Social media policy

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Associated documents:	
Links to:	
• Esafety policy • Data protection policy	

Our Vision – Transforming education: Transforming performance: Transforming lives

Putting children and young people at the heart of all that we do.

We will ensure that all our children and young people, regardless of their background, fulfil their educational potential. We will do this in safe, supportive and ambitious environments, ensuring we maximise life chances for them all.

Our values

- We will work inclusively within our communities, embracing the varied localities we serve while sharing our common vision and values.

- We will develop the very best leaders of the future, working to improve education and transform lives.

- We will adhere unwaveringly to the 'Nolan Principles' of Public Service, which is made clear in our commitment to Ethical Leadership.

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1 Purpose and Ethos

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

1.2 Social networking is defined as sharing your interests and thoughts in an online forum with like-minded individuals. Social media is the means by which this is completed.

1.3 Social media sites have become important learning, communication and marketing tools as they allow users to interact and raise their profile with a wide cross section of other users.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all those who work in a professional capacity within the Trust – this includes Members, Trustees, members of Local Academy Committees, all staff members and those who support our work in a voluntary capacity. For the sake of brevity, these individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.

2.2 This policy covers content that is published on the internet (e.g. contributions in blogs, message boards, social networking sites or content sharing site and applications – 'apps') even if created, updated, modified, shared and contributed to outside of working hours or when using personal IT systems. The internet is a fast-moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances of emerging media - the principles in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

3 Safeguarding

3.1 We have a duty of care to ensure that all of our pupils are safe. This policy is adopted in line with our Safeguarding Policy and our E-Safety Policy.

3.2 Staff members should at all times consider the safety and wellbeing of our pupils when embarking on social media activities.

4 Legal Framework

4.1 The Trust is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide services that meet the highest standards. All staff members 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.

4.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations
- Politically sensitive information.

4.3 The Trust could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees. 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 Trust liable to the injured party.

4.4 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any Trust policy.

4.5 It should be noted that individuals can be identified as working for the Trust regardless of their privacy settings. For this reason, the principles in this policy apply to personal as well as professional social media use.

5 Acceptable use of Social Media

5.1 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 school and your personal interests.

5.2 You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the Trust into disrepute.

5.3 You must not represent your personal views as those of the academy or ATT, on any social medium. You should also ensure that any personal views expressed are not likely to cause offence or bring the Trust into disrepute.

5.4 You must not discuss personal information about pupils, staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media. You must not divulge any information that is confidential to the Trust or partner organisations.

5.5 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 Trust. Similar expectations are placed on parents and carers via the Home-Academy Agreement.

5.6 You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating and altering online sources of information on behalf of the Trust.

5.7 The ATT logo, academy logo or intellectual property may not be used in connection with any blogging or social networking activity without express permission from the CEO.

5.8 No post should cause others embarrassment, harm or undue offence. This is not intended in any way to stifle freedom of expression but rather to serve as a reminder that we work in a professional public service and that our obligation is to educate about opposing or offensive views, which is best done in person rather than online, where much can be open to misinterpretation.

6 Personal use of Social Media

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

6.2 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.

6.3 Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. If any such requests from pupils who are not family members, are received they must discuss this with a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

6.4 On leaving service, staff members must not contact Trust 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 sites.

6.5 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, and other parties and school corporate information must not be discussed on their personal web space or personal social media sites.

6.6 Photographs, videos or any other types of digital images depicting pupils wearing uniforms or clothing with academy logos or images identifying academy premises must not be published on staff members' personal web space or personal social media sites.

6.7 Trust email addresses and other official contact detail must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

6.8 Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, in a personal capacity at work.

6.9 Trust or academy logos or brands must not be published on personal web space or personal social media sites.

6.10 Staff members should not provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites (such as LinkedIn).

6.11 Staff members must use appropriate security settings on social media sites in order to mitigate any potential issues. Staff members are advised to set their privacy levels of their personal web sites or personal social media 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 separate email addresses just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

6.12 Staff members should be mindful that the principles outlined in this policy may apply to historical postings made before their engagement with the Trust. Appropriate care should be taken to delete any posts which may contravene this policy.

7 Using Social Media on behalf of the Trust

7.1 Permissible ways of communicating with pupils online are determined by the Trust and by academies and staff will be made aware of these. This usually takes the form of a specific 'intranet' or 'portal' site.

7.2 Staff members must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the Trust to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

7.3 Academies will hold a Twitter account on their website and to keep it up to date. Official academy sites and social media profiles must be created and maintained only by authorised users.

7.4 Parents and carers should be encouraged not to use social media to communicate with staff members. While communication received via social media should be treated as if it had been received in any other way, the Trust's response will always be given via email or in writing.

8 Monitoring of Internet Use

8.1 The Trust monitors usage of its network, internet and email services.

8.2 The contents of the Trust's IT resources and communication systems are The Trust's property.

8.3 Users of Trust-owned equipment, network, internet and email service should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the IT system.

8.4 The Trust may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created, and may delete such copies in line with Data Protection requirements.

9 Breaches of the Policy

9.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff members involved in line with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy. In the case of an individual involved in governance or in a voluntary capacity, breaches of this policy which are proven may lead to dismissal.

9.2 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and can be amended at any time.