

National Piping Centre

Professional Communication & Boundary Guidelines

(Quick Reference for NPC Representatives)

1. Purpose

These guidelines set out best practice for communication between NPC Representatives and those they interact with in their role.

For the purposes of this document, an NPC Representative is anyone representing the National Piping Centre in a teaching, mentoring, supervisory, leadership or programme delivery capacity. This includes staff, freelance tutors, volunteers, visiting tutors and anyone acting on behalf of the NPC.

These guidelines are designed to protect learners, particularly children and vulnerable adults; protect NPC Representatives from misunderstanding or professional risk; promote clear professional boundaries in situations where a power imbalance exists; and support the safeguarding principles outlined in the NPC Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

All communication should always be professional, transparent and defensible. NPC Representatives should ask: "Would this communication withstand external scrutiny?"

2. Core Principles

All communication undertaken in an NPC capacity must be professional, transparent, boundaried, appropriate to the power dynamic and safeguarding aware.

Professional communication should relate to teaching, learning or NPC activity. Transparent communication should be capable of being reviewed by colleagues, parents or the organisation if required. Boundaried communication maintains appropriate teacher-learner relationships. NPC Representatives must recognise that they hold a position of authority and act accordingly. Communication should always prioritise the safety of children and vulnerable adults and protect the reputation of the NPC.

3. Approved Communication Channels

When communicating about NPC activity the following channels should be used wherever possible:

- NPC email accounts
- NPC Google Classroom
- NPC booking system messaging

These platforms provide transparency and appropriate organisational oversight.

4. Use of WhatsApp and Other Messaging Platforms

We would always prefer that NPC matters between teacher and student are conducted via official NPC approved communication channels.

However, WhatsApp may be used in limited circumstances as identified below;

Communication with non-vulnerable adult learners, parents or carers of children or vulnerable adults, and adult participants in group logistical communication such as event coordination.

WhatsApp must not be used for direct communication with children under 18 or vulnerable adults. Communication with these individuals must take place through official NPC channels or through parents or carers where appropriate.

5. Communication Content – Appropriate Topics

Communication should relate directly to NPC activity. Examples include lesson scheduling, course information, practice guidance, event or competition logistics, educational feedback and administrative matters.

Communication should remain clear, respectful, professional and appropriate to the learning context.

6. Communication Content – Not Appropriate

The following types of communication are never acceptable when acting in an NPC capacity:

- Personal or intimate conversations unrelated to NPC activity
- Comments on appearance or body
- Sexualised, suggestive or flirtatious language
- Emotional dependency or personal counselling
- Sharing personal problems with learners
- Encouraging secrecy in communication
- Communication that isolates the learner from parents, carers or the organisation
- Late-night or excessive messaging
- Persistent one-to-one communication outside legitimate educational need

7. Platforms That Must Not Be Used

The following must never be used for communication relating to NPC activity:

- Disappearing message platforms such as Snapchat
- Secret or temporary messaging services
- Private social media messaging with children or vulnerable adults
- Personal gaming chat platforms or private servers
- Anonymous messaging services

These platforms lack transparency and present safeguarding risks.

8. Social Media Boundaries

NPC Representatives must maintain clear boundaries on social media.

NPC Representatives should not initiate social media connections with learners in their NPC role, use personal social media accounts to discuss NPC teaching matters with learners, or engage in private messaging with children or vulnerable adults.

Where staff and learners share community spaces such as pipe bands or competitions, staff must continue to act in a professional and safeguarding-aware manner.

9. Pre-Existing Community Relationships

NPC recognises that piping operates within a small community network where staff and learners may already know each other through pipe bands, competitions, cultural or community groups, or family and social connections.

In these circumstances, NPC matters should always be moved to official NPC channels wherever possible.

If communication about NPC matters occurs through existing community platforms, the NPC Representative must maintain clear professional boundaries, avoid private one-to-one messaging where possible, ensure communication remains appropriate and relevant, and exercise professional judgement about whether the conversation should move to an official NPC channel, involve parents or carers, cease entirely, or be reported as a safeguarding concern.

If uncertainty arises, advice should be sought from a Designated Child Protection Contact (DCPC).

10. Warning Signs That Communication May Be Becoming Inappropriate

NPC Representatives should stop and seek advice if communication begins to involve personal emotional dependency, increasingly frequent or private messaging, communication outside appropriate hours, topics unrelated to learning or NPC activity, attempts by a learner to move communication to private platforms, or any conversation that feels secretive or uncomfortable.

If there is concern about boundaries or safeguarding, the matter should be reported to a DCPC in line with NPC safeguarding procedures. Early reporting is a protective measure and does not imply wrongdoing.

11. Quick Examples

Appropriate communication examples:

- Emailing a student about lesson times
- Messaging a parent about a timetable change
- Posting course information on Google Classroom
- Sending competition details via official NPC messaging systems

Not appropriate examples:

- Messaging a student privately on Instagram about personal matters
- Late-night texting unrelated to lessons
- Using Snapchat or disappearing messages
- Encouraging a learner to keep communication secret
- Discussing personal relationships or emotional issues

12. If in Doubt

If you are unsure whether a communication is appropriate, pause before sending the message.

Ask yourself:

- Is this professional?
- Is this necessary?
- Would I be comfortable if this message were reviewed by the NPC or a parent or carer?

If uncertainty remains, seek guidance from a Designated Child Protection Contact.