

Social Media Policy

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| 10.12.20 | 1.1 | Update following Data Protection information | Addition of information around staff use of WhatsApp. J Bowman | |
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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped.

For the purposes of this policy, “social media” will be used to refer to blogs, online discussion forums, online collaborative spaces (i.e. Facebook), media sharing services (i.e. YouTube), and micro-blogging applications (i.e. Twitter). However, given the fast moving nature of technology, this list is not intended to be exhaustive, and “social media” will be used as a blanket term to cover all such sites, and any new versions of this that may be developed in the future.

This Policy gives clarity to the way in which social media is to be used by pupils, Directors, visitors, volunteers and school staff at The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust (TSSMAT). It will also provide guidance for parents.

This policy applies to pupils, staff, volunteers, Directors, Members, LAG members, visitors, visiting staff and contractors.

There are seven key areas:

- A. Using Social Media for learning purposes.**
- B. Pupil’s private use of Social Media**
- C. Use of social networking by staff/volunteers in a personal capacity**
- D. Parents/carers private use of Social Media**
- E. Dealing with incidents of online bullying**
- F. Security & identity theft**
- G. Trust/School use of social media**

A. Using Social Media for learning purposes.

TSSMAT’s Acceptable Use of IT Policy outlines the rules for using IT in school and these rules therefore apply to use of social networking sites. Such sites should not be used/accessed in school unless under the direction of a teacher and for a purpose clearly apparent from the learning objective of the relevant learning experience. If social media sites are used then staff should carry out a risk assessment to determine which tools are appropriate. Children’s information or work should not be uploaded to such sites without prior parental permission.

B. Pupil’s private use of Social Media

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child, it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered, including Facebook and Instagram to name two.

C. Staff and volunteers private use of Social Media

It is possible that a high proportion of staff and volunteers will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that they do not breach the law or disclose The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust's confidential information, or breach copyright while on Social Media sites.

Guidelines are issued to staff and volunteers:

- Staff must **never** add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are **strongly advised** not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts. Where relationships are already established, staff should proceed with caution, being fully aware of the social media guidelines and the Staff code of conduct
- Staff **must not** post comments about the school, pupils, parents/carers or colleagues including Directors, Members, or LAG members, or reply to comments by others.
- Staff must not disclose personal data or information about any individual that could breach the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR 2018, or TSSMAT E-Safety policy. They should keep completely confidential, any information regarding the children, their families or other staff, which is learned through the school.
- Staff must not post photographs of any pupil at the school on their personal social media accounts.
- Staff must ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to TSSMAT
- Staff must not include material that is abusive, defamatory, sexist, racist or that could be interpreted as harassment or bullying
- Staff should not share or discuss matters relating to TSSMAT on Social Media
- Staff should not post anything which may bring The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust into disrepute
- Staff must take care not to allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between members of staff and clients of TSSMAT.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.

- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

D. Parents/carers private use of Social Media

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking. Methods of school communication include the website, newsletters, email and verbal discussion.

School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion.

Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for the child.

Guidelines for Parents/Carers:

- Parents **must not** post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.
- Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the TSSMAT community.

E. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites

The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all of its staff, parents/carers and pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. The Trust's Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the school roll.

Cyber-bullying methods could include text messages, emails, phone calls, instant messenger services, circulating photos or video clips or by posting comments on web sites, blogs or in chat rooms. Personal blogs that refer to colleagues without their consent are also unacceptable. Staff, Directors, parents and carers who cyber-bully could also face criminal prosecution under various laws, including the Malicious Communications Act 1988

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Directors will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy and will send a letter.

The Governing Body understands that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where

violence is threatened or encouraged.” Furthermore, “Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written which:

- expose (an individual) to hatred, ridicule or contempt
- cause (an individual) to be shunned or avoided
- lower (an individual’s) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (an individual in their) business, trade, office or profession.” (National Association of Headteachers)

F. Security and identity theft

Staff, Directors, parents and carers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if they are part of a ‘network’. Staff, Directors, parents and carers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Staff, Directors, parents and carers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and, for example, favourite football team which can form the basis of security questions and passwords.

