Policy document

Communication & Engagement Strategy

1 Introduction

1.1 The Communication and Engagement Strategy outlines how the Trust will build on its existing communications strengths, develop organisational messages and maximise the use of communication tools to ensure a cohesive narrative and engagement with stakeholders. We recognise the importance of listening, engaging and communicating as we seek to deliver our vision and priorities.

1.2 This Strategy is written primarily for Trustees, Governors and staff and should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Strategic Development Plan.

1.3 To ensure that the Trust and its academies continue to be successful, all internal stakeholders, staff, governors and Trustees alike, have a responsibility to engage, communicate and interact with a wide range of individuals, organisations and communities to further enhance the reputation of the Trust.

2 Aims & Objectives

2.1 The Trust is committed to the promotion of effective communication between students, members of staff, parents/carers, stakeholders, governors, Trustees and all members of the Trust community and beyond.

2.2 Our objectives are to:

- Have a clear and professional communication strategy in place which will identify channels of communication and reporting.

- Make written communications as accessible and inclusive as possible avoiding bias, stereotyping or any form of discrimination.

- Be open, honest, ethical and professional.

- Ensure that the Trust's communication and engagement activities align with its vision and values.

- Recognise that monitoring and evaluation of communication issues through regular meetings and discussion with stakeholders is an on-going consideration. In the context of a growing organisation, it is particularly important to review systems and facilitate the best possible communication at all stages of the Trust's development.

2.3   The Communication and Engagement Strategy outlines the lines of communication and reporting within the Trust. It is also intended to outline key internal and external communication and engagement activities of the Trust and the frequency and intended audience of each.

2.4   The Strategy is intended to outline the key principles of the Trust's communication and engagement activities. Academies should ensure that communications with students, parents, staff, local governors and local external stakeholders align with the Trust's vision and values.

3   Communication of the Trust's Vision and Values

3.1   To ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the Trust's vision and values, communication and engagement will include:

- Maintaining frequently updated and DfE compliant Trust and academy websites;
- Producing a termly Trust Newsletter which is circulated to all stakeholders;
- Featuring in regular local and national press articles;
- Networking and facilitating visits to Trust Academies;
- Local sponsorship opportunities as appropriate.

4   Communication between the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies

4.1   Effective communication between the Board of Trustees and the Local Governing Bodies is vital so that:
- The Board of Trustees has an accurate, up-to-date picture of provision across the Trust and is able to take this into account in its strategic decision-making;
- The views of member Academies, through their Local Governing Bodies, are appropriately represented at Trust Board level;
- Local Governing Bodies are able to implement policies and decisions agreed by the Trust Board.
- Any proposal to significantly amend the Trust's mission, values or strategic direction will involve consultation with the Chairs of the Local Governing Body Chairs who will be involved in the decision-making process.

4.2   In order to facilitate communication, the following systems are in place:
- A standing item is included on each Local Governing Body agenda to receive an update on Trust matters via a summary of the most recent Trust Board meeting;
- The Chief Executive Officer, Chair of Trustees or Vice Chair will attend a Local Governing Body meeting of each academy at least once per year;
- Local Chairs meet with the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Trustees at least termly;

- Minutes of Trust Board meetings are routinely published on the Trust website;

- A summary of all Local Governing Body minutes, prepared by academy Clerks, is circulated to all Trustees and Local Governing Bodies have a standing item to ensure that the key issues to be included have been identified;

- Decisions by the Trust Board that impact Local Governing Bodies and individual academies, e.g. approval of Trust policies, will be shared with governors by local academy clerks.

4.3   On occasion it is necessary for the Chair of Trustees or the Chair of the Local Governing Body to take a Chair's action outside the meeting cycle. In these circumstances it is important to ensure that Chair's Actions are reported and ratified at the next available meeting.

Academy Clerks are, therefore, to be copied into any email correspondence around such issues, to enable the addition of ratification of any Chair's action to the next agenda.

