



# Social Media Policy

## Cherry Trees

Review date: Spring Term 2021

Next Review: Spring Term 2022

## **1. Purpose**

As a school, we recognise how social media has evolved and become a tool that people use to communicate, to share information and to make contributions online. Cherry Trees School has implemented this Social Media Policy to help all employees understand and adhere to responsible social media practices.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to the use of social media for personal and organisational purposes, during the working day or otherwise and applies to social media accessed on school equipment or personal devices.

The standards set out in the policy are designed to protect employees and the reputation of the school and apply to all employees including the Executive Headteacher and Governors.

### **Definition of Social Media**

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any type of online media that allows individuals to communicate instantly with each other or to share information including photographs, comments, opinions and location with others. This includes Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Whatsapp and SnapChat. This list is not exhaustive and is intended to illustrate the types of social media covered by this policy. Employees should be aware that all types of social media are covered by this policy including those that are created in the future.

For the purposes of this policy, posts and communications refer to the creation of such content, commenting on, referencing it or forwarding it to a wider audience.

## **3. Responsibilities**

Any reference to 'the organisation' refers to Cherry Trees School. The appropriate level of authority will be determined according to the organisation's decision-making structure.

## **4. Accountabilities**

The Executive Headteacher is accountable for ensuring that managers are appropriately trained to implement this procedure and that a sufficient level of investigation is carried out prior to any formal disciplinary action being taken.

Managers investigating disciplinary matters against staff must establish the facts of the matter and present all information obtained during the investigation in a fair and unbiased way.

All colleagues have a responsibility to be aware of and conduct themselves in line with the organisation's policies, the law and maintain acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour. Where relevant, colleagues must adhere to codes of practice or standards associated with their profession, trade or occupation.

All colleagues have a responsibility to safeguard the reputation of the organisation. As such, if a colleague sees any social media posts, messages or activity which has the potential to damage the reputation of the organisation or is directed at an individual connected with the organisation, they should report it to Executive Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

## 5. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will apply:

**Safeguarding** - The safeguarding of young people is a priority for our organisation. All colleagues must set a good example for young people by using social media and IT responsibly. All colleagues must comply with the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable young adults as well as comply with the relevant statutory guidance on safeguarding.

**Fair and Proportionate** – The organisation will act fairly and proportionately in its application of this policy taking account of an individual's human right to privacy.

**Consistent and Objective** – All managers have a duty to ensure that they and all of the colleagues they are responsible for are aware of, and comply with, the organisation's policies and procedures. Managers are also responsible for making sure that colleagues know when they are not achieving or maintaining the expected standards of conduct or behaviour.

**Acceptable Behaviour and Conduct** - The employer expects all colleagues to meet high standards of behaviour and conduct, including the relevant code of conduct. Colleagues should note the standards identified in Appendix A of this policy.

## 6. Link with Other Policies and Procedures

**Grievance Policy** – Colleagues may raise a grievance regarding the organisation's application of this policy which will be addressed in accordance with the organisation's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

**Disciplinary Policy** – This policy sets out standards in relation to the use of social media at work and in a colleague's personal life. Any breach of this policy will be considered to be a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, in which a range of sanctions are available to the employer from addressing the matter informally to summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

**ICT Policy** - This policy should be read in conjunction with the organisation's other policies regarding information technology use including the Staff Code of Conduct.

**Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct** – Colleagues must ensure their actions regarding social media are consistent with the safeguarding of young people and adhere to the organisation's Code of Conduct.

**Equal Opportunities/Bullying and Harassment Policy** – The organisation does not tolerate bullying or harassment and the use of social media for such purposes will be considered a very serious matter and dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Policy. Colleagues are not permitted to make any offensive, derogatory or negative comments about any individual's characteristics whether protected or not.

**Data Protection Policy** – Colleagues are expected to maintain the privacy and security of personal information about another individual and/or the organisation. The disclosure of personal data (including special category data), commercially sensitive information or intellectual property will be considered a very serious matter and dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Policy.

