



Nurturing **Ambition
Through a Living Faith**

Social Networking Policy

School Ethos & Vision

Mission Statement: Nurturing ambition through a living faith.

Vision Statement: Our academy delivers a purposeful curriculum through its living Christian faith. We nurture ambition in all of our learners in order for them to become positive citizens of tomorrow.

Bible Verse: *"Let us not love with words or speech alone but with actions and truth."*
— 1 John 3:18

Policy Statement

At Darwen St James' C of E Primary Academy, we recognize the widespread use of social media and networking platforms as tools for communication, engagement, and collaboration. However, the use of social networking also presents potential risks to online safety, privacy, personal reputation, and safeguarding.

This policy sets out clear expectations for staff, governors, volunteers, parents, carers, and visitors regarding the professional and personal use of social media. It applies to all online communication platforms (including Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, and digital forums).

1. Statutory Framework & Related Policies

This policy has due regard to national guidance and statutory frameworks, including:

- DfE Statutory Guidance: **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR**
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997 & Malicious Communications Act 1988**
- **Equality Act 2010**

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- Staff Code of Conduct & ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Parent, Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct
- Pupil Acceptable Use & Online Safety Policies

2. Expectations for Staff, Governors, and Volunteers

2.1. Personal Social Media Use

- **Professional Boundaries:** Staff must maintain strict professional boundaries with current and former pupils, as well as parents/carers. Staff must not accept friend/follow requests or communicate with pupils or parents via personal social media accounts.
- **Privacy Settings:** Staff are strongly advised to apply maximum privacy settings on all personal accounts and ensure they are not publicly identifiable as employees of the academy or Trust.
- **Reputation & Conduct:** Staff must not post comments, images, or content that could bring the academy, Trust, colleagues, or pupils into disrepute, or reveal confidential information.
- **Timing & Devices:** Personal social networking must not take place during instructional/working hours or using Trust-owned equipment.

2.2. Official Academy Social Media Accounts

- **Approval & Oversight:** All official school accounts (e.g., academy Facebook page or X feed) must be formally approved by the Headteacher and Trust COO and logged on the Trust Social Media Register.
- **Account Ownership:** Designated staff members are responsible for maintaining account security, monitoring interactions, and ensuring content reflects school values.
- **Image & Data Protection:** Images, videos, or work of pupils may only be posted if explicit, up-to-date parental photo consent is verified. Full names of pupils must never accompany images.

3. Expectations for Parents, Carers, and Visitors

The academy maintains social media accounts to share news, celebrate pupil achievements, and communicate upcoming events. We encourage positive, respectful participation.

- **Respectful Online Conduct:** Social media must not be used to air complaints, fuel campaigns, or publicly criticize the academy, staff, governors, or other pupils.
- **Protecting Pupil Privacy:** Parents and visitors must not post photos, videos, or identifiable details of other pupils taken during school events (e.g., sports days, plays) onto public or private social media sites.
- **Direct Communication Channels:** Concerns or grievances must be addressed directly via official school channels (Class Teacher, Headteacher, or formal Complaints Procedure) rather than discussed online.

4. Prohibited Online Conduct

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited across all personal and official platforms:

- **Defamation & Cyberbullying:** Posting abusive, derogatory, defamatory, or offensive comments about pupils, staff, governors, parents, or the Trust.

- **Inappropriate Content:** Sharing content that promotes illegal activity, hatred, discrimination, extremist views, or violence.
- **Privacy Breaches:** Sharing confidential school data, internal communications, or unconsented photos/videos.
- **Impersonation:** Creating fake profiles or accounts attempting to represent the academy, staff members, or Trust.

5. Breach of Policy & Sanctions

Any breach of this policy will be investigated promptly and addressed through proportionate action:

User Category	Potential Actions / Sanctions
Staff & Volunteers	• Formal disciplinary investigation in line with Trust HR procedures. • Professional warnings, suspension, or dismissal for gross misconduct. • Escalation to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) or DBS where safeguarding risks occur.
Parents & Visitors	• Formal meeting with the Headteacher and requirement to remove offensive content. • Referral to the Police in cases of harassment, threats, or severe cyber-bullying.

	• Legal action via the Cidari Trust Legal Team for defamatory/libellous claims. • Formal site ban under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996.
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