

# Social Media Policy

## Statement of intent

The Learning Trust understands that social media is a growing part of life outside of school. We have a responsibility to safeguard our students against potential dangers when accessing the internet at school, and to educate our students about how to protect themselves online when outside of school.

We are committed to:

- Encouraging the responsible use of social media in support of the Trust's mission, values and objectives.
- Protecting our students from the dangers of social media.
- Preventing and avoiding damage to the reputation of the Trust and its schools through irresponsible use of social media.
- Protecting our staff from cyber bullying and potentially career damaging behaviour.
- Arranging e-safety meetings for parents.
- Complying with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the DfE (2023) 'Data protection in schools'.
- Complying with General Data Protection Regulations.
- Complying with DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'.

## 1. Key roles and responsibilities

- 1.1. The Governing Bodies have overall responsibility for the implementation of the Social Media Policy and procedures of The Learning Trust.
- 1.2. The Governing Bodies have responsibility for ensuring that the Social Media Policy and guidelines, as written, do not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to: ethnicity/national origin, culture, marriage, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- 1.3. The Governing Bodies have responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the relevant school's Complaints Policy.
- 1.4. The relevant Headteacher will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Social Media Policy and procedures of The Learning Trust.
- 1.5. Staff, including but not limited to teachers, support staff and volunteers, will be responsible for following the Social Media Policy and also for ensuring students do so. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently in the classroom.

- 1.6. The relevant DSL will be responsible for dealing with concerns about social media use that are safeguarding concerns.
- 1.7. Parents and carers will be expected to take responsibility for the social media habits of their child/children at home.
- 1.8. Parents and carers will be expected to promote safe social media behaviour.

## **2. Each school will have an e-safety team that works with the Trust IT Support team**

- 2.1. Each school's e-safety team will include the relevant DSL, SLT link, members of the Trust IT Support team and other members of school staff where appropriate.
- 2.2. Dave Helsby is the Director of IT for The Learning Trust with overall responsibility for the central IT team.
- 2.3. The Headteacher will be responsible for authorising members of staff and any other individual to have admin access to school social media accounts. Only people authorised by the Headteacher/SLT will be allowed to post on the school's accounts.  
Passwords for the school's social media accounts are stored securely on the school's IT network. The passwords are only shared with people authorised by the Headteacher.

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, X (Twitter), Google+, Wikipedia, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, Snapchat, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for the Trust's purposes as well as personal use that may affect the Trust in any way.
- 3.2. The Learning Trust defines "cyber bullying" as any use of social media or communication technology to bully an individual or group.
- 3.3. The Learning Trust defines "members of the school community" as any teacher, member of support staff, student, parent/carer of student, governor, volunteer or ex-student.

## **4. Training of staff**

- 4.1. At The Learning Trust, we recognise that early intervention can protect students who may be at risk of cyber bullying or negative social media behaviour. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk students.
- 4.2. Teachers and support staff will receive training on the Social Media Policy as part of their new starter induction.
- 4.3. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

## **5. Student expectations**

- 5.1. Students are responsible for following the school rules and will be expected to follow requests from all school staff.

## **6. Social media use - staff**

- 6.1. Staff may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.

- 6.2. Staff may use social media during their break times.
- 6.3. Members of staff should avoid using social media in front of students.
- 6.4. Members of staff must not “friend” or otherwise contact students or parents/carers through social media.
- 6.5. If students or parents/carers attempt to “friend” or otherwise contact members of staff through social media, they should be reported to the Headteacher.
- 6.6. Members of staff should avoid identifying themselves as an employee of The Learning Trust on social media.
- 6.7. Members of staff must not post content online which is damaging to the Trust, school or any of its staff or students.
- 6.8. Where staff use social media in a personal capacity, they should make it clear that their views are personal.
- 6.9. Staff must not post any information which could identify a student, class or the school.
- 6.10. Members of staff should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.
- 6.11. Breaches of this policy by members of staff will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content, could lead to prosecution, disciplinary action or dismissal.
- 6.12. Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity brings The Learning Trust into disrepute, disciplinary action will be taken.
- 6.13. Staff should regularly check their online presence for negative content via search engines.
- 6.14. If inappropriate content is accessed online, an inappropriate website content report form should be completed and passed on the Director of IT/Headteacher.
- 6.15. Attempts to bully, coerce or manipulate members of the school community, via social media, by members of staff will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- 6.16. Staff should not leave a computer or other device logged in when away from their desk, or save passwords.
- 6.17. Staff members should use their school email address for school business and personal email address for their private correspondence; the two should not be mixed.
- 6.18. It is important that staff protect their professional reputation by ensuring they use personal social media accounts in an appropriate manner.

## **7. Social media use – students and parents/carers**

- 7.1. Students may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.
- 7.2. Breaches of this policy by students will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content could lead to prosecution or exclusion.
- 7.3. Students and parents/carers must not attempt to “friend” or otherwise contact members of staff through social media. If attempts to contact members of staff through social media are made, they will be reported to the Headteacher.
- 7.4. If members of staff attempt to “friend” or otherwise contact students or parents/carers through social media, they should be reported to the Headteacher.

- 7.5. Students and parents/carers should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.
- 7.6. Students and parents/carers must not post content online which is damaging to the school or any of its staff or students.
- 7.7. Students at The Learning Trust must not sign up to social media sites that have an age restriction above the students age.
- 7.8. If inappropriate content is accessed online on school premises, it must be reported to a member of school staff.

## **8. Blocked content**

- 8.1. Various social media websites will be blocked at different times by the network firewalls.
- 8.2. Attempts to circumvent the network firewalls and filtering will result in a ban from using school computing equipment, other than with close supervision.
- 8.3. Inappropriate content which is accessed on the school computers should be reported to the IT Support Team so that the site can be blocked.
- 8.4. Requests may be made to access erroneously blocked content by contacting the IT Support Team, who may seek further guidance from SLT.

## **9. Cyber bullying**

- 9.1. At The Learning Trust, cyber bullying is taken seriously.
- 9.2. Incidents of cyber bullying will be dealt with and reported along the same chain as the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 9.3. Staff members should never respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Incidents should instead be reported as inappropriate, and support sought from their line manager or senior staff member.
- 9.4. Evidence from the incident should be saved, including screen prints of messages or web pages, and the time and date of the incident.
- 9.5. Where the perpetrator is a current student or colleague, most cases can be dealt with through the school's own disciplinary procedures.
- 9.6. Where the perpetrator is an adult, in nearly all cases, a senior staff member should invite the victim to a meeting to address their concerns. Where appropriate, the perpetrator will be asked to remove the offensive content.
- 9.7. If the perpetrator refuses to comply, it is up to the school to decide what to do next. This could include contacting the internet service provider in question through their reporting mechanisms, if the offensive content breaches their terms and conditions.
- 9.8. If the material is threatening, abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitutes a hate crime, the school should consider contacting the police.
- 9.9. As part of our on-going commitment to the prevention of cyber bullying, regular education and discussion about e-safety will take place as part of computing and PSHE.

## **10. Be SMART online**

10.1. We encourage students to take a SMART approach to social media behaviour:

- Safe – Do not give out personal information, or post photos of yourself to people you talk to online. Follow age restriction rules.
- Meeting – Do not meet somebody you have only met online. We encourage parents/carers to speak regularly to their children about who they are talking to online.
- Accepting – We advise that students only open emails and other forms of communication from people they already know.
- Reliable – We teach students about the dangers of believing everything they see online.
- Tell – We encourage students to tell a teacher, parent or carer if they see anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable.