

THE **D**IOCESE OF **S**HEFFIELD **A**CADEMIES **T**RUST



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ACADEMIES
TRUST

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2024-26

Approved by: DSAT Trust Board

Last reviewed on: Summer 2025

Next review due by: Summer 2026



Social Media Policy

1 Policy Statement

1.1 The Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust (DSAT) recognise that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. However, employees' use of social media can pose risks to the safeguarding of our students, our confidential information, reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations.

1.2 To minimise these risks and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, we expect employees to adhere to this policy.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 Who Is Covered By The Policy?

2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including members of the senior leadership team, teachers, support staff, all employees, local school board members, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy).

2.2 Third parties who have access to our electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

3 Scope And Purpose Of The Policy

3.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.

3.2 It applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

3.3 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

3.4 Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

4 Personnel Responsible For Implementing The Policy

4.1 The Executive Central Team have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the school Headteacher. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with all senior and middle managers.

4.2 All senior and middle leaders and line managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

4.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the line manager. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to a senior member of staff.

5 Compliance With Related Policies And Agreements

5.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- 5.1.1 breach our E Safety Policy;
- 5.1.2 breach our Child Protection Policy;
- 5.1.3 breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- 5.1.4 breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;
- 5.1.5 breach our Disciplinary Rules;
- 5.1.6 defame or disparage school or DSAT;
- 5.1.7 harass or bully other staff in any way;
- 5.1.8 unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties;

5.1.9 breach our Data protection policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online);

5.1.10 breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements).

5.2 Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to school / DSAT and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Trust.

5.3 Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

6 Personal Use Of Social Media

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. Staff are not permitted to use mobile phones in classes, unless prior approval has been sought from the Headteacher, and as such should not be active on social media during working hours.

7 Contact with Students and / or parents / carers

7.1 You must not contact any student and / or parent / carer on any form of social media. If a student and / or parent / carer contacts you on social media, you must immediately notify the Headteacher. You must not enter into any correspondence with a student and / or parent / carer on social media. Staff should not have links to any student and / or parent / carer on any form of social media such as being friends with them on Facebook in a way which enables them have insight into any personal affairs which may present the school or staff in a negative way. Any exceptions to this require the explicit permission of the Headteacher.

7.2 Staff should refrain from contacting / entering into correspondence with previous students and / or parents / carers of the school on any form of social media, particularly where such contact could jeopardise the reputation of the school and / or member of staff.

7.3 If your duties require you to contact students and / or parents / carers by email or other platform such as Class Dojo on behalf of the school, you must ensure the content is professional and consistent with written communication sent by school / DSAT.

7.4 All staff have a duty towards safeguarding our students' wellbeing. Therefore, if you become aware of any act which may breach any of the terms of our Child

Protection Policy on any form of social media, you must immediately report the matter to the Headteacher.

8 Monitoring

8.1 The contents of our IT resources and communications systems are our property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems.

8.2 We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems.

8.3 We may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created, and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

8.4 Do not use our IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you wish to be kept private or confidential from the school.

9 The School's Use of Social Media

9.1 If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the school in a social media environment, you must still seek approval for such communication from the Headteacher, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

9.2 Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the school or Trust for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the inquiry to the Headteacher and do not respond without written approval.

9.3 The use of social media for the school's purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

10 Responsible Use Of Social Media

10.1 The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

10.2 You should be aware that any comments made via the use of social media are subject to exactly the same legal rules as any other written comments. As such both you and the school and Trust may be at risk of legal proceedings if the comments breach the legal rules, in particular those relating to any breach of confidentiality or any disparaging or defamatory statements etc.

10.3 Protecting our reputation:

10.3.1 Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about: school, DSAT, our students and / or parents / carers, our employees, our local school board, other affiliates and stakeholders.

Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our reputation, even indirectly.

10.3.2 Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.

10.3.3 Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by the masses (including the school itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind before you post content.

10.3.4 You must not disclose your affiliation as an employee of school / DSAT. You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to students and colleagues.

10.3.5 You must not post comments about sensitive work-related topics, such as our performance. Even if you make it clear that your views on such topics do not represent those of the school, your comments could still damage our reputation.

10.3.6 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with the Headteacher.

10.3.7 If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the school or our stakeholders, you should contact the Headteacher. All staff are responsible for protecting our reputation.

10.4 Respecting confidential information:

10.4.1 Staff should not do anything to jeopardise our confidential information through the use of social media.

10.4.2 Do not use our logos or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission.

10.4.3 You are not permitted to add students', parents and / or carer's contacts made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts, such as Facebook accounts or LinkedIn accounts.

10.5 Respecting colleagues, students, parents / carers, local school board members and partners:

10.5.1 Do not post anything that your colleagues or our students, parents / carers, local school board, partners would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

10.5.2 Do not post anything related to your colleagues or our students, parents, carers, local school board, partners or other stakeholders without their written permission.

11 Monitoring And Review Of This Policy

11.1 Headteachers in conjunction with the Executive Central Team shall be responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

11.2 Headteachers and the Executive Central team have responsibility for ensuring that any person who may be involved with administration or investigations carried out under this policy receives regular and appropriate training to assist them with these duties.

11.3 Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting his/her line manager or a member of the senior team.