5   Communication between Trustees and Governors

5.1   To ensure efficient and effective communication between Trustees and academy Governors, there are key expectations of members of the Trust Board and members of the Local Governing Bodies as follows:

- To regularly attend Trust Board/Local Governing Body meetings;

- To prepare well for meetings by reading all communications and papers in advance;

- To respond in a timely manner to email correspondence from fellow Trustees or governors;

- To access relevant information on the designated IT systems as outlined by the Director of Governance or academy clerks;

- To immediately advise the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of Trustees of any issue which might affect the interests of the Trust.

6   Communication between Trust Academies

6.1   Close collaboration between our academies is an expectation of the Trust and Principals/Headteachers work closely with the Chief Executive Officer and other members of the Central Team to ensure that expertise is effectively shared across the Trust.

6.2   Academies are also encouraged to celebrate the successes of other Trust members, publicising "good news" stories from across the Trust. Methods of communication include:

- Email

- Trust newsletters
- Trust Website

7 Communication with External Stakeholders

7.1 Communication and engagement activities with external stakeholders, including parents and students of the academies in the Trust, are intended to:
- Further improve relations and trust
- Build on established relationships to enhance the reputation of the Trust
- Continually improve our offer in terms of quality and relevance
- Anticipate and manage potential issues
- Identify opportunities

7.2 Academies are responsible for their communication and engagement with students and parents but must ensure that activities align with the Trust's vision and values.

7.3 When considering stakeholder engagement, it is recommended that academies refer to the Power/Interest Matrix in Appendix 1.

8 Communication with Media and the Wider Public

8.1 When press coverage takes place, all parties who may be interested such as staff, Trustees and governors will be informed via email, the newsletter and the Academy/Trust website.

8.2 All Trust and academy publications should be mindful of the equal opportunities policy, reflecting and celebrating the diversity of our Trust community.

8.3 Principals/Headteachers are authorised to provide press releases to the local press on 'Good news' items relating to their academy.

8.4 Any other contact with the Press, local or national, relating to the Trust more generally, should always be made via the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chair of Trustees unless authorised to do so by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chair of Trustees.

9 Communication of Recruitment Opportunities

9.1 The Trust takes a proactive approach to the recruitment of high quality leaders, teachers and support staff.

9.2 Trust vacancies will be shared via email with all academy staff by academy HR colleagues and advertised externally where appropriate.

10 Responsibilities

10.1 **Academy responsibilities**
- To publish key policies, documents and procedures on the academy website and in

other areas that maximise their accessibility and usefulness to the entire community ensuring compliance with funding body requirements. (Refer to Appendix 2 – 'Compliance Checklist').

- To ensure that the academy website refers to being part of the Trust and links to the Trust website.
- To publish on the academy website key information about the composition and remit of the Local Governing Body, including a list of governors, their record of attendance at meetings during the previous 12 months, and a register of their business interests.
- To ensure that Trust and academy policies are clearly communicated with staff and other stakeholders as appropriate.
- To have clear communication and engagement strategies to keep staff, parents and students informed about news, events and key developments.
- To seek the views of the parents and students on their education and learning environment and ensure that their ideas and feedback are always treated with respect and built into planning and development, e.g. regular circulation of questionnaires.
- To seek creative ways of making key messages relevant to the communities served by each academy.
- To follow the Trust Brand Guidelines (Appendix 3) when using the Trust logos etc in any communication or engagement activities.
- To ensure that academy letterheaded paper contains the Trust logo and registered address. It is suggested that this forms part of the footer.

10.2 **Staff members' responsibilities**

- To ensure that the principles and procedures of this policy are followed in communicating with all internal and external stakeholders.

- To ensure that relevant academy policies, e.g. acceptable use, staff conduct etc, are adhered to at all times when communicating with stakeholders.

- To follow Trust Brand Guidelines when using the Trust logo etc in any communications.

10.3 **Trustee/Governor responsibilities**

- To ensure that the principles and procedures of this policy are followed in communicating with all internal and external stakeholders.

