QEGSMAT
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Use of Social Media by Staff Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction

QEGSMAT (the Trust) recognise the benefits of social media, but also the potential risk it brings, to its school and to individuals. For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as websites and applications (apps) that allow people to create or share content and/or participate in social networking. Examples include, amongst others Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, WordPress, Tumblr, Ask.fm, WhatsApp, Messenger. This policy also refers to online gaming platforms and MMORPG ('massively multiplayer online role-playing games') e.g. World of Warcraft.

For the purpose of this policy 'staff' refers to employees, Trustees, Governors and volunteers.

We realise that a growing number of educationalists and education groups use discussion groups, online chat forums and bulletin boards to share good practice and disseminate information and resources. The use of online discussion groups and bulletin boards relating to professional practice and continuing professional development is encouraged, although staff are reminded that they are representing the Trust, and appropriate professional standards should apply to all postings and messages.

2. Scope and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all use of social media, by all staff, Trustees, Governors and volunteers, including personal use, work-related use, during working hours or out of hours, onsite or offsite, through the school's internet network or otherwise, on school owned or personal devices, on official school social media accounts/platforms or personal accounts/platforms.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Bring Your Own Device Policy and the Acceptable Use of IT Policy.

All staff are expected to comply with this policy. All leaders are responsible for ensuring their team read, understand, and comply with this procedure.

In order to be described as an official 'school platform' or 'school account':

- Master privileges and access permissions are held by the school.
- The school must have editorial oversight of all content.
- The number of staff members with administrative rights should be limited to those necessary.

'Quasi school' social media, for example a X (formerly known as Twitter) account such as 'Miss Stuart History @ Secondary School' are not official school platforms unless the above conditions are met. The Trust will not accept liability for content and postings on accounts containing any of its school names which have not been authorised and do not meet the official 'school platform' criteria. Personal information and pictures should not be posted without appropriate consent and oversight. Authorised accounts will remain the property of the Trust and may be deleted at any time.

The Trust Data Protection Officer (DPO) can provide assistance and further guidance on the use of social media with regards to data protection, details are below:

DPO:	GDPR for Schools, Derbyshire County Council
DPO Email:	dpforschools@derbyshire.gov.uk
DPO Phone:	01629 532888
DPO Address:	County Hall, Smedley Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG

A breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action.

If there are concerns that comments or posts may potentially be defamatory or libellous, the Trust may seek legal advice.

3. Recognised School Channels

Business use of social media

The Trust community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department X (formerly known as Twitter) account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to their Leadership Team which covers the following points:-

- The aim of the account.
- The intended audience.
- How the account will be promoted.
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named).
- Will the account be open or private/closed.

Following consideration by the Leadership Team an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Leadership Team must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the Trust, including volunteers or parents.

Anyone whose duties require them to speak on behalf of the school in a social media environment must seek approval for such communication from the Headteacher, who may require them to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to their activities.

Likewise, if a member of staff is contacted for comments about the school for publication anywhere on or offline, including in any social media outlet, they should direct the enquiry to the Headteacher and not respond without written approval.

A list of social media channels used by the school are detailed in Appendix 1 (schools to complete and retain).

Guidelines for the use of social media include but are not limited to:

- The official use of social media sites is limited to activities with educational or community engagement objectives.
- The official use of social media as a communication tool has been formally risk assessed and approved by the Headteacher.
- Account information and login details must be held centrally in the school.
- Official social media sites have appropriate privacy settings, are suitably protected and, where possible, linked to from the Trust/school website.

- Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including anti-bullying, data protection, confidentiality, and child protection.
- Multi-factor authentication (a method of account security that ensures only legitimate users can access accounts and applications), will be enabled wherever possible.
- Any official social media activity involving pupils/students will be moderated (***if appropriate***).
- Written permission of parents/carers will be sought for posts involving names/images of children.
- Official social media use will be used in conjunction with other methods of communication, so as to reach all members of the community, including those who do not/cannot utilise social media.

4. Our Social Media Standards

QEGSMAT will ensure online conduct, whether on behalf of the Trust or posted on a personal account by a staff member, does not impact adversely on the reputation and integrity of the setting.

As part of our obligations under Keeping Children Safe in Education we may check the online presence including social media searches of our staff, Trustees, Governors and volunteers. The outcomes of these checks will be recorded.

Any use of social media that could impact on the Trust should meet these standards:

- Respect others, they may be affected directly or indirectly by your actions online.
- Be honest about who you are, and what you know.
- Be sensitive to others and to your position within the school.
- Protect privacy and respect the confidentiality of others.
- Maintain professional standards.
- If in doubt, don't post!

5. Our Social Media Rules

These rules should be followed, to ensure we meet the required standards:

i. Be kind:

- Use common courtesy.
- Consider the potential effect on others of your words or content you post.
- Always be responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.

ii. Be honest:

- Be transparent about your role, especially when representing the Trust in an official capacity.
- Only post about things you know to be true and only if it is appropriate to share them.
- Do not post someone else's images or content without prior permission, or with appropriate acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce.

iii. Be sensitive:

- Do not enter into discussions with parents or colleagues via social media forums.
- Do not post or share images, memes (or similar) or links that are inappropriate or have inappropriate content.
- Do not post anything that could be considered; discriminatory, gossip, lies, offensive or threatening comments, comments/images that deliberately, negligently, or recklessly mock, tease, humiliate or harass an individual.
- Be especially careful when posting about potentially inflammatory subjects.

