



## **Social Media Policy**

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## Version History

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## **1. Introduction**

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

While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that The Enquire Learning Trust staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the Trust's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the Academy are safeguarded.

All colleagues must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to all Academy's across the Trust, all governing bodies, all teaching and other staff, external contractors providing services on behalf of the Trust, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the Trust and the Academy's. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'colleagues' throughout the policy.

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official Academy purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the Academy.

This policy applies to personal web space such as social networking sites (for example Facebook, Myspace, Instagram), blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia, social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and content sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

## **3. Legal Framework**

The Enquire Learning Trust is committed to ensuring that all colleagues provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the Academy 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. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality and the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation 2018

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation 201
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- Academy business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

Colleagues should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Enquire Learning Trust could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their colleagues in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc. or who defame a third party while at work may render The Enquire Learning Trust liable to the injured party.

#### **4. Related Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Enquire Learning Trust policies:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Information Governance Policy (and all subsequent policies)
- Acceptable Use Policy

#### **5. Principles**

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 Enquire Learning Trust and Academy and your personal interests.

You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring The Enquire Learning Trust into disrepute.

You must not represent your personal views as those of The Enquire Learning Trust on any social medium.

You must not discuss personal information about pupils, The Enquire Learning Trust and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.

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, The Enquire Learning Trust.

You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of The Enquire Learning Trust.

## **6. Personal Use of Social Media**

Colleagues must not identify themselves as employees of The Enquire Learning Trust or service providers for the Academy in their personal web space. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the Academy and to safeguard the privacy of all colleagues, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.

Colleagues must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from The Enquire Learning Trust or any other Academy, unless the pupils are family members. Colleagues may not be friends with any ex-students until they reach the age of 20.

The Enquire Learning Trust does not expect all colleagues to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the Academy starts providing services for them. However, any information that colleagues obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.

Colleagues 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.

If colleagues wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the Academy.

Colleagues must decline "friend requests" from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not

family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become “friends” of the official Academy site.

On leaving The Enquire Learning Trust service, colleagues must not contact Academy pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former Academy’s by means of personal social media.

Information that colleagues have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues and other parties and Academy corporate information must not be discussed on their personal web space.

Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing Academy uniforms or clothing with Academy logos or images identifying sensitive Academy premises must not be published on personal web space.

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

Colleagues must not edit open access online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer’s IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

The Enquire Learning Trust corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal web space.

The Enquire Learning Trust only permits limited personal use of social media while at work. Access to social media sites for personal reasons is not allowed between 9am and 5pm. There is a daily quota of 30 minutes to access these sites outside these hours. However, staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties and, in practice, personal use of the internet should not be on the Academy’s time.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be “friends” in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships.

Colleagues are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal 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 a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

## **7. Using Social Media on Behalf of your Academy**

Colleagues can only use official Academy sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official Academy sites to communicate with pupils or others. Colleagues must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the Academy to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Colleagues must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

## **8. Monitoring of Internet Use**

The Enquire Learning Trust monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

Users of Academy email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the Academy's ICT system.

## **9. Breaches of Policy**

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with The Enquire Learning Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of The Enquire Learning Trust or any illegal acts or acts that render The Enquire Learning Trust liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.