

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Issued: April 2018
Next Review Due: July 2019

1. Rationale

Social Media platforms and applications bring many opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways with our partners, pupils and the community.

Before we start using Social Media, it is important that we fully understand policies and procedures in order to use these resources and services effectively and flexibly.

However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to the Trust, the Trust's reputation, our pupils, the community and our legal responsibilities.

Our use of social networking platforms and applications has obvious implications for our duty to safeguard pupils, vulnerable adults and ourselves as ambassadors of the Trust.

The policy you are about to read aims to provide a simple and balanced support, allowing for clarity and definition between good and bad, positive or negative interaction and development.

These requirements apply to all members of staff in the Trust, including Directors and Governors to which all staff, Directors and Governors must adhere. The term 'staff' hereinafter used includes Directors and Governors.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Safeguard all pupils, staff and third parties
- Protect the Trust from litigation or social damage
- Ensure the reputation of the Trust, its staff and governors are protected and covered at all times
- To ensure that all staff are responsible for distinguishing that all information shared on social media is 100% legitimate and representative of the Trust, its ethics and practice.

2. Definitions & Scope

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to: Blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, 'microblogging' applications and online gaming environments. Examples include Linked-in, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Windows Live Messenger, YouTube, Flickr, Xbox Live, Blogger, Tumblr, Last.fm and comment streams on public websites such as newspaper sites.

Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All members of staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the academy's Equalities, Child Protection and ICT Acceptable Use policies.

Within this policy, there is a distinction between the use of academy-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes and personal use of social media.

The open nature of the internet means that social networking sites can leave professionals such as teachers vulnerable if they fail to observe a few simple procedures. The following guidelines are intended not as a set of instructions, but to provide general advice on how to avoid compromising your professional position. If in doubt, seek advice from your Headteacher.

- To ensure your Social Media account does not compromise your professional position, please regularly review your privacy settings to ensure they are set to the highest possible level.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to follow or invite friend requests from a person you believe to be either a parent or pupil at your academy.
- Do not engage in communications on social media relating to your place of work.
- Always make sure that you log out of Social Media after using it, particularly when using a machine that is shared with other colleagues/pupils. Others can hijack your account if you remain logged in – even if you quit your browser and/or switch the machine off. Similarly, software that has an instant chat facility, allows caches conversations to be viewed at a later date. Therefore, please make sure you clear your chat history, prior to logging out.
- Employers may scour websites looking for information before a job interview. Take care to remove any content you would not want them to see.
- Do not make disparaging remarks about your employer/colleagues. Doing this in the presence of others may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment.
- Act in accordance with your employer's information technology (IT) policy and any specific guidance on the use of social networking sites. If your academy encourages the positive use of social networking sites as part of the educational process, they should provide clear guidance on what is considered appropriate contact with pupils. Having a thorough policy in place will help staff and pupils to keep within reasonable boundaries.
- Other users could post a photo on their profile in which you are named, so think about any photos in which you appear. On Facebook, you can 'untag' yourself from a photo. If you find inappropriate references to you and/or images of you posted by a 'friend' online, you should contact them and the site to have the material removed.
- Parents and pupils may access your profile; if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, could complain to your employer.
- Ensure that any comments and/or images could not be deemed defamatory or in breach of copyright legislation.

3. Use of Social Media in Practice

- Any communication received from pupils on any social media site must be reported to the designated person for Child Protection.
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must be immediately reported, as above.
- All email communication between staff and members of the academy community on academy business must be made from an official academy email account.
- Staff should not use personal email accounts or mobile phones to make contact with members of the academy community on academy business, nor should any such contact be accepted, except in circumstances given prior approval by the Headteacher.

- Staff are advised to avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the academy and members of its community on any social media accounts.
- Staff are asked to assess and measure their behaviour when posting on social media platforms. Please remember that your posts, comments, likes and shares could be seen outside of your social circles and in some cases, global.
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the academy in any posts or comments related to the academy on any social media accounts.

4. Academy sanctioned use of social media

Each academy is to publish its own policy on In-academy Use of Media, which is tailored to their own setting.

Social Media, if used properly can be a legitimate way to support a pupil's learning and progress. There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum, so it is in our best interests to support and facilitate this in line with student learning. For example, if the academy has any official social media accounts, then various tasks for courses or course work that require the use of blogging or posting can be harvested using this medium.

There are also opportunities for pupils to use social media, with guidance, as a research tool, assessing and reviewing various pages, groups and communities regarding their chosen subject.

6. Unsuitable and Inappropriate Activities

The Trust believes that the activities referred to in the table below would be inappropriate in an academy context and that staff should not engage in these activities either in or outside of the academy when using academy equipment or systems:

Users shall not visit internet sites, make, post, download, upload, data transfer, communicate or pass on, material, remarks, proposals or comments that contain or relate to:
Child sexual abuse images –The making, production or distribution of indecent images of children. Contrary to The Protection of Children Act 1978
Grooming, incitement, arrangement or facilitation of sexual acts against children Contrary to the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
Possession of an extreme pornographic image (grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character) Contrary to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008
Criminally racist material in UK – to stir up religious hatred (or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation) - contrary to the Public Order Act 1986
Pornography
Promotion of any kind of discrimination
Threatening behaviour, including promotion of physical violence or mental harm
Any other information which may be offensive to colleagues or breaches the integrity of the ethos of the academy or brings the academy into disrepute