



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Reviewed by: Standards Committee

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INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to any interactive Web 2.0 platform, including social networks, internet forums and blogs. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media. Staff should assume that all online activity is covered by this policy. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use, both at work and at home.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, Associates of the Trust Board / Local Support Boards, volunteers and all who work on any YES Trust site.

This policy takes account of all the appropriate legislation and sets out to:

- Assist those who work with students to work safely and responsibly, to monitor their own standards of behaviour and to prevent the abuse of their position of trust with students.
- Offer a code of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal, and recreational use. Advise that, in the event of unsafe and/or unacceptable behaviour, disciplinary or legal action (including gross misconduct leading to dismissal) will be taken, if necessary, in order to support safer working practice and minimise the risk of malicious allegations against staff and others who have contact with students.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the trust's use of IT policy and the updated Staff Handbook, Autumn 2022.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOL

Staff are not permitted to access social media websites from the school's computers or other school device at any time unless authorised to do so by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Staff should assume that anything they write (regardless of their privacy settings) could become public so should ensure a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives.

Any use of social media made in a professional capacity must not:

- Bring the school into disrepute.
- Breach confidentiality.
- Breach copyrights of any kind.

- Bully, harass or be discriminatory in any way.
- Be defamatory or derogatory.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

The trust appreciates that staff may make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, staff must be aware that if they are recognised from their profile as being associated with the trust or any of its schools, opinions they express could be considered to reflect the trust's opinions and so could damage the reputation of the trust and its schools. For this reason, staff should avoid mentioning anything that may be deemed negative or inflammatory about the trust, or any of its schools by name, or any member of staff by name or position. Opinions should follow the guidelines above so as not to bring the school into disrepute, breach confidentiality or copyright, or bully, harass or discriminate in any way.

Staff may wish to post positive news stories about their school or job opportunities on their personal social media profile. However, they should always keep in mind that doing so may prompt people in the school communities including pupils, parents and governors to look into their social media in more depth. Staff must understand that old social media posts could still be seen to be bringing the trust into disrepute, particularly when they have drawn attention to the fact they are employed by the trust.

GENERAL CONSIDERTIONS

When using social media staff and others must:

- Never share work log-in details or passwords.
- Keep personal phone numbers private.
- Never give personal email addresses or any other personal contact details to students or parents.
- Must consider adopting high privacy settings on their personal social media pages.

Those working with children have a duty of care and are therefore expected to adopt high standards of behaviour to retain the confidence and respect of colleagues and students both within and outside of school. They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information effectively so that it cannot be misused by third parties for 'cyber-bullying,' for example, or identity theft.

Staff should never make 'friends' with students at their school, or those of other schools in the trust, because this could potentially be construed as 'grooming.' Nor should they accept invitations to become a 'friend' of any students. This includes all and any online platforms such as social media, online gaming, and

chat rooms for example. Staff should also refrain from making 'friends' with former students.

Staff should also carefully consider contact with a student's family members because this may give rise to concerns over objectivity and/or impartiality.

Staff should keep any communications with students transparent and professional and should only use the school's systems for communications.

If there is any doubt about whether communication between a student/parent and member of staff is acceptable and appropriate a member of the Senior Leadership Team should be informed immediately so that they can decide how to deal with the situation.

Before joining the school, new employees should check any information they have posted on social media sites and remove any post that could cause embarrassment or offence. This is line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 guidance.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

Serious breaches of this policy, such as incidents of bullying or of social media activity causing damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.