



CORE
EDUCATION
TRUST

Social Media Policy

September 2020

DELIVERING A
CORE EDUCATION

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1. Introduction

Social media applications give employees of CORE Education Trust and its schools opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate with audiences in a new way and acknowledge that new media has become a regular part of everyday life. The Trust understands the importance of using these technologies and services effectively and flexibly to instantly share good news, best practice and to build relationships, whilst maintaining a balance between our duties to our service users and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

We recognise that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, Instagram, Google+, Whisper, Tumblr, Vine, Instagram and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs etc. (collectively referred to as social media in this policy). However, employees' use of social media can pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information, and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations.

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

- That the reputation of the Trust and its schools is promoted correctly and positively and that both are not exposed to negative attention, legal or governance risks.
- Employees and pupils are protected.

The policy applies to the use of all social media whether during office hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using Trust/school ICT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

This policy covers all employees but does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

CORE Education Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Headteacher within the school and the delegated person of responsibility within the Trust. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risk lies with the policy owner who will review this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

All staff have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that they understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Trust/Headteacher and any questions regarding content or application of this policy should be directed to the Trust/Headteacher.

2. Related Documentation

This policy refers to, and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- E-Safety Policy & Acceptable User Agreement.
- Equality Policy.
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- Grievance Policy & Procedure.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies.

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive or negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Trust.

Staff who breach the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Staff may be required to remove social media postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy and the disciplinary policy.

3. Principles of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is not to ask staff to refrain from social networking and blogging sites in their personal time; however, staff should ensure that they do not engage in activities using social media that may bring the Trust or schools into disrepute including using:

- Inappropriate language and/or posting derogatory or offensive comments.
- Contravening the safeguarding and protection of pupils.
- Harassment, defamation or making derogatory comments about colleagues or the Trust or its schools.
- Bring into question an employee's suitability to work within an education setting.

4. Social Media for Official Trust/School Use

The Trust/school representatives must adhere to this policy which applies to uses of social media and networking website applications by all. All proposals for using social media networking websites applications as part of the Trust/school whether hosted by the Trust or by a third party, must be approved by a delegated person of authority e.g. Headteacher. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications, such as open discussion forums and internally facing uses, such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on the Trust/school network or not.

The delegated person of authority may require the employee to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions regarding the employee's activities. If the employee is contacted for comments about CORE Education Trust for publication anywhere (print or online), including any social media outlet, they must direct the enquiry to the delegated person of authority and must not respond without written approval. The use of a social media platform should be part of a wider marketing strategy, with specific objectives set for a social media strategy, with clear measurable key

performance indicators to ensure the strategy is working for the intended audience. The tone of social media marketing should be organisational, representing the Trust and school and not personal.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The Trust expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Social networking applications, must not be used to publish any content which may put the Trust and its schools at risk of legal action including but are not limited to:

- Defamation or libel.
- Breach of data protection.
- Disclosure of personal, confidential or sensitive information.
- Reputational damage.
- Breaches of the Trust and its schools or third party's copyright or other intellectual property right.

Such actions include but are not limited to material of a sexual or offensive nature that may bring the Trust and its schools into disrepute.

Employees who are delegated to represent the Trust/school via social media platforms:

- Must not use such platforms for party political purposes or specific campaigning purposes. The Trust/schools are not permitted to publish material which 'in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party'.
- Must not say or incite anything that conflicts with the Trust duty to eliminate discrimination or promote equality.
- Must not use such platforms for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures, or personal campaigns.
- Must not use such platforms in an abusive or hateful manner or otherwise be used to harass, bully, or intimidate others.
- Must not use such platforms for actions that would put the Trust and its school representative in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- Must not do anything which damages the reputation of the Trust and its schools or brings the Trust and its schools into disrepute.
- Must, in using social networking applications, treat colleagues, managers, partner organisations and the public with respect.
- Must note that the use of social media is an informal form of communication which is not appropriate for formal matters such as the raising of grievances.
- Must report any concerns they have regarding their own social media content or the content posted by other representatives to the appropriate Trust leader/Headteacher immediately.
- Must report any complaints or concerns from a third party (whether from a colleague or a member of the public) regarding their content to the Trust/Headteacher who shall take appropriate action.

