

# Holy Trinity Primary School, A Church of England Academy

## Social Media Policy



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## **Contents**

### **Page**

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Purpose and scope.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Legal framework .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Use of social media .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Personal use of social media .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Using social media on behalf of the academy.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. Monitoring the use of the internet .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. Disciplinary action for breach of policy.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9. Other policies and procedures .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Social networking sites advice and guidance .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact rapidly (with immediate effect) with one another. Whilst recognising the potential benefits of such media for new opportunities for communication, the academy expects all staff and contractors to follow the principles set out in this policy when using social media.
- 1.2 It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the academy's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly and professionally in order that the broader reputation of the academy, as well as confidentiality of pupils and staff, is safeguarded.
- 1.3 Staff members must at all times be conscious of the requirement to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

## **2. Purpose and scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff, trainees, external contractors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of, the academy. These individuals are collectively referred to in this policy as 'staff members'.
- 2.2 This policy covers use of social media for personal purposes, as well as for official school purposes. This includes sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the academy (see sections 5, 6, and 7 plus Appendix 1).
- 2.3 This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example Facebook, Myspace and others), blogs, and texting, microblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia, social bookmarking sites and content sharing sites such as YouTube etc. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

## **3. Legal framework**

- 3.1 The governing body is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the academy are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws and a responsibility to staff and pupils to protect the knowledge to which they have privileged access in the course of their work.
- 3.2 Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:
- the Human Rights Act 1998

- the Data Protection Act 1998
- the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- the common law duty of confidentiality.

3.3 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, person-identifiable information, eg pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.4 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- the Libel Act 1843
- the Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- the Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- the Malicious Communications Act 1998
- the Communications Act 2003, and
- the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

3.5 The academy could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyber-bullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render the academy (as well as themselves personally) liable to (legal) action from the injured party.

#### **4. Use of social media**

4.1 The academy recognises that staff members are entitled to make use of social media in a personal capacity outside of the academy. Staff members must, however, be aware that they can potentially cause damage to the reputation of the organisation if they are identified as being employees.

4.2 Staff members must therefore ensure that if they use social media they must do so sensibly and responsibly. They must at all times be confident that their use will not adversely affect the academy, nor be found damaging to the academy's reputation and credibility nor otherwise violate any academy policies.

4.3 Staff should be made aware, in the event that they access any personal web-based e-mail accounts via their school network, that these may be subject to the academy's internet protocol which could include monitoring and surveillance.

4.4 With the rise in identity theft and fraud, employees may wish to consider the amount of personal information that they display on their personal profile. Staff should always keep passwords secret and protect access to accounts.

- 4.5 If employees make reference to their employment at our academy on a personal internet site (social networking sites, personal web pages, personal space provided by internet providers and internet presence including blogs such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace etc) they should inform the headteacher.
- 4.6 Employees must avoid bringing the academy or its staff into disrepute and must not use their site to attack or abuse colleagues or pupils of our academy. If staff members discuss their work on social media in their personal life, they must include on their profile *"the views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer"*.
- 4.7 Staff members must keep their professional and personal lives separate, and should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between work for the academy and their personal interests. Staff members should remember that when social media tools are used, they are making public what they are doing and therefore cannot rely on private comments not being exposed to the public.
- 4.8 Staff members must not:
- engage in activities involving social media which might bring the academy into disrepute
  - represent personal views as those of the academy on any social medium
  - divulge or discuss on social media any personal information about our pupils or staff or other professionals with whom they interact as part of their job
  - use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils (or their family members), colleagues, other professionals, other organisations or our academy itself
  - do anything that could be considered discriminatory against (or be interpreted as bullying or harassment of) any individual eg making offensive or derogatory comments relating to any protected characteristic (defined within bullying and harassment policy) neither should they promote links to any such content. This includes 'retweeting' or 'sharing' other's comments / pictures that could be deemed as discriminatory or offensive.
  - be inaccurate, unfair or less than transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the academy.

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

- 5.1 Staff members are allowed limited access for personal use to social media websites from the academy's computers or devices or their own mobile devices. Access to social media sites for personal reasons is only permitted at lunch periods and outside their contracted working hours. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties.
- 5.2 Staff members must not:

- identify themselves as employees of the academy in their personal web space (in order to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the academy and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services)
- use an academy email address when registering on such websites
- have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from our academy or any other school (unless the pupils are family members)
- use information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain nor pass any such information on to others who may use it in such a way
- have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity or integrity.

