



The Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust

Our Expectations for Employees, Volunteers and Contractors for Social Media

“The Internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God.”—Pope Francis Jan 2014.

A well-considered use of social media has the ultimate goal of encouraging “true friendship” and of understanding the human longing for meaningful community. Social media provides a tool for building community. Membership in communities also requires accountability and responsibility; this policy expands on the expectations under the Code of Conduct in the use of social media by the Trust’s employees and applies also to directors, governors, volunteers and contractors.

The Internet provides various ways for individuals to interact and has changed the way we communicate and share information. The Trust views the Internet as an important educational and evangelizing tool to promote the school and diocesan programs. The Trust encourages Local Governing Bodies to support Internet use and to give employees, and volunteers the necessary training and tools to interact safely and responsibly online whilst adhering to Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (DfE March 2015) and the Trust’s policies. However, those using the Internet should bear in mind that certain comments and information may have a harmful effect on the Trust and its schools, its reputation and its employees. In light of this possibility, employees, directors, governors, volunteers and contractors are required to adhere to the Code of Conduct regarding the use of personal, school, Trust and other websites (including social networks and blogs). Social media has blurred the lines between people’s personal and professional time and space. It is important to understand that the impact of a person’s social media presence can have repercussions in both their personal and professional lives.

The Trust seeks to establish a culture of respect, transparency, trust and integrity in all aspects of its schools life. As a Catholic organisation we seek to model our students’ love of neighbour and self, expecting our students, parents and employees to use social media in a way that promotes our values.

Aims of the Policy guidance

- To inform employees, directors, governors, volunteers and contractors of regulations relating to social media use within the Trust
- To promote respectful relationships.
- To ensure the highest level of duty of care for all employees and students.

POLICY

This policy provides guidance for use of social media, which should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message-boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

PROCEDURES

The following principles apply to professional use of social media on behalf of the Trust and its schools as well as personal use of social media when referencing the Trust and its schools. At all



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times employees and others acting with or on behalf of the Trust must consider the Trust's Safeguarding statement of Intent and the Safeguarding procedures of the Local Governing Body.

- They need to know and adhere to the Trust's Code of Conduct, School Handbooks, and other Trust policies when using social media in reference to the Trust and its schools.
- They should be aware of the effect their actions may have on their personal images, as well as the Trust's image. The information that is posted or published may remain public information for a long time.
- They should be aware that the Trust may observe content and information made available through social media whether Trust resources have been employed or not. They should use their best judgment in posting material to ensure that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the Trust, its employees, pupils or stakeholders.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libellous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- They are not to publish, post or release any information that is considered confidential or not in the public domain. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with their Head of Department or the Headteacher, and others should check with the Headteacher or Trust Secretary.
- Employees must decline any 'friend requests' from students that they may receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from students who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost students to become 'friends' of the official academy site. Equally, they must not suggest that students should become 'friends' on their personal social media accounts. Others must exercise similar restraint.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to their Headteacher who will discuss these with the Board representatives.
- If employees encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, employees should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of their Head of Department or Senior link.
- All should get appropriate permission before referring to or posting images of current or former employees, students, parents, governors or suppliers. Additionally, employees should



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get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.

- Social media use shouldn't interfere with employee's contractual responsibilities. The Trust computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using the Trust computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is allowed (ex: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn), but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging of online content is discouraged and could result in disciplinary action.
- Subject to applicable law, after-hours online activity that violates the Trust's Code of Conduct or any other Trust or Local Governing Body policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action or termination.
- If employees publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with the Trust, a disclaimer should be used, such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent the Trust's positions, strategies or opinions."
- It is highly recommended that employees keep the Trust's related social media accounts separate from personal accounts, if practical.

Remember:

Despite the existence of privacy options, many items published in social media are publicly accessible and it can be difficult to guarantee that sites are fully private. As such always start with the assumption that anything you say can be read by anyone, anywhere, at any time and remember that the Internet has a long memory. Always exercise good judgement when posting and be aware that inappropriate conduct can negatively affect your employer, colleagues, students, parents and yourself. Always apply the following test: "Would my Headteacher, Head of Department, class, colleagues or parents be happy to see this content published?"

Social Media Etiquette:

- Be transparent
- Be accurate.
- Be professional
- Be fair and respectful
- Be smart
- Be aware of confidentiality
- Be careful

Signed:
Chair of DOWAT

Date: *JULY 2015*
Review date: *JULY 2016*

