



# Social Media Policy

Learning Trust for Excellence

Contact Person: Head Teacher

Committee: Full

Date of Approval: June 2017

Date Last Amended: June 2017

**Review Date: June 2020**

## **Definition of social media**

For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and videos and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Instagram. This is not an exhaustive list.

Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees must follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

## **Use of social media at work**

Employees are allowed to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the organisation's computers or devices, provided that this does not interfere with their duties and should be limited to use which may support their role.

Employees are allowed to access social media websites from the organisation's computers or devices at certain times (provided that they are not undertaking overtime and if the use will not impact upon their role). Employees must limit their use of social media to their official rest breaks such as their lunch break/times when they are between [jobs/appointments], for example travelling/times when they are not on duty/times when they are not manning the telephones/times when they are not on the site where they are working.]

However, the organisation has specifically blocked use of Facebook and some other social media websites on its computers via the Link2ICT firewall as they are not deemed to be of educational value to our schools.

The Trust understands that employees may wish to use their own computers or devices, such as laptops and tablets and other hand-held devices, to access social media websites while they are at work. As a safeguarding measure, employees must not use personal devices for taking any images of pupils, staff members or school premises for the purpose of social networking.

## **Excessive use of social media at work**

Employees should not spend an excessive amount of time while at work using social media websites. They should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on employees' productivity.

## **Monitoring use of social media during work time**

The organisation reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The organisation considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- been using social media websites when he/she should be working;
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

The organisation reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of [one year]. Any such information will be handled and held in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the relevant school policies on retention of data.

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

## **Use of social media at work**

The organisation encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work for promoting school work and activities. It is an important part of how the organisation communicates with the local community.

Employees may contribute to the organisation's social media activities, for example by writing for our blogs or running the official Twitter account for the organisation.

Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the organisation's social media activities, they are representing the organisation. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the following rules.

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public sphere. These safeguards include child protection and restrictions on photographs going online:

- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the organisation;
- obtaining permission from a manager before embarking on a public campaign using social media; and
- getting a colleague to check the content before it is published.
- ensuring parental consent has been granted prior to uploading any images of children.

Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not:

- bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:
  - criticising or arguing with anyone;
  - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups;
  - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
- breach confidentiality, for example by:
  - revealing trade secrets, protected intellectual property or information owned by the organisation;
  - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague, pupil or family) or organisation (such as a rival business or school);
  - discussing the organisation's internal workings (such as deals that it is doing with a [customer/client/agency] or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public);
- breach copyright, for example by:
  - using someone else's images or written content without permission;
  - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something;
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
  - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
  - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the organisation);
  - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive [or links to such content].
  - re-tweeting, liking, re-post others comments if they could be deemed to be inappropriate or discriminatory to others

## **Social media in your personal life**

The organisation recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that they can damage the organisation if they are recognised as being one of our employees. Any personal use of social media should not bring the school or teaching profession into disrepute.

Employees are allowed to say that they work for the organisation, which recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media. However, the employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the organisation's name.

If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the organisation operates), they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

## **Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put his/her details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), the HR department and managers should conduct searches, either themselves or through a third party, on social media only when these are directly relevant to the applicant's skills or claims that he/she has made in the recruitment process. For instance:

- a prospective employee might claim that he/she has used social media in his/her previous job (for example, as a publicity tool); or
- a prospective employee's social media use may be directly relevant to a claim made in his/her application (for example, if he/she runs a blog based around a hobby mentioned in his/her CV or a skill in which he/she claims to be proficient).

There should be no systematic or routine checking of prospective employees' online social media activities, as conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a

part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with the organisation's equal opportunities policy.]

### **Disciplinary action over social media use**

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.