Social Media Policy

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Introduction and Policy Aims

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform that enables people to directly interact with each other.

We understand the benefits of social media, but recognise it also brings potential risks to the Trust, its schools and to individuals. For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as websites and applications (apps) that allow people to create or share content and/or participate in social networking. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, WordPress, Tumblr, Ask.fm and WhatsApp.

Through this policy, we aim to:
1. Safeguard and protect our pupils, staff and the wider Trust community
2. Ensure that the reputation of the Trust is protected
3. Ensure that all Trust employees are operating within our social media framework

Purpose

The Trust recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Trust staff are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media to positively promote their schools. However, there are risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation.

The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that the use of social media is responsibly undertaken and that the confidentiality of pupils and staff and the reputation of the Trust and its schools are protected.

Scope

This Policy deals with the use of all forms of social media and other internet posting sites.

It applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes during working hours or otherwise. The Policy applies regardless of whether social media is accessed using Trust IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.

This policy:
➢ Applies to all staff (School and Managed Service staff) and to all online communications that directly or indirectly, represent the school
➢ Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere
➢ Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
➢ Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.

The use of social media platforms can change rapidly, so the Policy does not attempt to cover all circumstances. Staff must apply common sense and professional judgement when faced by situations not covered by this document. Staff are required to seek advice from their Headteacher if they are unsure of how to use a particular aspect of social media or have concerns and need additional guidance.

Compliance

All Trust staff are expected to comply with this policy and all School Leaders and Line Managers are responsible for ensuring their teams read, understand, and comply with this policy.

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other Trust policies.

Employees are prohibited from using social media to:
• Breach the Acceptable Use of IT Policy
• Breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality
• Breach the disciplinary rules

- Harass or bully other staff or pupils in any way or breach our Code of Conduct Policy and our Behaviour, Anti Bullying and Exclusions Policy
- Unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties or breach our Equal Opportunities policies
- Breach our Data Protection Policy
- Breach our Information and Records Retention Policy
- Breach any other laws or ethical standards.

Employees who breach any of the above policies may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Breach of this Policy:

- Any misuse of social media should be reported to the School Leader who will seek guidance from the Trust.
- Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this Policy will be required to cooperate with an investigation. This may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.
- Staff may be required to remove posts which are deemed to constitute a breach of this Policy.
- A breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.
- Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Organisational control: Roles and Responsibilities

School Leader

- Effective day-to-day operation of this policy
- Facilitating training and guidance on social media use
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents
- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate Trust staff and external agencies as required
- Receiving completed applications for social media accounts
- Approving account creation

IT Manager

- Creating accounts following School Leader approval
- Storing account details, including passwords securely
- Being involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Controlling the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

All Staff

- Knowing the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via school accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school/Trust

Process for creating new school social media accounts

Anyone wishing to set up a new school social media account must seek agreement from their School Leader. For any official school platform, the follow must be in place :

- Master privileges and access permissions are to be held by the school (normally the IT Team)

- The school must have editorial oversight of all content
- The number of staff members with administrative rights should be limited to those necessary

In all cases, the School Leader must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Managing school social media accounts

The do's

- Check with the School Leader before publishing any content that may have controversial implications for the school or Trust
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion from a more senior colleague
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting processes
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible.

The Don'ts

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Don't use social media to air internal grievance.

Responsible use of social media

The following section of this Policy provides staff with common sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely. They apply to both personal and Trust-affiliated accounts.

Also, please see the addendum at the end of the policy entitled Quick Reference Guide for Staff**.**

Safeguarding children and young people

- You must not communicate with pupils over social media sites
- You must never send a direct message to a pupil through a social media account
- Staff must not respond to any direct communication from a pupil
- Pupils' personal accounts should never be tagged in a social media post
- Staff must not accept any current pupil of any age as a follower or friend on any personal account (see addendum)
- Any communication received on a personal account from a pupil must be reported to the School Leader/Designated Safeguarding Leader
- If a social media platform is being used as a way for pupils to collaborate with a member of staff as part of an school approved project, that account must me made private
- You must block unwanted communications from pupils
- You should not interact with any ex-pupil of the Trust who is under 18

- Privacy settings should be set so that age restrictions are set at 13+. Children under 13 are not legally allowed to create social media accounts
- You should enable a profanity filter
- Any sharing of links to external sites must be appropriate
- Abusive or threatening posts should be reported to the School Leader (see addendum)
- Avoid posting anything on a personal account that you do not want your pupils to see and consider stricter privacy settings (advice included in the addendum)
- Only use school owned equipment to post to a school social media account.