5.3 In relation to Teachers' Standards 2012 Part 2 - Personal and Professional Conduct:

*"A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school."*

The academy expects that all members of staff (not just teachers) will adhere to this particular standard.

- 5.4 Staff members must decline any 'friend requests' from pupils that they may receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official school site. Equally, they must not suggest that pupils should become 'friends' on their personal social media accounts.
- 5.5 On leaving the academy's service, staff members must not contact the academy's pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- 5.6 Staff members who have access to information as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, academy staff and other parties, must not discuss such information on their personal web space.
- 5.7 Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school uniform or school logos or images identifying the school premises must not be published on personal web space.
- 5.8 School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

- 5.9 Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias (such as Wikipedia etc) in a personal capacity at work, since the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the academy itself.
- 5.10 Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy.
- 5.11 Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what may be posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers or other personal information.

## **6. Using social media on behalf of the academy**

- 6.1 Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.
- 6.2 There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating an official school site to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the academy to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.
- 6.3 Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements. Careful consideration must be given to the level of engagement of contributors - for example whether users will be able to add their own text or comments or upload images.
- 6.4 Sites created for and contributed to by pupils must have the strongest privacy settings to prevent breaches of confidentiality. Pupils and other participants in sites must not be able to be identified. Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of our pupils when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

## **7. Monitoring the use of the internet**

- 7.1 The academy reserves the right to monitor staff members' internet usage. Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.
- 7.2 Users of email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the academy's ICT system.

## **8. Disciplinary action for breach of policy**

- 8.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member involved in line with the academy's disciplinary policy. Examples of such breaches include: misuse of the internet, having pupils as 'friends', usage which is outside the limits of personal use during the working day, breaches of confidentiality, defamation or damage to the reputation of the academy or any illegal acts or acts that render the academy liable to third parties.
- 8.2 Disciplinary action can be invoked if any employee is using social media at work or in the employee's own time at home. Disciplinary action will be taken against an employee who posts an inappropriate social media entry (eg tweet or facebook entry) if it impacts upon the academy (for example reputational damage) regardless of whether it was posted at work or at home.
- 8.3 Contracted providers of the academy must immediately inform the headteacher of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the academy.
- 8.4 Serious breaches of the social media policy may constitute gross misconduct and may lead to summary dismissal.

## **9. Other policies and procedures**

- 9.1 This policy will be supported by the following policies:
- Disciplinary Policy
  - E -Safety Policy
  - School ICT Policy

## **Appendix 1: Social networking sites advice and guidance (e.g. Facebook, Myspace)**

**Facebook:** Reports can be made by clicking on the `Report' link located on pages throughout the site. Facebook users can also report another user by using the "Report/Block" link that appears at the bottom of a user's profile page or by listing the user's name in the "Block List" box that appears at the bottom of the Privacy page.

**Myspace:** Reports can be made by clicking on the `Contact MySpace' link at the bottom of every Myspace page and selecting the `Report Abuse' option. Alternatively, click on the `Report Abuse' link located at the bottom of each user profile page and other user-generated pages. Inappropriate images can be reported by clicking on the image and selecting the `Report this Image' option. Additionally, school staff may email Myspace directly at [schoolcare@myspace.com](mailto:schoolcare@myspace.com) [www.myspace.com/safety](http://www.myspace.com/safety)

### **Video and photo hosting sites**

**YouTube:** Logged in YouTube members can report inappropriate content by using the `flag content as inappropriate' function which appears under every video. <http://icanhaz.com/YouTubeAbuseSafety>.

### **Instant Messenger**

It is good practice for IM providers to have visible and easy-to-access reporting features on their services. Instant Messenger providers can investigate and shut down any accounts that have been misused and clearly break their terms of service. The best evidence for the service provider is archived or recorded conversations, and most IM providers allow the user to record all messages.

**MSN:** When in Windows Live Messenger, clicking the `Help' tab will bring up a range of options, including `Report Abuse'.

**Yahoo!** When in Yahoo! Messenger, clicking on the `Help' tab will bring up a range of options, including `Report Abuse'.

### **Chatrooms, individual website owners/forums, message board hosts**

It is good practice for chatroom providers to have a clear and prominent reporting mechanism to enable the user to contact the service provider. Users that abuse the service can have their account deleted. Some services may be moderated, and the moderators will warn users posting abusive comments or take down content that breaks their terms of use.