Social Media Policy

Version 1.0

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Name of Author	Trust ICT Development Manager
Name of Responsible Committee/Individual	Trust Board
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Target Audience	All Stakeholders
Related Documents	Acceptable Use Agreement - Staff Acceptable Use Agreement – Parent/Student Code of Conduct Internet Safety Policy Data Protection Policy

CONTENTS

1. RATIONALE

Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust recognises and embraces the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. Whilst staff are encouraged to engage with, collaborate and innovate through social media, they should also be aware that there are some associated risks, especially around issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal and the Trust's reputation. It is important therefore that students/pupils and parents are educated about the use and consequences of using social media.

The word "Trust" refers to all schools/college and staff who work for the Brighter Futures Learning Partnership Trust including Governors and Trustees.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect the Trust, and all staff, students/pupils, and to promote the effective use of social media.

This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by the Trust's staff, parents/carers and students/pupils.

The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's facilities and equipment, or personal equipment

Personal communications via social media accounts that are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards or the Trust's reputation sit within the scope of this policy.

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full-time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees and agency workers. It also covers parents/carers and pupils/students.

3. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES

Trust CEO, Trust Board and Trustees
The Trustees and CEO are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and monitored across all schools/UTC in the Trust.

School Governors, the Headteacher/Principal
The Local Governing Boards and Headteachers/Principal are responsible for the implementation of this Policy in their schools/UTC, for monitoring the effectiveness and reporting any concerns into the central Trust.

Staff
Staff must:
- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils/students and colleagues on social media
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies, e.g. the Staff Code of Conduct
- be aware that any excessive use of social media in school/college during the school day may result in disciplinary action
- be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. Staff are therefore advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video that they are about to post

on a social networking site is something that they want pupils/students, colleagues, other employees of the Trust, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!

Line Managers and Senior Leaders

Line managers and senior leaders are responsible for:

- Addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media
- Raising concerns with the Headteacher/Principal where social media has been misused
- Operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Responsible use of social media in relation to their children in the school
- Using the correct channels of communication (i.e. not social media) for issues or concerns arising from the education of their children
- Report any concerns or issues to the school as quickly as possible

Students/Pupils

Students are responsible for:

- Reporting any concerns or issues as soon as possible
- Responsible use of social media
- Not bringing the Trust and its schools/UTC into disrepute

4. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. It allows people to share information, ideas and views. Examples of social media include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Myspace, Flickr and YouTube. This is not however an exhaustive list.

5. ACCEPTABLE USE

Be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if you restrict it to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond the intended recipients. Therefore, those who use social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

Staff

Staff should not upload any content on to social media sites that:

- Is confidential to the Trust or its staff
- Amounts to bullying
- Amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Brings the Trust into disrepute
- Contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips
- Undermines the reputation of the Trust/school or individuals
- Is defamatory or knowingly false
- Breaches copyright
- Is in any other way unlawful

Remember that anything posted online is not really private. Below are some common-sense guidelines and recommendations that staff are advised to follow to ensure responsible and safe use of social media.

Staff should:

- Not add students (ex-students under the age of 18) as friends or contacts in your social media accounts
- Always maintain professional boundaries. Never use personal accounts to communicate with any student or parent/carer. Do not engage in discussion with students or parents online unless through official school accounts.
- Decline friend requests from parents where they are not part of an existing personal relationship. The Trust understands that working and living in the local community means that you will sometimes already be in touch with parents of children due to existing relationships. In using social media platforms please consider professional boundaries and ensure confidentiality, any concerns or issues should be raised with the Headteacher/Principal immediately.
- Consider using an alternative name on sites like Facebook to make it harder for students to find you. For example, some members use their partner's surname online but their own surname in school.
- Remember humour is relative. For example, posting images and/or text about a recent stag or hen night may be deemed inappropriate. Likewise, a few 'light-hearted' comments and/or images about colleagues or pupils/students may not be perceived as such by either subject(s) of the humour or the employer. The guiding rule is: if in doubt, don't post it.
- If staff are tagged in something in Facebook that might be considered inappropriate, staff should use the remove tag feature to 'untag' yourself (for details on how to do this, refer to the Facebook help centre).
- Be cautious of accepting 'friend requests' from people you do not really know. Simply being a 'friend' of your own Facebook friend does not mean that they should automatically be given access to your information.
- Review your profile information and settings on all social media platforms to ensure it is appropriate as it may be accessed by others such as colleagues, students, parents, and potential employers.
- Check your privacy and security settings regularly and keep your date of birth and home address to yourself. Identity theft is a growing crime, and this kind of information could be used to gain access to your bank or credit card account.
- Never post any information which can be used to identify a pupil/student. This can only be done through official social media accounts with express permission from the pupil/student/parent/guardian.
- Respect pupil/student privacy and confidentiality always.
- Use strong passwords for social media accounts and change them regularly. Protect mobile phones smart phones/tablet computers with at least a PIN, especially when in school/UTC to protect access to its content and potential misuse.

