

# Social Media Policy

## **1. Social Media Policy**

The Social Media Policy should be read and understood in conjunction with the following Company policies:

- (a) Safeguarding;
- (b) Equality Opportunities;
- (c) Anti-Harassment and Bullying;
- (d) Data Protection;
- (e) Electronic Information and Communications Systems;
- (f) Confidentiality;
- (g) Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

This policy and procedure applies to all Trust staff unless otherwise indicated. It does **not** form part of the terms of your contract with us, which are provided to you separately.

### **What do we mean by Social Media?**

The term 'social media' is used here to describe socially-interactive, networked information and communication technologies that allows for user generated content.

### **Examples of Social Media**

The following non-exhaustive list are examples of social media:

- Twitter;
- Facebook;
- Instagram;
- SMS text messaging;
- Blogger;
- LinkedIn;
- Google+;
- Bebo;
- Snapchat;
- WhatsApp.

### **The FHT and Social Media**

We recognise that the growth in social media has created increased opportunity for media communications that have the potential for making a significant impact upon our activities including increased awareness about our core aims, values and services.

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to ensure so far as is practicable that our use of social media has a positive impact, that we safeguard as far as possible against negative impact and also:

- a) Encourage good safe practice;
- b) Protect the school and FHT, our employees, clients, suppliers and other stakeholders and associates;
- c) Clarify where and how existing policies and guidelines apply to social media;
- d) Promote effective and innovative use of social media as part of our activities.

### **Starting point**

Any official social networking site/group must be approved by the head teacher or CEO. All sites must have a named designated administrator (the administrator) who is responsible for the content of the site and has been approved by relevant management. The administrator must work only within the guidelines provided in this policy. Any queries, issues or concerns should in the first instance be raised with your line manager.

The administrator will work with the school or Trust social media only during normal working hours. The reason for this is to protect the health and wellbeing of the administrator and to ensure that the content of the Social media remains under the overall supervision of Senior Leadership Team. Any breach of this rule may lead to disciplinary proceedings and in the case of persistent or serious offences be deemed sufficiently serious enough to lead to dismissal.

### **Prohibited use**

These prohibitions apply to social media on the school or Trust's behalf and also to personal use:

- Material must not be posted in social media that could damage our reputation or the reputation of our employees, pupils, parents, carers, volunteers or any external organisations or individuals;
- Social media used as a tool for bullying, harassment or discrimination will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure;
- If you are unsure as to whether accessing and/or posting any item on social media would risk a breach of this Policy, this should be immediately referred to your line manager;
- Confidential information or personal data must not be publicised without written consent of the person to whom the data relates. Breach of this rule will not only be a breach of this Policy but may also be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Company's Data Protection Policy. We will not be held liable for such a legal action or provide support to defend the individual concerned;
- Confidential information includes information that is not in the public domain and should remain strictly within the work environment regarding employees and internal communications and processes;

- Confidential information may also include information that is in the public domain but which employees should not share in social media as it is work related and inappropriate to discuss outside of the work environment;
- Breach of Intellectual property rights, copyright and ownership of data are also prohibited under this Policy;
- Our social media and the use of personal social media is prohibited from interaction with and response to potentially contentious posts on other social media sites
- It is completely forbidden to use our social media for personal purposes whether during working hours or outside working hours and contravention of this rule may lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if a serial offence and/or an act is considered as an act of gross misconduct, you may be liable to dismissal with or without notice;
- You are strictly prohibited from commenting via social network or other social media channels media on any past, present or future employment dispute or issue including disciplinary, grievances, or any individual involvement. To do so would constitute a fundamental breach of confidentiality and potentially bring the organisation into disrepute leading to disciplinary action on grounds of gross misconduct;
- If anyone affected is concerned that any of the above prohibited conduct conflicts with a potential “whistleblowing” event then you are referred to our Whistleblowing Policy and should speak, in confidence, to your line manager;
- You are strictly prohibited from using social media and social networking tools for the purpose of either criticising or making derogatory, offensive, inflammatory, slanderous or damaging comments about us, our management, employees, external organisations and individuals;
- If you are unsure as to whether accessing and/or including a contribution to a certain website would risk a breach of this policy, this should be immediately referred to your head teacher or the CEO of the FHT;
- Confidential information or personal data must not be publicised without written consent. Breach of this rule will not only be a breach of this policy but may also be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. We will not be held liable for such a legal action or help defend the individual concerned.

### **Consequences of breaching this Policy**

You should never assume that the material posted on social media will remain private regardless of the privacy settings used. You are reminded that even with appropriate privacy settings, the information and material posted may quickly reach a wider audience and even the general public. The details of any such information or material may therefore be brought

to our attention. Regardless of how this information came into the public arena, we will take the appropriate disciplinary action if such information or material is in breach of this policy.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings and, if a serial offence and/or an act is considered as an act of gross misconduct, you may be liable to dismissal with or without notice.

Information or material that offends may also amount to defamation and may result in legal action being taken against the individual posting the information or material. Such information or material will be in breach of this Social Media Policy and we will not be held liable for such a legal action or help defend the individual concerned.

### **General Guidance**

We all need to consider Intellectual property rights, copyright and ownership of data and the Data Protection Act 1998 when using social media.

We support the use of social media where it *adds value* to existing methods of communication.

It is completely forbidden to use our social media for personal purposes whether during working hours or outside working hours and contravention of this rule may lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if a serial offence and/or an act is considered an act of gross misconduct, you may be liable to dismissal with or without notice.

We will continually review the use of social media and may amend and modify its policies from time to time.

### **Communications and External Relations uses**

We recognise the opportunity to communicate with the external community through social media as part of an integrated strategy.

### **Other potential uses by the Company**

We may refer to social networking sites in the public domain when assessing job and volunteer applications.

We will refer to social networking sites when investigating breaches of discipline, for example breach of this and related policies, for example, Dignity at Work.

### **Breaches of the Social Media Policy**

Breaches of this policy or failure to report known breaches are likely to result in disciplinary action and persistent and/or serious offences may be considered as gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal or dismissal.

If you become aware of breaches of the policy, you should report this to your line manager who will ensure that matters raised in good faith are investigated without you being penalised.

When investigating a reported incident, we will study carefully what the contributor's actual impact is now and in the future, as accurately as possible in terms of business interest and workforce relations before making any decision to conduct a formal investigation or, in exceptional circumstance, suspension of the individual pending formal investigation. All actions will be judged proportionately and fairly.

Any online contributions which you suspect may contravene other policies, for example Bullying and Harassment, must be reported as a matter of urgency.

You are reminded that commenting via social network channels on any past, present or future employment dispute or issue including disciplinary, grievances, or any individual involvement, is strictly prohibited. To do so would constitute a fundamental breach of confidentiality and potentially bring the organisation into disrepute leading to disciplinary action on grounds of gross misconduct.

### **Areas of responsibility**

These guidelines are the responsibility of the FHT.

If you become aware of breaches of the policy, you should report this to your line manager who will ensure that matters raised in good faith are investigated without you being penalised.

When investigating a reported incident, we will consider carefully the adverse impact of the breach in terms of our reputation and core values and service and employee relations in making any decision to conduct a formal investigation or, in exceptional circumstances, suspension of the individual pending formal investigation. All actions will be judged proportionately and fairly.