- To ensure that relevant academy policies, e.g. acceptable use, conduct etc, are adhered to at all times when communicating with stakeholders.
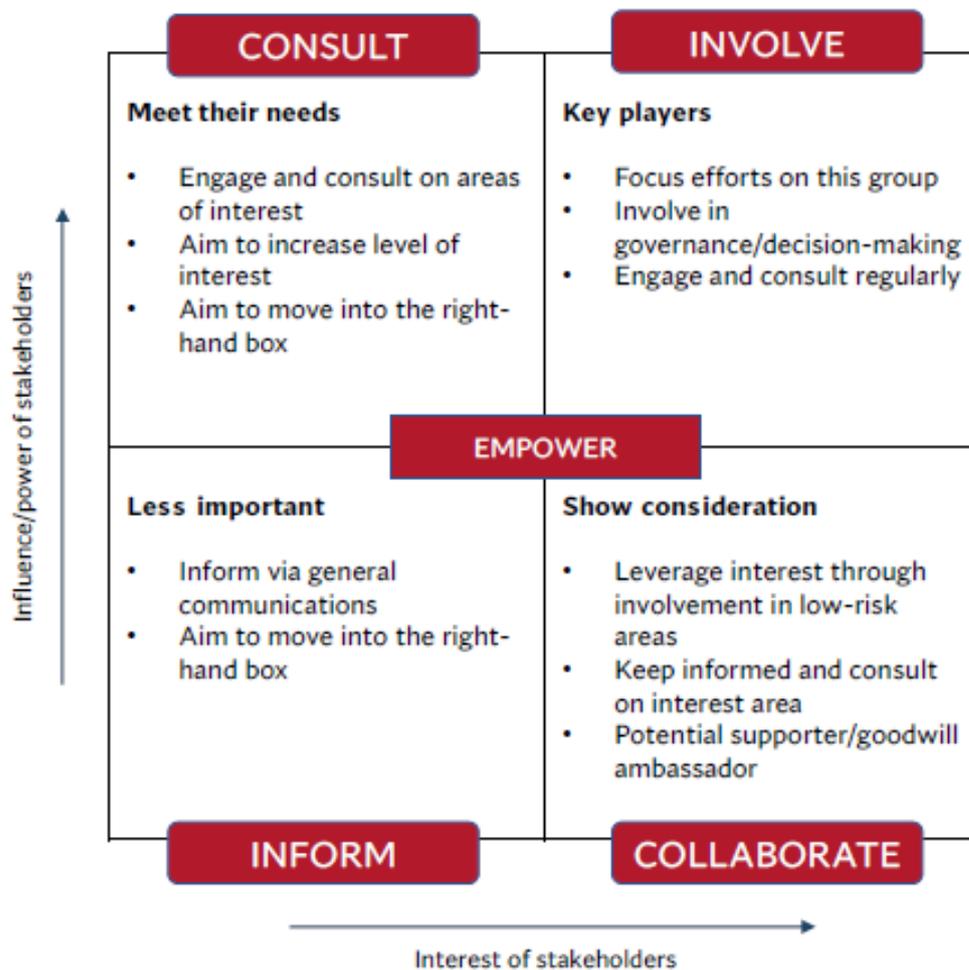
11   Equality Impact

The Trust's responsibilities towards promoting equality, diversity and inclusion have been considered when drafting this policy.

Date of review	Date agreed	LGBs	MAT Board	Review date	Comments
01/09/2024	18/11/2024	Spring 2025	12/12/2024	September 2026	

Appendix 1

POWER/INTEREST MATRIX

Influence/power of stakeholders (vertical axis)

CONSULT

Meet their needs

- Engage and consult on areas of interest
- Aim to increase level of interest
- Aim to move into the right-hand box

INVOLVE

Key players

- Focus efforts on this group
- Involve in governance/decision-making
- Engage and consult regularly

EMPOWER

INFORM

Less important

- Inform via general communications
- Aim to move into the right-hand box

COLLABORATE

Show consideration

- Leverage interest through involvement in low-risk areas
- Keep informed and consult on interest area
- Potential supporter/goodwill ambassador

Interest of stakeholders (horizontal axis)

POWER/INTEREST MATRIX

The level of power/influence and interest which particular stakeholder groups have in the policies, services, or operation of the Trust will shape where they are located in the matrix.