- Do not use social media to 'whistle blow' – raise concerns through the proper channels which would entitle you to legal protection (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998).

Staff should note that the use of social media accounts during lesson time is not permitted.

It is understood that social media can play an important part in communication between School/UTC and pupils/students, parents/carers; however, there is also a need to ensure it is used in an appropriate and safe way. **Before any member of staff sets up a resource such as a student blog space or a school Twitter account, they must seek permission from the Headteacher/Principal** and they should ensure that appropriate steps are taken to make such social media 'private' so that only people they approve can access it. **The Headteacher/Principal remains responsible for the posts made although they can delegate the responsibility for monitoring.**

Use of digital and video images - Photographic, Video

The development of digital imaging technologies has created significant benefits to learning, allowing staff and students/pupils instant use of images that they have recorded themselves or downloaded from the internet. However, staff and students/pupils need to be aware of the risks associated with sharing images and with posting digital images on the internet. Those images may remain available on the internet forever and may cause harm or embarrassment to individuals in the short or longer term.

The following procedures must always be observed:

- When using digital images, staff should inform and educate students/pupils about the risks associated with the taking, use, sharing, publication and distribution of images. They should recognise the risks attached to publishing their own images on the internet e.g. on social networking sites.
- Staff can take digital / video images to support educational aims but must follow Trust policies concerning the sharing, distribution, and publication of those images. Those images should only be taken using school equipment; the personal equipment of staff should not be used for such purposes. They should also only be stored on the Trust ICT Systems and not on any personal device.
- Care should be taken when taking digital/video images that students are appropriately dressed and are not participating in activities that might bring the individuals or the Trust into disrepute.
- Students must not take, use, share, publish or distribute images of others without their permission.
- Photographs published on websites, or elsewhere that include students will be selected carefully and will comply with good practice guidance on the use of such images.
- Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of students are published on the school website/UTC (this is covered as part of the agreement signed by parents or carers).
- Be aware that downloading, copying, or printing images from the internet may also breach copyright laws.

Access to Inappropriate content

Some internet activity e.g., accessing child abuse images or distributing racist material is illegal and is obviously prohibited from the school/UTC ICT systems. Other activities e.g., Cyber-bullying, use of electronic communications to radicalise children or others, is banned, and could lead to criminal prosecution. There are however a range of activities which may, generally, be legal but would be inappropriate in a school context, either because of the age of the users or the nature of those activities. For safeguarding purposes, some access may be required to this content in the course of an investigation.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians should:
- Not post photos, videos or comments that include other children at the school.
- Not use social media on their own devices while on school premises.
- Not access social media while helping at school/UTC or on school/UTC visits.

- Raise queries, concerns, and complaints directly with the school rather than posting them on social media – whether on their own pages, in closed groups (e.g., groups set up for school parents to communicate with each other) or on the school's pages.
- Parents/Carers must refrain from publishing a statement(s) on social media which lowers the estimation of others of Trust/School/UTC/Staff which causes serious harm. If any such statement is made on social media, the Trust/School/UTC/Staff may have a claim for defamation against the parent/carer who has published the defamatory statement. Remedies available to the Trust/school/UTC on behalf of it's staff include a court order to remove the defamatory statement, payment of damages and its legal costs.

Students/Pupils

Students/pupils should:
- Not join any social networking sites if they are below the permitted age (13 for most sites including Facebook and Instagram).
- Tell their parents if they are using the sites, and when they are online.
- Be aware how to report abuse and inappropriate content.
- Not access social media on school devices, or on their own devices while they are at school unless with express permission from the teacher as part of their lesson.
- Not make inappropriate comments (including in private messages) about the school, teachers, or other children
- Use a mobile phone or other digital device in a lesson without express permission from the teacher.