G. Trust/School Use of Social Media

Official TSSMAT Social Media accounts

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school social media sites. Staff must not create sites unnecessarily or for trivial reasons which could expose TSSMAT to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

- All official TSSMAT Social Media accounts must have the prior approval of the CEO in writing.
- All official TSSMAT Social Media accounts must be linked to a TSSMAT email address, and not to an individual’s personal email or social media account.
- The URL identity of the site and log in details should be notified to the Headteacher prior to going live. The school office will keep a record of this information, and must be informed immediately if passwords change.
- The content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the School, and TSSMAT;
- **Staff must ensure that the School has parent/carers consent to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of the student.**
- **Staff must ensure that they do not identify a student using their full name. Only first/forenames or initials may be used, where permission is in place;**
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe;

- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of TSSMAT-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of the Leadership Team;
- Staff will not enter into private discussions with others on social media using a Trust school account.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of parents/pupils through social media where the message is not public;
- Staff should not seek to view/link up with parent/pupil accounts. For example, in the case of Twitter, staff should not “follow back” those who follow, share or like School/TSSMAT comments/posts.
- The failure to follow the rules may give rise to disciplinary action.

Twitter

Aims of Using Twitter

- To quickly share and celebrate children’s and school achievements, successes and updates.
- To demonstrate safe and responsible use of social media
- To promote Trust Schools as forward thinking and progressive schools through our use of 21st Century technology

What is the primary purpose of a Trust School’s Twitter Page?

The school Twitter page will be used principally to be followed by staff, parents and other members of our community in order to advertise the excellent work by staff, children, parents and directors. Similarly, it will also contain information detailing special events in school. The aim of this is to run alongside more traditional methods like sending home letters, and not to replace it.

Who controls content?

The uploading of content for the twitter page will be controlled by the Headteacher and E-safety Leader.

Who can follow a Trust School?

The school will encourage teaching staff, Directors, parents and members of our community to be followers. We are fully committed to the safety of all children and the Headteacher and E-safety leader are also our Designated Safeguarding Leads. Children will not be permitted to use Twitter within school or follow our school.

The school Twitter account will be a Public account. The Head teacher and E-safety Leader will monitor the followers and block any who appear not to be school focused.

Who will Trust Schools follow?

In order to protect the account from inappropriate content being distributed into the news feed, schools will only follow other users who have obvious benefits to the school (e.g.

other educational establishments or organisations who work with children, local media). These will be decided on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Headteacher and E-safety leader.

What is inappropriate content and referencing and how will it be dealt with?

The Trust schools will welcome any referencing, mentions, or interactions that share the success of the school community. Therefore we deem any of the following as inappropriate:

- Offensive language or remarks aimed at the school, its staff, parents, governors or others affiliated with the school;
- Unsuitable images or content posted into its feed;
- Unsuitable images or content finding its way from another's account into the school Twitter feed.
- Images or text that infringe upon copyright;
- Comments that aim to undermine the school, its staff, parents, governors or others affiliated with the school.

Any inappropriate content will be deleted and its users will be removed, blocked, and, depending on the nature of the comment, reported to Twitter. Furthermore, incidents of a more serious nature may be reported to the appropriate authority.

Further information can be found at the Twitter 'Help Center' on:

<https://support.twitter.com/>

Whats App

As a general rule, TSSMAT does not approve the use of WhatsApp as a professional communication method between staff.

However, in some circumstances, WhatsApp may be a suitable platform, such as in the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, where information needed to be shared quickly.

Where groups of staff use Whats App or similar platforms to contact each other in a professional capacity, the group must ensure the following:

- The admin function is shared between more than one member of staff
- The group is clear on its purpose, and relevant staff are not excluded unless they choose not to give their personal mobile numbers to the group. In this case, an alternative way of ensuring all staff members have access to relevant information must be found
- The Headteacher is aware of all WhatsApp groups being used by their school staff for professional purposes
- The group is not under any circumstances used for gossip, or "banter"

- Inappropriate language is reported to a member of the SLT
- Plans for social engagements are not undertaken
- Inappropriate pictures, videos or jokes are not posted
- Personal or sensitive data is not posted
- Devices being used for this purpose have adequate security, at a minimum a pin code to open the device

Other Relevant Policies

Please also see TSSMAT Confidentiality Agreement, Confidentiality Policy, Bullying Policy, Acceptable Use of IT Policy, Data Protection Policy, E-Safety Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Harassment & Bullying Policy, Disciplinary Policy, and Codes of Conduct.