It is also important to remember that although the matrix set out provides a framework to map the different stakeholder groups, even within the groups there can be different opinions on any given issue and shifting positions in terms of power and influence. As part of the Trust's Communication and Engagement strategy, we have developed a flexible approach and have capacity to engage in more long-term strategic positioning on certain policy issues to respond to ad hoc issues which arise, and to have an approach aimed at targeting information to particular groups.

1. Inform
Information provisions – it can be proactive (dissemination) or responsive (responding to questions from stakeholders).
- Tools: emails, website, newsletters, presentation, press releases, etc.

2. Consult
This level of engagement is used when the purpose is primarily to listen, gather information and garner feedback. It may also involve focused interaction with particular groups who have high levels of power/influence to have a better understanding of the issues which are important to the Trust and its academies. It can include responses which the Trust makes to external calls for consultation.
- Tools: key stakeholders interviews, Focus groups, surveys, public meetings/forums, and formal consultation responses.

3. Involve
This level of engagement is used when two-way information exchange is required and where individuals and groups have an interest in the corporate/operating plan and are likely to be affected by the delivery of the objectives.
- Tools: one-on-one meetings, etc.

4. Collaborate
Collaborative partnerships can range from loose affirmations through to establishing formal boards or committees.
- Tools: Partnership agreements, newsletters.

5. Empower
This can be used when individuals and groups have accepted the challenge of being part of identifying the solutions themselves.
- Tools: Focus groups.

Appendix 2

Website Compliance –September 2024

		Responsible Person
Admission Arrangements		
• **By 15th March** publish admissions arrangements that comply with the 'School admissions code' and the 'School admissions appeals code' for children starting at the normal point of entry. These should include how applications will be considered, how many children will be admitted in each age group, what a parent needs to do to apply, how places are allocated, **how many external applicants a school intends to admit into the sixth form** • **By 31st August** publish how in-year applications are managed including a link to the local authority in-year application coordination scheme • **By 28th February** a timetable setting out how the school will organise and hear admissions appeals including a deadline that allows 20 school days to lodge an appeal, 10 days' notice of the hearing and issue a decision letter within 5 days' of the hearing.		
Annual Report and Accounts		
• Annual Report • Annual audited accounts		
Behaviour Policy		
You *should* publish details of your school's behaviour policy, including its anti-bullying strategy.		
Careers Programme Information		
• Publish a policy statement to comply with 'provider access legislation' setting out how the school will give providers of technical education and apprenticeships access to year 8-13 pupils • Name of careers lead • Summary of the careers programme including how pupils, parents, teachers and employers can access information about it • How the school measures and assesses the impact • Date when this information will be reviewed		
Charging and Remission Policies		
• The activities or cases for which your school will charge pupils' parents		
The circumstances where your school will make an exception on a payment you would normally expect to receive under your charging policy		
Complaints		
All academies and colleges should publish their complaints policy online		
Publish your whistleblowing policy		
Publish any arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the support the school provides.		
Contact Details		
• Name, postal address and telephone number		

• Name of member of staff who deals with queries from parents and other members of the public • Name of Headteacher • Name and address of Chair of governing body • Name and details of SEN Co-ordinator • Contact details for academy trust and link to its website		
Curriculum		
• The content of the curriculum your school follows in each academic year for every subject, including for mandatory subjects such as Religious Education even if it's taught as part of another subject or subjects or is called something else • Information to make parents aware they have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of RE		
• How parents or other member of the public can find out more about the curriculum your school is following		
• A list of the course available to pupils at KS4 including GCSEs		
• The 16 to 19 qualifications you offer		
• How you meet the 16 to 19 study programme requirements		
Your approach to the curriculum • (Your approach to the curriculum should also include how you are complying with your duties in the Equality Act 2010 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 about making the curriculum accessible for those with disabilities or special educational needs)		
• Publish information about the school's music development plan (DfE template available)		
• Publish policy on relationships education or relationships and sex education, consulting parents when developing and reviewing it, ensuring it meets pupils and parents needs and reflects the community		
Ethos and Values		
• Publish a statement of their ethos and values		
Governors' Information and Duties		
• The structure and responsibilities • Each governor and relevant business and financial interests • Encouraged to publish accessible data about the diversity of the local board		
For each local governor who has served at any point over the past 12 months: • Their full names, date of appointment, term of office, date they stepped down (where applicable), who appointed them, and relevant business and pecuniary interests including governance roles in other educational institutions, their attendance record at governing body and committee meetings over the last academic year		
For 16-19 academies publish the submitted annual accountability statement (part 2) within 3 months of the start of the academic year (1st December), regular reviews of how		

