



Waterloo
Primary Academy

Social Media Policy

Approved & Adopted: 15 December 2016

Responsible Personnel: Lee Warren

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Introduction

The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia*.

Whilst recognising the benefits of social media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that the academy staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

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 so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the academy is safeguarded.

Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

Scope

This policy applies to the members of the Academy Council Members, all teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the Academy, external contractors providing services on behalf of the academy, all trainees, volunteers and any other individuals who work for or provide services to and on behalf of the academy. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the academy.

This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *Myspace*, *WhatsApp*), blogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *Flickr*, *TikTok*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*. 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.

Legal Framework

The academy 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 to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to breach a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018
- Teachers' Standards

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality

- Academy corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

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:

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

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 cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc. or who defame a third party while at work may render the Academy liable to the injured party.

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- ICT Acceptable Use
- Safeguarding/E-Safeguarding Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality Statement
- Safeguarding Policy

Principles

BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL

- You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate.
- You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the Academy and your personal interests.
- You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the Academy into disrepute.
- You must not represent your personal views as those of the Academy on any social medium.
- You must not discuss personal information about pupils, the Academy, or other professionals you interact with as part of your employment, through the use of social media.
- You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations or the academy.
- You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the Academy.

Personal Use of Social Media

Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of the Academy in their personal webspace. This is 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.

Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from the Academy or any other school, unless the pupils are family members.

The Academy does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media however, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.

Staff members must not 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.

If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch, they can only do so with the approval of the academy and through official sites created in accordance with the requirements specified in this policy.

Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they 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' on the official academy site.

On leaving the Academy's service, staff members must not contact Academy pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former school by means of personal social media.

Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, and other parties must not be discussed on their personal webspace.

Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members must not be published on personal webspace.

The Academy's email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity whilst at work. This is because 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 employer itself.

The Trust and individual Academy logos or brands must not be used or published on personal web spaces.

The Academy only permits limited personal use of social media while at work. Access to social media sites for personal reasons is only allowed during breaks, staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties and, in practice, personal use of the internet should not be on the academy's time.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.

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. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

Using Social Media on Behalf of the Academy

Staff members can only use official Academy sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating an official Academy 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.

Official Academy sites must be created only according to the requirements of this policy. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.

Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

Monitoring of Internet Use

The Academy monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

Users of the Academy's email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the Academy's ICT system.

Breaches of the Policy

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with the Academy's disciplinary policy and procedure.

Any breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of the Academy or any illegal acts or acts that render the Academy liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Contracted providers of the Academy must inform the relevant person immediately 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 or academy.

Any action against breaches should be according to contractors 'internal disciplinary procedures.