- Do not give advice or information that you know to be contrary to the Trust's policies or interests.
- Do not reveal any sensitive information about the Trust or about any plans that are not yet public.
- In the event of an incident affecting the Trust or any members of its community only official communication channels and accounts should be used for comments or to share news or updates.
- Be aware of the potential risks of communicating with current and ex-pupils/students in ways which may be considered as inappropriate, particularly if it could be shown that the adult-pupil/student relationship of trust had been breached.
- Only use official Trust platforms to post information, celebration, news, and photographs. Ensure all posts are in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any inappropriate contact from pupils/students to the school Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations from escalating.
- Staff are reminded that, as a safeguarding issue, they should always be careful about who they are 'talking to'. It is very easy to hide an identity in an on-line conversation.

iv. Protect privacy and respect confidentiality:

- Do not breach confidentiality – do not share anything private about anyone else.
- Don't share anything about yourself that you wouldn't want the rest of the Trust community to see.
- Be aware that what you post could divulge information such as your home address.
- Always follow the Data Protection Policy and ensure that you have secured the appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel.
- Apply appropriate security and privacy settings to your social media accounts and the devices you use to access them.
- Make yourself familiar with privacy settings – these change often and with little or no warning; users with access to the school account will ensure that privacy settings are routinely updated.
- Be aware of 'phishing' attempts through social media, where scammers may try to obtain information about you or other people, including passwords or financial information.

v. Maintain professional standards

- Do not 'befriend' or initiate engagement online with pupils/students or their families, (including former pupils/students who have recently left the school) unless you are the parent of the child or a close family member.
- If you do wish to communicate with or are contacted by a former pupil/student who has recently left the school, via social media, contact the Headteacher before engaging.
- Always be professional and remember you are representing the Trust. The same standards of conduct should be followed online as well as offline.
- Do not post or share offensive, discriminatory, or illegal content, or anything that would bring the Trust into disrepute.
- Ensure a clear distinction between school and personal life when making comments and posts.

vi. If in doubt, don't post!

- Once you've posted something to the internet it cannot be taken back.
- Even if you delete content it may already have been copied or saved by another user and could be shared more widely.
- Even if you have posted in a closed or private group other members may not respect the rules or your confidentiality.

6. Access to Social Media at Work, for Personal Use

Personal use of the internet including access to social media is only permitted in your own time (e.g. before or after work or during your lunchtime) and must not be left running "in the background", whilst

at work. Staff are advised to refer to the Trust's Bring Your Own Device and Acceptable Use of IT policies for further guidance.

7. Online Safety Concerns

All staff members will be made aware of the reporting procedure for online safety concerns, including breaches of filtering, youth produced sexual imagery ('sexting', 'nudes'), cyberbullying, illegal content, and radicalisation. Refer to Keeping Children Safe in Education – in particular, but not exclusively paragraphs 133, 135-148 Online Safety.

8. Inappropriate References to the Trust, School or Staff

Members of staff who find that 'friends' have posted inappropriate material, relating to themselves on a social media site should ask them to remove it. If necessary, users can also report comments and posts to the relevant site. Staff should advise the Headteacher if there are likely repercussions for the setting.

Where staff are the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites, site reporting functions should be used. Where possible screen captures ('screen grabs') or photos of any post, page or thread which may be considered harmful, threatening or abusive should be taken.

Where staff find inappropriate references to the Trust, school, staff or pupils/students posted by parents/carers, colleagues, pupils/students, or other members of the community, this should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible. The Headteacher will take the appropriate course of action, which may include contacting the Human Resources team, seeking legal advice or contacting the police. Staff must not attempt to deal with the situation personally.

9. Complaints

There may be times where individuals will bypass the Trust's complaints procedure and use social media to criticise Trust decisions or policy, and, in some cases, make malicious comments about staff, Trustees or Governors.

Whilst people have a right to freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act 1998, their opinions should not cause harm or distress. Any complaint, dispute or grievance posted on any social media channels which names staff members, pupils/students, Trustees, Governors, or volunteers should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Concerns and complaints relating to a colleague or pupil/student's social media activity should be directed to Headteacher as appropriate.

10. Relevant Legislation

In applying this policy, the Trust will adhere to its rights, responsibilities, and duties in accordance with UK law. The following legislation may be pertinent:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 etc.)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Malicious Communications Act 1988: Section 1
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- Communications Act 2003: Section 127
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013.
- Online Safety Act 2023.

Appendix 1

To be completed by the individual school and held in the school office.

<School/Academy *name*> official social media channels are:

List details e.g. X (formerly known as Twitter) link; YouTube channel link – delete the examples once complete.

Platform	**Account/Page name**	**Master administration role**	**Approved users (posting)**	**Date**	
				Opened	Closed
e.g. X (formerly known as Twitter)	History@SSchool	Business Manager	HoD (Humanities)	16/5/18	
e.g. Facebook	Marehay Primary	Headteacher	DHT, SBO	16/1/23	