



## Social Media Policy

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## 1 **Scope and Purpose**

- 1.1 The internet provides opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and the sharing of information using a wide variety of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs and wikis. However, staff use of social media can pose risk to the Trust's confidential and proprietary information, and reputation.
- 1.2 To minimise these risks and to ensure that the Trust's IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, the Trust expects staff to adhere to this policy.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 This policy is in place to minimise the risks to the Trust and individual Academies through use of social media. It deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram and all other social networking sites and internet postings including blogs.
- 1.5 It applies to the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 1.6 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 1.7 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the Trust's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.
- 1.8 Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation that may follow, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.
- 1.9 Staff will be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

## 2 **Who is covered by this policy?**

- 2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades throughout the Trust, including part time and fixed term employees, casual staff, agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).
- 2.2 Third parties who have access to the Trust's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with policy.

## 3 **Who is responsible for the policy?**

- 3.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating this policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Principal.
- 3.2 The Senior Leadership team and all other managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements. Training will, if required, be provided to facilitate this.
- 3.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the relevant Trust Principal.
- 3.4 Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the relevant Trust Principal.

## 4 **Compliance with related policies and agreements**

- 4.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any the other policies of the Trust. If an internet post would breach any of the Trust's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. You are prohibited from using social media to:
  - 4.1.1 breach any obligations the Trust has in relation to the duty of confidentiality to its staff, governors and pupils, both past and present;
  - 4.1.2 breach Trust's disciplinary policy;
  - 4.1.3 defame or disparage the Trust, its staff, governors, pupils and third parties connected with the Trust, for example pupils', parents;

- 4.1.4 post commentary, content or images that are extremist, incitement to violence, sexist, racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, proprietary, harassing, libellous or that can otherwise create a hostile working environment;
  - 4.1.5 breach the Trust's IT and communications systems policy;
  - 4.1.6 breach the Trust's anti-harassment and bullying policy;
  - 4.1.7 breach the Trust's equal opportunities policy;
  - 4.1.8 breach the Trust's data protection policy;
  - 4.1.9 breach any other laws or ethical standard.
- 4.2 In addition, staff should not make postings in any forums where prohibited social media postings are made by others. If such a posting is made, staff are expected to desist from engaging in such forums in the future.
- 4.3 Staff should not promote social media sites of individuals or groups, or join online forums and groups with individuals, that are known to have views which may be considered extremist in nature. If staff are in doubt, they should speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- 4.4 Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. Such references, whether positive or negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for the Trust accordingly and the individual providing the reference.
- 4.5 If staff breach any of the above policies they will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

## 5 **Personal use of social media**

- 5.1 Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of the Trust's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems.

## 6 **Monitoring**

- 6.1 In light of the exemption of personal use of social media during working time, the contents of the Trust's IT resources and communications systems are the Trust's property. Staff should therefore have no expectation of privacy in any messages, files, data, document or social media post conversation or message

transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on the Trust's electronic information and communications systems.

6.2 The Trust reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, your activities using the Trust's IT and communication systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities to ensure that rules are being complied with, and for legitimate business purposes. Staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems.

6.3 Staff should not use the Trust's IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential.

## 7 **Business Use of Social Media**

7.1 It is unlikely that any member of staff will be required to speak on behalf of the Trust in a social media environment, but in the event that they are, they must still seek the approval for such communication from the CEO who may require them to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

7.2 Likewise, if staff are contacted for comments about the Trust for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they should direct the enquiry to the CEO and do not respond without written approval.

7.3 The use of social media for business is subject to the remainder of this policy.

## 8 **Recruitment**

8.1 The Trust may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where the Trust does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

## 9 **Responsible use of social media**

9.1 The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

9.2 Protecting the Trust's reputation:

9.2.1 Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statement about:

9.2.1.1 the Trust as an organisation;

- 9.2.1.2 members of staff, governors, trainees or pupils;
- 9.2.1.3 third parties connected with the Trust, e.g. parents
- 9.3 Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's reputation, even indirectly.
- 9.4 Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf, and not on behalf of the Trust, its officers or employees. A way to achieve this would be writing in the "first person".
- 9.5 If a member of staff discloses their affiliation with the Trust they should state that their views do not represent those of their employer. For example, they could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer".
- 9.6 Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media.
- 9.7 Staff should ensure that the content of their postings is consistent with professional image as a member of staff of the Trust.
- 9.8 If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until they discuss it with the Principal.
- 9.9 If a member of staff sees content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust or any member of staff, they should contact the Principal.
- 9.10 Staff should not do anything to jeopardise confidential information of the Trust, its staff or pupils through use of social media.
- 9.11 Staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals as this may create liability for both themselves and the Trust.
- 9.12 Staff should be respectful to others when making a statement on social media and should not post anything that colleagues or third parties would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.
- 9.13 Staff should not post anything related to their colleagues or pupils without their or their parents written permission and consent. (including consent for use of photographs/videos).

- 9.14 Staff must not have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with pupils on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family (if a member of staff is found to be in breach of this requirement it will be considered an act of potential gross misconduct and dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy).
- 9.15 Staff are **strongly advised** not to have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with parents on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family.
- 9.16 Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.