well the education provided by the college meets local needs, a statement in the annual report on recruiting and developing governors and governance professionals, a summary of outcomes of the external governance review and associated action plan every 3 years.		
Ofsted Reports		
• Publish a copy of your school's or college's most recent Ofsted report • Publish a link to the report on the Ofsted website		
Pay Gap Reporting		
• Schools with 250 or more employees must report their gender pay gap information to the government and publish this on the website		
Public Sector Equality Duty		
• Details of how the school complies with the public sector equality duty • The school's equality objectives (updating them at least every 4 years)		
Pupil premium and recovery premium		
• By 31st December publish a pupil premium funding strategy statement explaining how the premium is being spent and the education outcomes achieved for disadvantaged pupils • Publish the statement here so it meets the requirements • Publish by 31st July each year the amount of premium funding received, a breakdown of how it will be spent, the impact seen on school on pupils' participation and attainment in PE and sport and how this improvement will be sustained		
Remote Education		
• You must publish information about your school's remote education provision.		
School Opening Hours		
• Official start time of the compulsory school day • Official end time of the compulsory school day • Total time this amounts to in a typical week not including after-school activities		
School Uniform		
• Publish easily understandable policy on the cost of school uniforms. It should include information about optional or required items, seasonable items, branded or generic items, whether items can be purchased from a particular retailer and where second-hand uniform can be published		
SEN and Disability Information		
Special Education Needs (SEN) Information Report - The report must contain: • The 'SEN Information' specified in schedule 1 to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014. (Statutory guidance on this is contained in section 6.79 to 6.82 of the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years) • The arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils		

• The steps you have taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils • The facilities you provide to help disabled pupils to access the school		
Information as to the plan prepared by the governing body or proprietor under paragraph 3 of schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan) for: • Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum • Improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities and services provided or offered by the school • Improving delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled		
Test, Exam and Assessment Results		
• Publish a link to the compare school and college performance service and to the school's own performance measures page on it You *should* publish the following details from your school's most recent key stage 4 results: • Progress 8 score • Attainment 8 score • Attainment in English and Maths – percentage achieving a grade 5 or above • English Baccalaureate average point score • Pupil destinations – percentage staying in education or employment after KS4		
You *should* publish the following details from your school's most recent key stage 5 results: • Most recent 16-18 performance measures • Attainment measures • Retention measures • Destination measures		
Safeguarding		
Include suitable safeguarding guidance on your school website. The child protection policy should describe procedures which are in accordance with government guidance and refer to locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements put in place by the three safeguarding partners.		
Individual schools and colleges should ensure they have an effective Safeguarding/child protection policy. This should be updated annually (as a minimum), and be available publicly either via the school or college website or by other means		

Appendix 3

Branding Guidelines

1   Introduction

Our brand represents the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust, so it is essential that there are no inconsistencies in how the Trust is visually represented ourselves in communications and engagements with all stakeholders.

2   Principles

2.1   All content for Trust promotional materials to be used in the public domain must be approved by the Trust's Marketing Co-ordinator (jo.payne@heartofmercia.org.uk).

2.2   When using the Trust's logo in academy documentation, communications or on the website, do not:
- Stretch graphics so they are distorted from their original sizing
- Send anything out pixelated/fuzzy

2.3   Academy letterhead should include reference to the Trust's registered address, preferably including the Trust logo. A footer graphic can be provided on request.

2.4   The standard PowerPoint document should always be used for HOM presentations and can be provided by the Trust's Marketing Co-ordinator.

