



BDS TRAINING

Committed to Learning & Development

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POLICY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND OTHER FORMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA (JULY 2025)

BDS Training Limited has adopted this policy on the 10th of July 2025. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

1. PURPOSE

This Policy sets out the centres position regarding the use of social networking sites and other forms of social media. The aim of the document is to ensure that all employees are fully aware of the risks associated with using such sites and their responsibilities with regards to the safeguarding and protection of both children and you.

2. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all staff employed at BDS Training Ltd and those Teachers employed in Centrally Managed Services, along with Visitors and Volunteers.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The use of social networking/media/messaging sites such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Tik Tok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and WhatsApp has over recent years become a popular form of communication between friends and family.

3.2 It would not be reasonable to expect or instruct you not to use these sites which, if used with caution, should have no impact whatsoever on your role at BDS. Indeed, appropriate use of some sites may also have professional benefits. For example, the BDS Training Facebook page, our Facebook page is a means to enhance pupil, service users and parental engagement.

3.3 It is now widely acknowledged that use of such sites does not provide a completely private platform for personal communications. Even when utilised sensibly and with caution you are vulnerable and so are your personal details as they could be exposed to a wider audience than you might otherwise have intended.

One example of this is when photographs and comments are published by others without your consent or knowledge which may portray you in a manner which is not conducive to your role at BDS.

3.4 Difficulties may arise if you utilise these sites and do not have the relevant knowledge or skills to ensure adequate security and privacy settings. In addition, there are some cases when employees deliberately use these sites to communicate with and/or form inappropriate relationships with children and young people.

4. GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

4.1 Employees who choose to make use of social networking sites/media should be advised as follows: -

(i) You should not access these sites for personal use during working hours.

(ii) You familiarise yourself with the site's 'privacy settings' in order to ensure that information is not automatically shared with a wider audience than intended.

(iii) You do not conduct or portray yourself in a manner which may: -

- bring BDS Training/Centre into disrepute.
- lead to valid pupil, service user or parental complaints.
- be deemed as derogatory towards BDS Training/Centre Management or its employees.
- be deemed as derogatory towards pupils and/or parents and carers or service users.
- bring into question your appropriateness to work with children and young people.

(iv) (v) (vi) That you do not form on-line 'friendships' or enter into communication with *parents/carers or pupils as this could lead to professional relationships being compromised.

On-line friendships and communication with former pupils ARE strongly discouraged particularly if the pupils are under the age of 18 years. You could face legal proceedings if comments you post about named individuals are found to have harmed their reputation.

*(*In some cases, employees in school services settings such as Alternative provision sites are related to parents/carers and/or pupils or may have formed on-line friendships with them prior to them becoming parents/carers and/or pupils of the Centre/service. In these cases, you are advised that the nature of such relationships has changed and that you need to be aware of the risks of continuing with this method of contact. You are advised that such contact is contradictory to this Policy and as such you are potentially placing yourself at risk of formal action being taken under BDS Trainings Disciplinary Procedure.*

4.2 BDS training does not access social networking sites in order to 'vet' prospective employees. Such practice could potentially create an un-level playing field and lead to claims of discrimination if for example the selection panel were to discover a candidate held a protective characteristic as defined by the Equality Act.

5. SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

Communicating with both current and former pupils via social networking sites or via other non-centre related mechanisms such as personal e-mails and text messaging can lead to you being vulnerable to serious allegations concerning the safeguarding of children and young people.

The Department for Education document – Please read the '[Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings](#)' which states: -

12. Communication with children (including the use of technology)

In order to make best use of the many educational and social benefits of new and emerging technologies, pupils need opportunities to use and explore the digital world. Online risks are posed more by behaviours and values than the technology itself.

Staff should ensure that they establish safe and responsible online behaviours, working to local and national guidelines and acceptable use policies which detail how new and emerging technologies may be used.

Communication with children both in the 'real' world and through web based and telecommunication interactions should take place within explicit professional boundaries. This includes the use of computers, tablets, phones,

texts, e-mails, instant messages, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, chatrooms, forums, blogs, websites, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos, webcams and other hand-held devices. (Given the ever-changing world of technology it should be noted that this list gives examples only and is not exhaustive.)

Staff should not request or respond to any personal information from children other than which may be necessary in their professional role. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'

Staff should not give their personal contact details to children for example, e-mail address, home or mobile telephone numbers, details of web-based identities. If children locate these by any other means and attempt to contact or correspond with the staff member, the adult should not respond and must report the matter to their manager. The child should be firmly and politely informed that this is not acceptable.

Staff should, in any communication with children, also follow the guidance in section 7 'Standards of Behaviour'.

Staff should adhere to their establishment's policies, including those with regard to communication with parents and carers and the information they share when using the internet.

This means that adults (YOU) should:

- *not seek to communicate/make contact or respond to contact with pupils outside of the purposes of their work*
- *not give out their personal details*
- *use only the equipment and internet services provided by the school or setting, unless school policies state otherwise*
- *only use internet-enabled personal devices in line with school acceptable use policies*
- *follow their school / setting's acceptable use policy and online safety guidance*
- *ensure that their use of technologies could not bring their employer into disrepute*
- *not discuss or share data relating to children/ parents /carers in staff social media groups. This means that education settings should:*
 - *wherever possible, provide school devices such as cameras and mobile phones rather than expecting staff to use their own (e.g. on school trips)*

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

BDS Training shares this policy document with all staff who come into contact with children and young people, it is retained in the Staff Handbooks, and it is specifically referred to when inducting new members of staff into our BDS Training Centre Setting.

You are encouraged to consider any guidance issued by management and professional association concerning the use of social networking sites.

You should be aware that disciplinary action may be taken in relation to those members of staff who conduct themselves in a way which is contrary to the advice and guidance outlined in this Policy. If such conduct is deemed to amount to gross misconduct this may lead to dismissal.

If you are unsure or need advice relating to or highlighted in this policy, please speak with management before taking any action.

I _____ have read and understood the advice and guidance/rules for the use of social media relating to BDS training and those in association as stated in the social media policy above.

Issue Date: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Management Signature: _____

Date: _____