

Statutory Policy:	Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated
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St Peter's
PRIMARY SCHOOL

'I have come that they may have life – life in all its fullness' John 10 v 10

Belonging, Believing, Building a Future

Social Media Policy

Approved by:	Pay & Personnel
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I Statement of Intent

The aim of this policy on social media is to provide a framework that schools can adopt to enable employees to enjoy the benefits of social networking while understanding the standards of conduct expected by the Trust. It is intended to minimise the risks that can impact on the wellbeing of staff, pupils, and the reputation of the schools within ODST.

This policy has been developed following consultation through the OHRF- an Oxfordshire based forum of Multi Academy Trust HR leads and representatives of the recognised Trade Unions working within the education sector.

II Introduction

This policy covers the use of social media. It has been written in the context of schools, but the same principles apply to centrally employed and third parties working within our schools. It does not cover the use of other technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) within schools.

III Scope

- Governing Body ✓
- Teaching Staff
- Headteacher
- Support staff
- All Staff ✓
- Pupils
- Contractors/ Service Providers ✓

IV Date of Review

The policy guidance will be reviewed by the Board to take account of national policy development and the feedback from ODST staff and academies. It will be updated where appropriate and reviewed not later than 31st December 2026.

V General principles

Definitions

Where the term “relevant body” is used, this refers to the Board of Trustees of ODST.

Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

The relevant body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant equality legislation.

Delegation

The relevant body may choose to delegate some of all of its functions to Local Governing Bodies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Local Governing Body and Headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the Social Media Policy within their school.

Advice and guidance on any aspect of this policy can be obtained from ODST by emailing odst.hr@oxford.anglican.org

ODST Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

ODST recognises and embraces the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. While employees are encouraged to engage, 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 reputation. A brief guide for ODST employees on the use of Social Media is contained within Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

2. Purpose of the policy

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect the Trust and its employees, and to promote the effective use of social media as part of the Trust's activities.

2.2 This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by the school and staff.

2.3 The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the school's IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.

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

2.5 This policy covers all staff members, employees, casual workers, volunteers, and agency workers, and the expectations are also applicable to third parties who may support the school.

3. Roles, responsibilities, and procedure

3.1 Employees should:

- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils, and colleagues on social media,
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies, i.e., those of ODST,
- be aware that any excessive use of social media in school/college may result in disciplinary action,
- be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. They 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, colleagues, other employees of the Trust, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!

3.2 Managers are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media,
- operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

4. Definition of social media

4.1 Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other and is constantly evolving. It allows people to share information, ideas, and views. Examples of social media include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Tik Tok, Flickr, WeChat, QZone, Tumblr, and YouTube. This list is not exhaustive.

5. Acceptable use

5.1 Employees should be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if restricted to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond the intended recipients. Therefore, employees using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect at all times and should not intentionally or unintentionally bring the Trust or their school into disrepute.

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

- is confidential to the Trust, the school, or its staff,
- amounts to bullying,
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation,
- brings the Trust into disrepute (consideration will be given to whether this was a deliberate act),
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images, or video clips,
- undermines the reputation of the school and/or individuals,
- is defamatory or knowingly false,
- breaches copyright,
- is in any other way unlawful.

5.3 Employees should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and must not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18 on their personal social media accounts such as Facebook. The only exception to this is where the employee is a parent or carer of a pupil or ex-pupil.

5.4 Similarly, employees should not accept or invite 'friend' requests from parents on their personal social media accounts unless a previous relationship/friendship exists, for example, the parent is a relative.

5.5 Employees should be aware that where a pre-existing relationship exists, this can lead to professional and social boundaries being blurred and they should exercise professional judgement at all times in relation to accepting requests and any subsequent social media activity.

5.6 All communication with parents via social media should be through the Trust's social media accounts. If a member of staff receives unsolicited communication via social media by any of the above, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

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

6. Safeguarding

6.1 The use of social networking sites introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people and equally poses a risk to staff as a person in a position of trust and open to allegations.

6.2 In order 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 policies. Further advice can be found in the appendix below.

7. Reporting safeguarding concerns

7.1 Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school.

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

7.3 With regard to personal safeguarding, you should report any contact, harassment or abuse you receive online while using your work or personal accounts when related to school activity.