Protecting our reputation

- Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the School, Trust, pupils, parents or carers, trustees, staff, suppliers or any other Trust Stakeholders
- Staff should avoid posting messages that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our reputation
- If you disclose your affiliation as an employee of our School/Trust on a personal account, you must also state that your views do not represent those of your employer
- You should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you wish to present to pupils and colleagues
- Avoid posting comments about sensitive School/Trust-related topics
- If you are contacted for comment about the School/Trust by the press or some other external agency, staff must direct this to the School Leader and not respond without approval
- Deal with any complaints by offering dialogue through a more appropriate channel. Direct message the complainant with alternative contact details to avoid any awkward public conversations
- Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.

We realise that a growing number of educationalists and education groups use discussion groups, online chat forums and bulletin boards to share good practice and disseminate information and resources. The use of these platforms relating to professional practice and continuing professional development is encouraged, although staff are reminded that they are representing the Trust and their school community, and appropriate professional standards should apply to all postings and messages.

Ideas on What to Post on Social Media Platforms

1. Student Accomplishments: Show the great work being completed by your students and celebrate their acheivements.
2. Staff Accomplishments: Celebrate staff achievements such as promotions, academic successes and awards.
3. Classroom experience: Give your community a peek into your classrooms by sharing some of the wonderful things happening; this also has the added bonus of showing potential teachers what it's like to teach in your school.
4. Updates and Good News: Share postive news with your community, this could be sporting successes, offsite activities, new equipment, building work, fundraising activities, school play, exam results……
5. Reminders: Give useful reminders to parents about things such as trips, INSET days, parents evenings, non-uniform days, school photographs……
6. Educational Tips: You can share useful resources with parents for topics like online safety.
7. Events: You can create events to promote school activties/events but consider being selective and only posting major events such as Open Mornings where you want to attract a large audience.
8. Job vacancies: This can be a great platform to attract new staff. You can post specific jobs or do a general round-up post of all the jobs available. Sharing just one job per post will most likely get the best traction, but you can experiment to see what works best for your school.

9. Business partnerships: Does your school work with local businesses for sponsorships, partnerships, or donations? Highlight this and tag the businesses who support you! They just might share your posts.
10. Media mentions: Re-share and comment on posts you find interesting from other social media accounts as long as they are appropriate show the trust and your school in a positive light.

Use of Images

Each school maintains a list of those parents/carers who have objected to, or who have placed any restrictions or limitations, on the use of images of their child.

School/Trust use of images can be assumed to be acceptable providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be gained via completion of a Trust photo consent form.
- If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts and only if we have express written parental consent to publish their picture online (checking the school photo permissions list).
- Staff must ensure that they do not identify a student using their full name - only first/forenames or initials may be used.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts.
- Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately and notify the School Leader.

Disciplinary action may be taken if a member of staff uses, posts or publishes a photograph or video image of a student contrary to the instructions of their parent/carer. All staff must check the contents of the photo consent form and be aware of the conditions of use.

Respecting intellectual property and confidential information

- Remember that anything shared through social media is subject to copyright, data protection and freedom of information legislation
- Staff must not post anything that could jeopardise our confidential information and intellectual property
- Staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals
- Do not use our logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission
- Respecting colleagues, pupils, parents and carers, trustees and other stakeholders:
  - Do not post anything that your colleagues or our pupils, parents and carers, trustees and other stakeholders would find offensive including discriminatory comments, insults, threats or obscenity
  - Do not post anything related to your colleagues, our pupils, parents and carers, trustees, and other stakeholders without their written permission
- Circulating chain letters or other spam is never permitted
- Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to the Trust's business is prohibited.

Monitoring

School and Trust accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt.

Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Associated Policies/Documents

This policy links to:
- Acceptable Use of IT Policy
- Behaviour and Relationship Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- DfE guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Online Safety Policy
- Remote Learning Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Addendum

Quick Reference Guide for Staff

10 rules for staff on social media
1. Review your display name - use your first and middle name, use a maiden name, spell your surname backwards, use a nickname, or use a contraction
2. Change your profile picture to something unidentifiable, or if not, ensure the image is professional
3. Check your privacy settings regularly
4. Be careful about tagging other staff members in images or posts
5. Don't share anything publicly that you wouldn't be just as happy showing your pupils
6. Don't use social media sites in school hours
7. Don't make comments about your job, your colleagues, your school or your pupils online - once it's out there, it's out there
8. Don't associate yourself with your school on your profile (e.g. by setting it as your workplace, or by 'checking in' at a school event)
9. Don't link your work email address to your social media accounts. Anyone who has this address (or your personal email address / mobile number) is able to find you using this information
10. Consider uninstalling social media apps from your phone, The app recognises wi-fi connections and makes friend suggestions based on who else uses the same wi-fi connection (such as parents or pupils

Managing your personal use of social media:
- "Nothing" on social media is truly private
- When posting on social media, check, check and check again which account you are about to post with. You do not want to post a personal message or photo to an official school page!
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don't use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint
- Keep your personal information private
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online consider; scale, audience and permanency of what you post
- If you want to criticise, do it politely
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem

What to do if...

