

Social Media (Staff) Policy

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| Policy Code: | HR22 |
| Policy Start Date: | September 2020 |
| Policy Review Date: | September 2023 |

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR3 Grievance Policy
- HR5 Acceptable Use Policy
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy
- Trust Code of Conduct

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits. This policy is in place to minimise the risk to The Trust through use of social media, while recognising any benefits its use may present.
- 1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Training, Priory Apprenticeships, Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance SCITT.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 The Trust is committed to leading a mentally healthy organisation, which includes a commitment to and promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Therefore, all Trust policies and procedures ensure this commitment is incorporated in order to support all staff and students. Members of staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers, and students are encouraged to speak to any member of staff, if they feel any part of this policy would affect their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Any such comments should be passed to the Trust's HR department (via FederationHR@prioryacademies.co.uk) for appropriate consideration at the next available point in the policy review cycle.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Human Resources Director.
- 2.2 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 Aims

- 3.1 To ensure that all stakeholders who utilise social media technology for the professional purposes described below, including staff and students, do so in a safe and responsible manner.

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- 3.2 To ensure all staff, students, trustees, governors and volunteers follow the guidelines and recommended practices for professional social media communication between staff, as well as social media communication between staff and students.
- 3.3 To ensure The Trust recognises the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era, the lines between professional and personal endeavours are sometimes blurred. All staff, trustees and governors should also follow the guidelines and recommended practices for use of personal social media by staff.

4 Definition of Social Media

- 4.1 Social media are defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Snap chat and WhatsApp.

Professional social media is a work-related social media activity that is either school-based (e.g., a Facebook page for an Academy or a teacher establishing a blog for their class), or non-school-based (e.g. a twitter account to promote a Trust service).

Personal social media use is a non-work-related social media activity (e.g. a member of staff establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for their own personal use).

5 Maintaining Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts

- 5.1 Staff who decide to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate professional and personal e-mail addresses. As such, staff should not use their personal e-mail address for professional social media activities; rather, they should use their professional e-mail address that is completely separate from any personal social media they maintain.

6 Trust Expectations Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

- 6.1 Professional social media sites that are Academy-based should be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational or extra-curricular programme matters.
- 6.2 Staff should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in

professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behaviour is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behaviour is also inappropriate on the professional social media site. Staff should refer to the Trust's Code of Conduct if unsure of the Trust's expectations.

- 6.3 Staff should exercise caution, sound judgment and common sense when using professional social media sites.
- 6.4 When establishing professional social media sites, staff should consider the intended audience for the site. Staff must also consider the level of privacy assigned to the site; specifically whether the site should be a private network (e.g. it is limited to a particular class or particular class within a school) or a public network (e.g. anyone within the school, a larger group). It is recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.
- 6.5 Staff should obtain Academy SLT approval by using a registration form before setting up a professional social media presence. These forms can be obtained from the Federation's Strategic ICT Co-ordinator.
- 6.6 A list should be maintained of all professional social media accounts within the Academy. A member of staff setting up a professional social media account will be asked to share their login details with a nominated member of SLT.
- 6.7 Professional social media sites should include language identifying the sites as professional social media sites to differentiate them from personal sites.
- 6.8 Staff should use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites with the objective that professional social media communications only reach the intended audience. However, staff must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change an individual's current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, each member of staff has a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilised.
- 6.9 Professional social media communication must remain legal. Confidential information must not be disclosed and prohibitions must be placed on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language.

If images of students are to be posted online, there must be a media consent form on file at the Academy for each child featured. This form can be obtained from the data team at each site. It is not recommended that staff post photos of colleagues on professional social media sites without prior permission of the member of staff in the photo.