8. Reporting, responding, and recording cyberbullying incidents

8.1 Staff should never engage with cyberbullying incidents. If in the course of your employment with the Trust, you discover a website 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 the Designated Safeguarding Lead at your school.

8.2 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 the site should be recorded.

9. Action by employer: inappropriate use of social media

9.1 Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, the ODST Disciplinary Policy will be invoked, and a senior manager will conduct a prompt investigation.

9.2 Where in the course of the investigation, there is evidence of inappropriate student/ pupil involvement this will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy.

9.3 Any invoking of the policies and associated procedures set out above in 9.1 and 9.2 will follow an assessment of whether the applicable policy applies. Section 14 of this policy sets out relevant policies which may be referred to.

9.4 The Investigating Officer, where appropriate, will approach the website hosts to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency. If the website requires the individual who is complaining to do so personally, the school will give their full support and assistance, seeking the support of the LADO and police if required.

9.5 The member of staff will be offered support and access to wellbeing services available through the school.

10. Breaches of this policy

10.1 Any member of staff suspected of committing a 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 ODST Disciplinary Policy. The member of staff will be expected to cooperate 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 was in fact the member of staff.

10.2 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.

10.3 Staff should be aware that actions online can be in breach of various Trust policies and any online breaches of these policies may also be treated as conduct issues in accordance with the ODST Staff Code of Conduct and ODST Disciplinary Procedure.

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

11. Monitoring and review

11.1 Where a manager reasonably believes that an employee has breached this policy, the school may monitor or record communications that are sent or received from within the Trust's network.

11.2 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and, in accordance with the following, on an as-and-when-required basis:

- legislative changes,
- good practice guidance,
- case law,
- significant incidents reported that require changes.

12. Legislation

12.1 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.

13. Conclusion

13.1 The internet is a fast moving technology, and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media; however the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

13.2 When using social media, staff should be aware of the potential impact on themselves and the employer, whether for work-related or personal use; whether during working hours or otherwise; or whether social media is accessed using the employer's equipment or using the employee's equipment.

13.3 Staff should use discretion and common sense when engaging in online communication. There are some general rules and best practice in the appendix which staff may find helpful.

14. Related ODST Policies

14.1 Please see the following policies for additional information:

- ODST Staff Code of Conduct.
- ODST Disciplinary Policy,
- ODST IT Acceptable Use Policy,
- Safer Working Practices,
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Appendix 1 Social Media Guidance for Staff

Remember that anything you post 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.

- Do not add pupils as friends or contacts in your social media accounts.
- Follow this social media policy,
- Always maintain professional boundaries. Do not engage in discussion with pupils online unless through official school accounts,
- Think about the potential risks: professional boundaries of adding parents to your private social media accounts (refer to policy),
- Consider using an alternative name on sites such as Facebook to make it harder for pupils to find you. For example, some members use their partner's surname online but their own surname in school. For example, Miss Hayley Jane Pearce may choose to use Hayley Jane,
- Never post anything that is offensive or aggressive, even if you are angry or upset. It can easily be taken out of context,
- 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 students may not be perceived as such by either the subject(s) of the humour or the employer. The guiding rule is: if in doubt, don't post it,
- Make sure you regularly check and refresh your site page to ensure it is free of any inappropriate comments and/or images,
- If you are tagged in something on a social media platform that you consider inappropriate, use the remove tag feature to 'untag' yourself,
- 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 on all sites to ensure it is appropriate as it may be accessed by others such as colleagues, pupils, 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,
- Ensure that any comments and/or images could not be deemed defamatory or in breach of copyright legislation,
- Never post any information and especially not photographs which can be used to identify a pupil,
- Do not use social media in any way to attack or abuse colleagues or air any other internal grievances,
- Do not post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing, or discriminatory content,
- Do not engage in any conduct (using personal insults, obscenities) which would not be acceptable in the workplace. As a member of staff who works in education, you are held to a higher standard of behaviour, and this includes outside of the workplace. Please remember this at all times,
- Do not use social media to 'whistleblow' – raise concerns through the proper channels which would entitle you to legal protection (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). The ODST Whistleblowing Policy can be accessed by contacting odst.hr@oxford.anglican.org and via Governor Hub.