A pupil adds you on social media
- In the first instance, ignore and delete the request. Block the pupil from viewing your profile
- Check your privacy settings again, and consider changing your display name or profile picture
- If the pupil asks you about the friend request in person, remind them of your school's social media policy and tell them that you're not allowed to accept friend requests from pupils and that if they persist, you'll have to notify the School Leader and their parents. If the pupil persists, take a screenshot of their request and any accompanying messages.
- Notify your Line Manager and a member of the Senior Leadership Team about what is happening

A parent adds you on social media
To protect yourself, we recommend that you strongly consider any friend requests from parents. Bear in mind that:
- Responding to one parent's friend request or message might set an unwelcome precedent for both you and other staff at the school

- ➢ Pupils may then have indirect access through their parent's account to anything you post, share, comment on or are tagged in

You're being harassed on social media, or somebody is spreading something offensive about you
- Do not retaliate or respond in any way
- Save evidence of any abuse by taking screenshots and recording the time and date it occurred
- Report the material to Facebook or relevant social network and ask them to remove it
- If the perpetrator is a current school pupil, report this to the School Leader
- If the perpetrator is a current staff member, report this to School Leader
- If the perpetrator is a parent or other external adult, report this to the School Leader
- If the comments are racist, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitute a hate crime, you or someone from the school should consider contacting the police

Check your Facebook privacy settings
- Change the visibility of your posts and stories to 'Friends', rather than 'Public'. Otherwise pupils and their families may be able to see your posts and pictures you've been tagged in, even if you haven't accepted a friend request or they're not on Facebook
- Don't forget to check your old posts and photos – see Facebook's privacy support page for step-by-step instructions on how to do this
- The public may still be able to see posts you've 'liked', even if your profile settings are private, because this depends on the privacy settings of the original poster
- Prevent search engines from indexing your profile so people can't search for you by name – see Facebook's step-by-step instructions
- Remember, some information is always public; your display name, profile picture, cover photo, user ID (in the URL for your profile), country, age range and gender
- Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public

Check your Instagram privacy settings
- Change your profile visibility from the default 'Public' setting to 'Private'. Otherwise pupils and their families will be able to see your posts, reels, locations, and who you are following and are followed by. Go to the Instagram Help Centre for support with your privacy settings
- If a pupil or parent followed you before you changed your privacy settings, block them to prevent them seeing your posts
- Be careful about giving third-party apps or websites access to your Instagram account, and check app privileges in your phone to see if any apps currently have access. Sharing your information can put your account at risk and make you visible on search engines, even if you have set your account to 'Private'.
- Remember, some information is always public; your username, your bio and your profile picture Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public

Check your X (Twitter) privacy settings
- If you have a Twitter account specifically for or about teaching, make sure you don't include identifying information about yourself or your school. Use a nickname, for example 'Miss M'
- Change the visibility on your birth date to 'You follow each other' to prevent pupils and parents seeing this personal information. See Twitter's profile visibility guidance for more support
- Remember, your username, biography, location, website and profile picture are always public and can be seen by pupils and parents, even if they don't follow you and you have protected your tweets
- Protect your tweets by checking the box in the 'Audience and tagging' section of your privacy settings. This will mean only your approved followers can see your tweets
- Google your name to see what information about you is visible to the public

Take ownership of School LinkedIn Pages

- If you have an automatically created Company Page for your School, College, Professional Association or University that does not have Admin access, please add your School, College, Professional Association or University email address to your LinkedIn Profile at https://www.linkedin.com/psettings/email and then claim Admin access at https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/CP-MASTER.
- If you have an existing Company Page for your School or University, organise three staff to have Admin access and ask LinkedIn to convert it to a School or University Page at https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/ask/up-anup so that staff can select it in the Experience or Voluntary Experience sections and students can select it in the Education section.
- If you do not have a Company Page or School Page on LinkedIn, add your School or University email address to your LinkedIn account at https://www.linkedin.com/psettings/email, go to https://www.linkedin.com/company/setup/new/ and start by selecting 'Educational Institution.' Once completed, staff can then select it in the Experience or Voluntary Experience sections and students can select it in the Education section.

Ultimately, you need to ensure that at least three people have Admin access to a LinkedIn School Page. There is no need to have a Company Page as well.

We recognise that there are other platforms, much of the above advice will apply to those. If a member of staff requires support with changing settings, help can be provided via your school IT support or Trust IT support.