3   Guidelines

2.1   Information about the Trust's colour palette, typeface and logo assets can be found on the following pages of this guide.
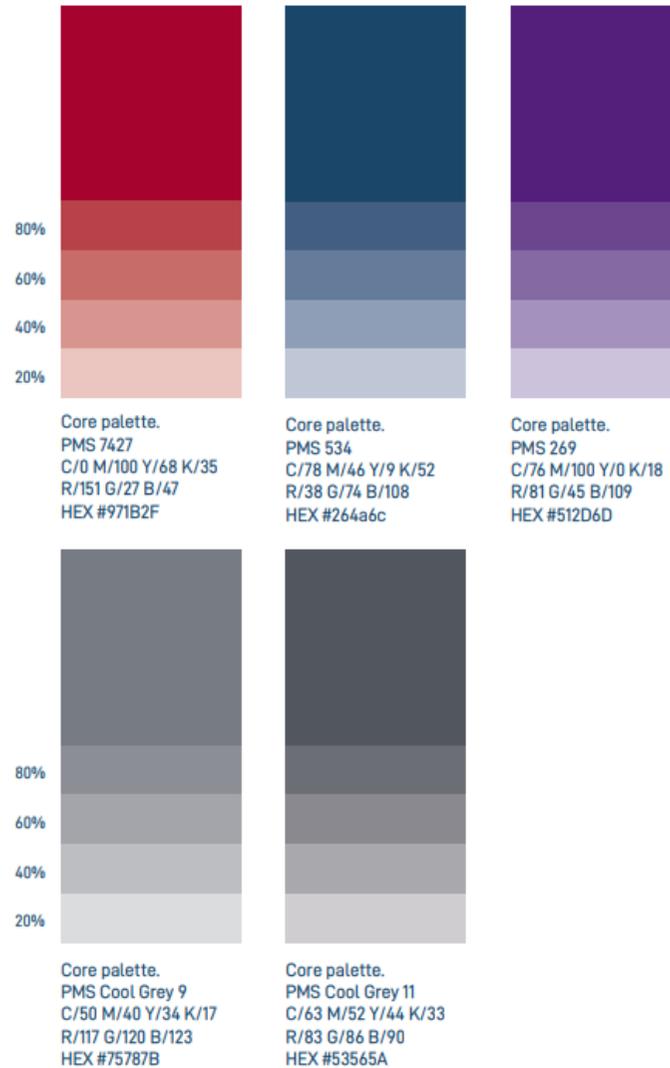
Colour palette

The brand colour palette is shown here, claret, navy, purple and grey.

The consistent and appropriate use of these colours will help to reinforce the Heart of Mercia brand.

Percentage tints can be used of any of these colours.

Colours can look different when used on screen so for digital use each colour is presented with web-safe hexadecimal values.

The colours were selected to bring partnership between all the colleges within the trust, but work togther as a palette for the creation of coroprate communications as and when required.

80%
60%
40%
20%

Core palette.
PMS 7427
C/0 M/100 Y/68 K/35
R/151 G/27 B/47
HEX #971B2F

Core palette.
PMS 534
C/78 M/46 Y/9 K/52
R/38 G/74 B/108
HEX #264a6c

Core palette.
PMS 269
C/76 M/100 Y/0 K/18
R/81 G/45 B/109
HEX #512D6D

80%
60%
40%
20%

Core palette.
PMS Cool Grey 9
C/50 M/40 Y/34 K/17
R/117 G/120 B/123
HEX #75787B

Core palette.
PMS Cool Grey 11
C/63 M/52 Y/44 K/33
R/83 G/86 B/90
HEX #53565A

Typeface

Headline and body copy should be presented in the typeface D-DIN which has eight weights, which can be used to add variation to typesetting.

D-DIN Pro is a well balanced sans serif typeface with open rounded letter forms and angled features to help communicate a clean, confident and contemporary brand style.

The typeface can be downloaded for free here:
https://fontesk.com/d-din-pro-typeface/

For instances where this typeface can't be used such as internally produced Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint documents, please use Arial as a substitute.

D-DIN Pro - bold
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

D-DIN Pro - regular
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

D-DIN Pro - medium
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

D-DIN Pro - semi bold
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

D-DIN Pro - heavy
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

D-DIN Pro - extra bold
abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

Logo type

Shown are the colourways to the logo types.

There is a colour, black and white versions in a variety of formats

.eps
.ai
.jpg
.png

Colour

Black

White