managed through the BDMAT Director of People and Communications who will manage the media response in conjunction with the appropriate headteacher, in consultation with the chair of governors and chair of BDMAT.
- 3.2 Any staff member or volunteer who receives an enquiry from the media should report the incident to their school headteacher who will in turn notify the BDMAT Director of People and Communications. Staff or volunteers receiving the initial

communication should take a note of the date, time and contact details of the media enquirer, a summary of the query and any information on timing for a response. Staff and volunteers should not comment on individual media enquiries or promise a response.

- 3.3 The BDMAT Director of People and Communications will then agree whether a response to the media is appropriate. Responses may include a media statement, to be party to an interview or no response.
- 3.4 It will be at the BDMAT CEO's discretion who should be involved in the response, but routinely the chair of the board, or other trustees will be informed as appropriate. In the case of a school level query all responses will be agreed and coordinated by the Director of People and Communications in consultation with the CEO and headteacher and chair of governors as appropriate.
- 3.5 The decision on whether to seek legal or professional advice will also be determined by the BDMAT CEO and / or Chair of BDMAT and will be coordinated by the Director of People and Communications.
- 3.6 All other school staff, volunteers and governors should not enter into discussion with the media and should refer the media to the headteacher in the first instance. Failure to comply appropriately with this guidance may be a disciplinary offence for staff and volunteers.
- 3.7 All statements/interviews regarding events or activities related to the school should only proceed once the permission of the BDMAT Director of People and Communications is obtained. If permission is granted details of students/staff addresses and personal details should not be released to the media. The full name of the student and their age can be released, providing the student does not appear on the 'no publicity list' held in the school office and only with the explicit consent of the child's parent/carer. All staff and volunteers must ensure that no student on the list is included in a media photograph, video or in any form of communication with the media.

Reactive media handling in response to a school closure

- 3.9 In the event of the closure of the school e.g. in case of snow, lack of heating, the headteacher should follow the school processes for informing parents (text and phone trees etc). The school website will be main first point of reference. The BDMAT CEO should be notified of a decision to close and the reason.

Proactive media handling

- 3.10 At times the Trust or school may wish to proactively seek media coverage to advertise or promote a school opportunity, success or event. This is very much encouraged and should be managed by the school.

- 3.12 If a school is aware of a positive news opportunity and would like support drafting press statement or engaging with the media, please contact the BDMAT Director of People and Communications.