## 6. Standards of use of Social Media

As an employee of the organisation, you are an ambassador for the school and your behaviour in any situation, including online, should reflect positively on the school. Therefore, the following standards should be adhered to at all times when using social media either in a work capacity or in your personal life:

1. When posting or communicating on social media, you are doing so on your own behalf and not as a representative of the organisation, unless specifically requested to do so by the Executive Headteacher for school business.
2. All posts or communications must be made under your own name.
3. You must not identify yourself as an employee of Cherry Trees School on social media.
4. If you include your occupation in your online profile, any posts or communications associated with your profession must include a disclaimer such as "the opinion expressed here is entirely my own and does not necessarily reflect the views of my employer".
5. You must not under any circumstances disclose confidential or personal information about Cherry Trees School, its business or any of its employees, governors or other professionals working with the school or discuss any individual at or associated with another school.
6. You must not under any circumstances disclose any confidential or personal information about any of the pupils at Cherry Trees School or their parents, carers or other professional working with them and their families.
7. All posts or communications must not constitute defamation, discrimination, bullying or harassment towards any individual or group. This includes social media content that is of a sexual, violent or inappropriate nature (in the context of a school environment). The publication of this type of information will be taken very seriously by the school and be considered to constitute gross misconduct. Legal action may be brought against the individual responsible for the publication of such information.

### **Use of Social Media at Work**

The school understands that employees may wish to use their own equipment to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees must limit their use of social media on their own equipment to break or lunch time when they are not on duty and this must be done out of sight of any pupil / in the staff room.

### **8. Excessive use of Social Media at Work**

Employees are not permitted to spend an excessive amount of time using social media while they are at work, whether it be on school equipment or personal devices of any kind. Any use of social media at work (unless in the course of employment) must not interfere with a

colleague's duties and employment responsibilities. This is likely to have a detrimental impact on the employee's productivity and the outcomes for young people.

## **9. Monitoring use of Social Media**

The school reserves the right to legitimately and proportionately monitor employees' internet, email and social media usage on school computers or mobile devices. This monitoring may include but is not limited to monitoring, accessing, reviewing and printing of any social media material. This information may be disclosed to a third party for the purposes of obtaining advice on further action.

Valid reasons for monitoring usage may include suspicions that the employee has:

- been using social media websites when he/she should be working;
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy;
- ensure the security and integrity of IT systems; or
- to safeguard the privacy and security of the personal data the organisation is responsible for.

The contents of the school's IT and Communication Systems are the property of the organisation. Colleagues should have no expectation of privacy in any social media post or message transmitted from or to, received, stored or recorded on the organisation's IT and communications systems. Therefore, colleagues are advised not to use the organisation's IT equipment for any personal matter they wish to keep private or confidential from their employer.

## **10. Social Media Use on behalf of the Organisation**

If you are required to create and maintain social media accounts for the organisation in the course of your employment, those accounts, content and contacts remain the property of the organisation. You will be required to provide the employer with full access to the accounts including at any time upon request and when you leave the organisation's employment.

Employees must ensure they adopt appropriate safeguards for organisational social media purposes which include:

- obtaining permission from a manager before embarking on a public campaign using social media; and
- getting a senior management colleague to check the content before it is published.

Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media and must not be considered misuse as identified in Appendix A of this policy.

## **11. Social Media in your Personal Life**

Cherry Trees School accepts that its employees will use social media in their personal life. Employees must be aware that their posts and communications can damage the reputation of the school if they are recognised as being an employee. Employees should adhere to the standards set out in Appendix A of this policy at all times when using social media in their personal life.

The school reserves the right to legitimately and proportionately monitor and review the use and content of personal social media, if it has been found that there has been proven misconduct in this regard or if it has been brought to the attention of the school that potential misconduct is taking place. If any posts or communications, whether initiated, responded to or distributed by the employee, are considered to be in breach of the standards set out in this policy, disciplinary action will be considered.

## **12. Disciplinary action over Social Media use**

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

An employee who makes a defamatory statement that is published on the internet or who harasses an individual, may be legally liable for any damage to the reputation of the individual or organisation concerned.

## **13. Data Protection**

The organisation will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection law. Personal data will be processed by the organisation in accordance with the principles of that legislation, as necessary for the performance of the employee's contract of employment and/or the conduct of the organisation's business. The organisation will ensure that personal information about an employee is securely retained in line with GDPR.

## **Appendix A – Examples of Social Media misuse (this list is not exhaustive)**

Any post or communication that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- Bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:
  - Criticising or arguing with colleagues, governors, parents or other professionals working within the school or in another school;
  - Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
  - Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
  
- Breach confidentiality, for example by:
  - Revealing information about the business of the school or its future plans or any information owned by the organisation;
  - Giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague, pupil, governor or anyone in the school community) or organisation (such as another school); or
  - Discussing the organisation's internal workings (such as current business or activities) or its future plans that have not been communicated to the public).
  
- Breach copyright, for example by:
  - Using someone else's images or written content without permission; or
  - Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
  
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
  - Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
  - Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the organisation or anyone in the school community); or
  - Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).

The posting of photographs and videos on personal social media accounts, which depict the school, a pupil or group of pupils, any colleague/s or member of the school community in the course of school business including associated school activities e.g. concerts, school trips etc is specifically prohibited.