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- 6.10 Staff are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback regarding their work-related professional social media sites. The monitoring responsibilities include reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis. If managers discover questionable communications or behaviour on professional social media sites, they are required to contact a member of the SLT for assistance. If members of staff decide to create a professional social media site and they are notified of questionable communications or behaviour on their site, they may remove the material and/or contact SLT.
- 6.11 If students post anything on a member of staff's professional social media site which causes concern or they disclose abuse then the member of staff must follow their setting's safeguarding procedures and report their concerns immediately.
- 6.12 If private messaging is a facility provided by the member of staff's professional social media site they must not use this function to communicate with students. If possible this function should be switched off.

7 Personal Social Media Use

- 7.1 In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with students, staff should not communicate with or have any direct connection with students who are currently enrolled in any of The Trust's Academies on personal social media sites. Staff communication with students and/or their parents/carers may be permitted in the following circumstances:
- (a) communication with parents or carers of students, where the communication does not relate to any student enrolled on any of the Trust's Academies;
 - (b) if an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case, the member of staff should notify SLT of the communication as soon as possible; and
 - (c) if the student is an existing friend or familial relation of the member of staff, subject to the approval of the SLT, such approval at the absolute discretion of the SLT or the Trust.

8 Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

- 8.1 Staff should exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

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- (a) As a recommended practice, staff are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, staff must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change an individual's current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, staff are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilised.
 - (b) It is not recommended that staff "tag" photos of their colleagues, volunteers, contractors or vendors without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.
 - (c) Staff are prohibited from posting or disclosing personally identifiable student information or confidential information via personal social media sites.
 - (d) Staff should not use any of the Academies' or Trust logos or make representations that their personal social media sites speak in an official capacity. Staff should make it clear in personal social media postings, or in their personal profiles, that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal email address. Personal social media should not be linked to a member of staff's professional email address.
 - (e) If staff see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on The Trust, they should contact their Academy SLT.
 - (f) Staff should not use personal social media to participate in any form of cyberbullying (bullying, harassment or victimisation) of colleagues, volunteers, contractors or vendors, Any reported cases of cyberbullying will be investigated through the Trust's HR12 Disciplinary policy.

9 Applicability of Policies and Other Laws

- 9.1 This policy provides guidance intended to supplement, not supersede, existing child protection procedures and laws, the Acceptable Use, Code of Conduct and Data Protection Policies.

10 Social Media Misuse

- 10.1 Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the Trust's investigation which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

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- 10.2 Staff may be required to remove any social media that the Trust considers to be a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.
- 10.3 Staff must avoid making any social media communications that could damage The Trust's business interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- 10.4 Staff must not use social media to defame or disparage the Trust, its staff or any third party, to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties, to make false or misleading statements, or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- 10.5 Staff must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as the Trust's performance, or do anything to jeopardise the Trust's confidential information or intellectual property unless authorised to do so and only on professional social media.
- 10.6 Staff must not post any communications which would amount to a breach of any of the Trust policies or will bring the Trust into disrepute.

11 Monitoring

- 11.1 To ensure that Trust policies are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes, the Trust reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using Trust IT resources and communications systems. This includes, but is not limited, to social media postings and activities. Staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems.

12 Recruitment

- 12.1 The Trust may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. When this occurs, The Trust will act in accordance with its Data Protection and Equal Opportunities obligations.

13 Policy Change

- 13.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

Social Media (Staff) Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Pay, Performance and HR Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.

Key Terms

Blogs - Short for 'web-logs', these are sites that can function as on-going journals with multiple entries. Typically, entries are categorized with 'tags' (content labels or captions) for easy searching. Most blogs allow for reader comments. Examples: Blogger, Wordpress, TypePad.

Micro-Blogs - These blogs allow for shorter content posts, typically with a limited set of typed characters allowed. Micro-blogs can be used for status updates and to quickly communicate information to 'friends' or 'followers.' Examples: Twitter, Tumblr.

Networking - These sites allow people to connect with each other around common interests, pursuits and other categories. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Ning, StumbleUpon

Photo/Video - These sites allow people to share videos, images, slideshows, and other media. Often these sites allow viewers to comment and share posted content. Examples: YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr.