Use of Social Media Policy

Review Period:	Annually
Person Responsible For Policy:	Chief Executive Officer
Governing Committee:	Trust Board
Date of Trustees Approval:	February 2021
Date for Review:	February 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 The Trust recognises its statutory responsibilities related to employment. Day to day management of staff is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer; ultimate responsibility lies with the Trust Board.

1.2 The Trust Board is committed to ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the growing use of social networking sites. It recognises that the use of such sites has become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a positive way to keep in touch with family, friends and colleagues, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests. Examples of such sites include, but are not limited to, blogs (short for web logs), MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, Windows Live Spaces, LinkedIn, forums, bulletin boards, multiplayer online gaming, chatrooms and instant messenger apps.

1.3 The Trust Board will ensure that all staff are made aware of this policy and any other related ICT protocols. This policy will be easily accessible to staff and the relevant Headteacher will make any new or temporary staff aware of this policy.

1.4 The Trust Board expect staff to keep a professional distance from students and to make a clear separation between their private social lives and those of students. Social networking between staff and students is prohibited. The exception to this is where the Trust uses social networking sites as a communication tool with parents, the community and the wider population (see 6.1.14)

1.5 It is important that all staff are able to use technologies and services effectively and flexibly whilst ensuring that they do not make themselves vulnerable. The Trust Board must balance this with their duty to safeguard students and the reputation of the Trust and the wider community.

2. To whom does this policy apply?

This policy applies to all employees, governors and volunteers at the Trust.

3. Aims:

- to enable staff and volunteers to use social networking sites safely and securely
- to ensure staff and volunteers are aware of the risks associated with inappropriate use of social networking sites
- to safeguard staff and volunteers with respect to the use of social networking sites and make sure they do not make themselves vulnerable
- to ensure the Trust Board maintains its duty to safeguard students and the reputation of the Trust
- to ensure duty of care towards staff and volunteers adversely affected

4. Legislation

This policy has taken account of the following legislation:
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006

5. Responsibilities

The Trust Board will:
a) ensure this policy is implemented
b) ensure that all staff and volunteers have access to this policy and all new employees and volunteers are made aware of it
c) seek professional advice and support from an HR advisor when necessary.
d) take appropriate action, up to and including referring the matter to the police in the case of staff and volunteers being subjected to abuse on social media.

The Headteacher of each academy, in conjunction with the Chief Executive Officer will:

a) know this policy and make sure that staff and volunteers also understand the policy and their own responsibilities
b) ensure that staff and volunteers understand the risks of the use of social networking sites and the possible implications of inappropriate use
c) instigate disciplinary procedures where appropriate
d) seek advice from an HR advisor where necessary in the case of potential misuse

Staff will:

a) behave responsibly and professionally in connection with their use of social networking sites
b) co-operate with the and Trust Board and Leadership Team in implementing this policy

6. Use of Social Networking Sites

For their own security, employees should regularly review their privacy settings on all their social networking sites; however, all communication via social networking should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available intentionally or otherwise to an audience wider than that originally intended. If in doubt guidance should be sort from an appropriate manager.

6.1 Staff must not access social networking for personal use through Trust information systems or using Trust equipment.

6.2 Staff must not accept students as friends - personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional, and makes staff vulnerable to allegations.

6.3 In no circumstances should staff post photographs of students, except where the staff member's own children attend an Academy within the Trust. In these circumstances, staff members may post images of their own children and friends at social events; members of staff should take care to ensure the suitability of the images and that they are not posted in relation to the Trust.

6.4 Staff are advised not to be friends with recent students; the potential for staff to be compromised in terms of wall content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking.

6.5 Staff must not place inappropriate photographs on any social network.

6.6 Staff must not post indecent remarks.

6.7 If a member of staff receives messages via social networking that they think could be from a student, they must report it to their line manager and contact the internet service or social network so that they can investigate and take the appropriate action

6.8 Staff are advised not to disclose their affiliation with the Trust on their profile(s), or write about their work.

6.9 Staff must not disclose any information that is confidential to the Trust or disclose personal data or information about any individual which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act.

6.10 Staff must not disclose any information about the Trust that is not yet in the public arena.

6.11 Staff must not make defamatory remarks about the Trust / colleagues / students / parents or post anything that could potentially bring the Trust into disrepute.

6.12 Staff should not disclose confidential information relating to their employment at the Trust.

6.13 Staff should avoid language which could be deemed as offensive.

6.14 Where the Trust uses social networking for communication purposes, these networks can be accessed via Trust equipment. The Trust will monitor this closely and only those with administrator rights should communicate in this way. Any misuse or abuse by staff, students or the wider community should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher.

7. Breaches of the Policy

7.1 The Trust Board does not discourage staff from using social networking; however, staff should be aware that they will take inappropriate use of social networking seriously. Any posts or comments which could be deemed online bullying or harassment will be dealt with in the same way as other instances of bullying or harassment.

7.2 The Trust Leadership Team may take disciplinary action in the case of allegations of inappropriate use of social networking, depending on the seriousness of the allegations.

7.3 There may be instances where the Trust would be obliged to inform the police of any activity or behaviour where there are concerns about its legality.

7.4 From time to time, staff and volunteers at the Trust may be subject to abuse on social networking sites in connection with their role in the Trust. Any such abuses should be reported immediately to the Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher, who will inform trustees/governors and take whatever action is possible to deal with the situation and support the affected colleagues.