6. SAFEGUARDING

The use of social networking sites introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.
Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:
- Online bullying
- Grooming, exploitation, or stalking
- Exposure to inappropriate material or hateful language
- Extremism and radicalisation
- Encouraging violent behaviour, self-harm or risk taking.

To mitigate these risks, there are steps you can take to promote safety online:
- You should not use any information in an attempt to locate or meet a child.
- Ensure that any messages, photos, or information comply with existing safeguarding policies as well as this social media policy.

7. REPORTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead in the relevant school/UTC as soon as possible.

Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as urgent steps may need to be taken to support the child.

For staff safeguarding, you should report any harassment or abuse you receive online while using your work accounts to your line-manager.

8. REPORTING, RESPONDING AND RECORDING CYBERBULLYING INCIDENTS

Staff and students/pupils should never engage with cyberbullying incidents. If a website is discovered containing inaccurate, inappropriate, or inflammatory written material relating to you, or images of you which have been taken and/or which are being used without your permission, you should immediately report this to a senior manager (as a member of staff) or the designated safeguarding lead if you are a student/pupil.

Staff should keep any records of the abuse such as text, emails, voicemail, website, or social media. If appropriate, screen prints of messages or web pages could be taken and the time, date and address of site should be recorded.

9. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

It is hoped that all members of our Trust will be responsible users of ICT, who understand and follow this policy. However, there may be times when infringements of the policy happen, through careless or irresponsible or, very rarely, through deliberate misuse. Listed below are the responses that will be made to any apparent or actual incidents of misuse and must be reported immediately to the Headteacher/Principal.

- The Headteacher/Principal must be informed immediately.
- The Headteacher/Principal and any other relevant members of the School/UTC must inform the relevant authorities immediately of any concerns/ infringements.
- The steps taken must all be reported to the School's/UTC Governing Body and the Central Trust

Any suspected breach of this policy (or if complaints are received about unacceptable use of social networking that has potentially breached this policy) will be investigated in accordance with the Trust's bullying, disciplinary and safeguarding procedures. Members of staff, students/pupils and parents/guardians will be expected to co-operate with the school's investigation which may involve:

- handing over relevant passwords and login details
- printing a copy or obtaining a screenshot of the alleged unacceptable content
- determining that the responsibility or source of the content.

The seriousness of the breach will be considered including the nature of the content, how long the content remained visible on the social media site, the potential for recirculation by others and the impact on the Trust or the individuals concerned.

Staff should be aware that actions online can be in breach of a number of Trust policies, any online breaches of these policies may also be treated as conduct issues in accordance with the Trust's disciplinary procedure. If the outcome of an investigation leads to disciplinary action, the consequences will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate procedures. Serious breaches could result in the dismissal of the employee.

Students/pupils should be aware that any breach will be investigated as laid out in this policy and consequences will be put in place in line with the schools'/college behaviour policy.

Where conduct is considered to be unlawful, the school will report the matter to the police and other external agencies.

10. INVESTIGATING INAPPROPRIATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Following a report of inappropriate use of social media there will be an investigation. For students/pupils this may be the safeguarding team or another appropriate member of staff. For staff, this will be a senior leader designated by the Headteacher/Principal.

If during the investigation it is found that a student/pupil submitted the material to the website, that student/pupil will be disciplined in line with the school's/UTC's behaviour policy. If it is found that a member of staff is responsible for the material, then procedures in the Disciplinary Policy will be used.

The investigator, where appropriate, will approach the website hosts to ask that the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency, i.e. within 24 hours. If the website requires the individual who is complaining to do so personally, the Trust will give their full support and assistance.

If where the material concerns a member of staff and is threatening and/or intimidating, senior management will, with the member of staff's consent, report the matter to the police. The member of staff will be offered full support.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Trust reserves the right to monitor and record all traffic and messages sent using the ICT systems and infrastructure.

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis and, in accordance with the following, on an as-and-when-required basis:
- legislative changes
- good practice guidance
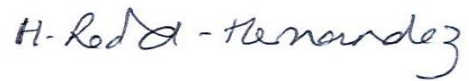- case law
- significant incidents reported.

12. LEGISLATION

Acceptable use of social networking must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the Trust will adhere to its rights, responsibilities, and duties in accordance with the following:
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

Social Media Policy Agreed: July 2021 (Version 1)

Signed CEO of BFLPT – Helen-Redford-Hernandez:

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Date: July 2021

Signed – Chair of BFLPT – Marcus Isman-Egal:

Marcus Isman-Egal

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