- The Trust/school's logo and other branding elements should only be used, where appropriate, for official use. The logo should not be used on social networking applications which are unrelated to or are not representative of the Trust or its schools' official position.
- Placing comments on the Trust/school owned pages via personal accounts is allowed. Any contributions must be made in a professional manner. Personal promotion via personal accounts on the Trust/school owned pages is strictly prohibited.
- The Trust/school representatives should ensure that any contributions they make on any social media sites are professional and uphold the reputation of the Trust/school.
- A Trust/school account on a social media or networking website may only be set-up with written consent from a delegated person of authority within the Trust/school e.g. Headteacher.
- Only authorised administrators may access the account.
- All information published must comply with the Trust confidentiality clauses set out in Employment Contracts and be in line with data protection laws and other relevant policies.
- Pupils, families and carers should not be referenced online without their express consent unless it is the duplication of an image or news article that has already been signed off.
- The Trust/school representatives should not promote or comment on political matters or issues that may be regarded as such.
- Employees, who are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, should refrain from making the communication until it has been discussed with the Trust/Headteacher.
- If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust/school or employees, you should notify the Trust/Headteacher immediately. All staff are responsible for protecting the reputation of the Trust.

It is also important to ensure that members of the public and other users of online services know when a social networking application is being used for official purposes. To assist with this, all representatives must adhere to this policy.

5. Respecting Intellectual Property and Confidential Information

Staff should not do anything to jeopardise confidential information and intellectual property using social media. Staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals, which can create liability for the Trust/school, as well as the individual author.

Do not use the Trust/school logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks, or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission.

To protect yourself and the Trust/school against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, reference sources of information posted or uploaded must be cited accurately. If you have any questions about whether a post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, ask the Trust/Headteacher before making the communication.

Any business contacts made during the course of your employment are regarded as the Trust/school confidential information and, as such, you will be required to delete all such details from your personal social networking accounts, such as Facebook accounts or LinkedIn accounts, on termination or employment.

6. Compliance with Related Policies and Agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Trust/school policies. If a social media post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum.

As representatives of the Trust and its schools' employees need to be mindful that information, they share through social networking applications, are subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation.

7. Monitoring of ICT Facilities

Employees should be aware that in using the Trust/school ICT resources and communications systems for any personal matter that it will not be private or confidential from the Trust/school. To clarify any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems can be viewed by the Trust/Headteacher or designated officer.

The Trust/school reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our ICT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules and regulatory duties are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your acknowledgement of this policy and your use of such resources and systems.

This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving, and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins recordings, and other uses of the systems.

We may store copies of such data or communications for a period after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice. Storage will be in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Employees should note that engaging in inappropriate activities even in private spaces may be subject to disciplinary action. Similarly, employees who fail to report any inappropriate activities that is their duty to report (implied or otherwise) that consequently questions their suitability to work with children or bring the Trust /schools into disrepute would also be subject to disciplinary action.

The Trust/Headteacher reserve the right to close any applications or remove content published which may adversely affect the reputation of the Trust/school or put it at risk of legal action.

8. Trust/School Email Address

Staff must only use their work email address for official Trust/school purposes only. If staff are found to be using their work email address for personal use, they may face disciplinary action.

9. Using Social Media for Personal Use

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working hours or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems, unless it has been authorised by a delegated person of authority.

The Trust recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that if associated with the Trust their activities may affect the perceptions that people have of the Trust and school and potentially damage the reputation of the organisation if they are recognised as being an employee.

Employees should be mindful that when using social media applications, even in private spaces, they do not use or participate in any activities that would question their suitability to work with children or bring the Trust or its schools into disrepute.

All members of the Trust/school Leadership Group have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

The Trust cannot prevent staff from referring to where they work, but staff should use caution if this information is disclosed. However, the employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the Trust or the names of any of its schools. Employees should make it clear in social media postings, or in their personal profile, that they are speaking on their own behalf. They must write in the first person and use a personal email address. They must be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.

If an employee discloses their affiliation with the Trust/School on their profile or in any social media postings, they must state that their views do not represent those of their employer, unless they are authorised to speak on our behalf in a professional capacity. Employees should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with their professional image.

If an employee is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until it has been discussed with a delegated person of authority. If an employee sees social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust/Schools, they should contact the delegated person of authority.

No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites.
No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil of the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.

No employee should request access to a pupil's area on any social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.

Where family and friends have pupils in the school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Trust/Headteacher in writing before connecting with them on social media.
It is illegal for an adult to network, falsely, as a child on social media platforms.

10. Breach of this Policy

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

The employee may be required to remove any social media content that the Trust considers to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

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