



Social Media Policy

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Date: 23/09/2024

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The Sovereign Trust is a Multi Academy Trust registered in England No. 09666511. Registered Office: Manor Academy Sale, Manor Avenue, Sale M33 5JX



Document Control

Title	Social Media Policy
Supersedes	4.0
Owner	CEO
Circulation/Distribution	All
Review Period	Annually

The Sovereign Trust is the owner of this document and is responsible for ensuring that this policy document is reviewed in line with Trust's policy review schedule.

A current version of this document is available to all interested parties [The Sovereign Trust Website](#)

Signature: 

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Version History

Next Review Date		23/09/2025		
Version	Date	Amendments	Author	Status
1.0	06/05/2018	Initial Issue	CEO	Approved
2.0	19/08/2021	Added additional social media platforms, keeping children safe in education, additional consents and SARs	CEO	Approved
3.0	03/08/2022	Formatting Amendments	CEO	Approved
4.0	28/11/2023	Formatting Amendments	CEO	Approved
5.0	23/09/2024	Included a definition of what social media is, what improper use of social media could result in and the use of social media during recruitment.	CEO	Approved

Introduction

This policy applies to all Trust staff regardless of their employment status. It is to be read in conjunction with the Trust's Electronic Communications Policy. This policy does not form part of the terms and conditions of the employee's employment with the Trust and is not intended to have a contractual effect. However, it does set out the Trust's current practices and required standards of conduct, and all staff are required to comply with its contents. Breach of the provisions of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary offence, which may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal in accordance with the Trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

This Policy may be amended from time to time, and staff will be notified of any changes no later than one month from the date those changes are intended to take effect.

Purpose of This Policy

The Sovereign Trust ("Trust") recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and Wikipedia. However, staff use of social media can pose risks to the Trust's confidential and proprietary information and its reputation, and it can jeopardise our compliance with our legal obligations.

To minimise these risks, avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate work-related purposes, all School staff are required to comply with the provisions in this policy.

Social media platforms allow us to build connections and to share ideas and content more broadly and quickly, and the School supports their use. However, improper use of social media may give rise to a breach of your contract and/or the school's policies, and/or the following:

- Bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination;
- Defamation (i.e., damaging the good reputation of another person or organisation);
- Contempt of court (i.e., interfering with the administration of justice e.g., by revealing someone's identity that had been protected by the courts);
- Breach of data protection laws;
- Misuse of confidential information belonging to the school or to its students/staff/parents/suppliers; and
- Damage to reputation of the user or school or to its students/staff/parents/suppliers.

Who is Covered by This Policy?

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within the Trust, including senior managers, officers, governors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **Staff** in this policy).

Third parties who have access to our electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

Scope and Purpose of This Policy

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and all other social networking sites and all other internet postings, including blogs.

It applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours and regardless of whether the Trust's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Personnel Responsible for Implementing This Policy

The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility to the Executive Headteachers, Head of Schools and CEO.

The CEO, in liaison with the Chief Information Officer and Chief HR Officer, are also responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks.

All senior Trust Staff have specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All Trust Staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Executive Headteacher, Head of School, and CEO in the first instance. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed by email to the Chief Information Officer.

Compliance with Related Policies and Agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post breaches any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- a) Breach our electronic information and communications systems policy;
- b) Breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- c) Breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;
- d) Breach our Disciplinary Rules;
- e) Defame or disparage the Trust, its Staff, its pupils or parents, its affiliates, partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders;
- f) Harass or bully other Staff in any way or breach our Anti-harassment and bullying policy;
- g) Unlawfully discriminate against other Staff or third parties or breach our Equal Opportunities policy;
- h) Breach our Data Protection policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online);
- i) Breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements); and
- j) Breach our obligations to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

Staff who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Personal Use of Social Media

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems.

Staff should not use a work email address to sign up for social media, and their personal social media pages should not mention their employment with the Trust (excluding LinkedIn, where prior permission is sought from the HR department).

Staff must not take photos or posts from social media that belong to the Trust for their own personal use.

Monitoring

The contents of our IT resources and communications systems are the Trust's property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems.

The Trust reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, Staff members' activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. By your acknowledgement of this policy, you consent to such monitoring of this policy and your use of such resources

and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems, as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

The Trust may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

All Staff are advised not to use our IT resources and communications systems for any matter that he or she wishes to be kept private or confidential from the Trust.

Educational and Extra-Curricular Use of Social Media

If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the Trust in a social media environment, you must follow the protocol outlined below.

The Headteacher may require you to undergo training before you use social media on behalf of the Trust and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the Trust for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, you must direct the inquiry to the Headteacher and must not respond without advanced written approval.

As part of this role, you will be required to ensure individuals have given prior consent before posting their personal information. You will also need to monitor the messages/posts coming through. Subject Access Requests (SARs) can be made via social media platforms.

Recruitment

The Trust may use internet searches to perform pre-employment checks on candidates in the course of recruitment. This is after the shortlisting and interview stage in order to make a final decision on where to recruit, including criminal record information, references, and information regarding qualifications. Where the Trust does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

Responsible Use of Social Media

Photographs for use with social media:

Any photos for social media posts may only be taken using Trust cameras/devices or devices that have been approved in advance by the Chief Information Officer. Where any device is used that does not belong to the Trust,

all photos must be deleted immediately from the device, once the photos have been uploaded to a device belonging to the Trust.

Staff protocol for use of social media:

Where any post is going to be made on the Trust's own social media, the following steps must be taken:

1. Ensure that specific permission from the child's parent/carer has been sought before the information is used on social media (via [Parent/Social Media Agreement]). Note: A parent/carer may have provided permission for one social media platform but not another. Staff should ensure that the appropriate permission is specific.
2. Ensure that there is no identifying information relating to a child/children in the post—for example, any certificates in photos are blank or without names, or the child's name cannot be seen on the piece of work. The Trust should seek additional consent to include any names when posting on social media.
3. The post must be a positive and relevant post relating to the children, the good work of staff, the Trust or any achievements.
4. Social Media can also be used to issue updates or reminders to parents/guardians. The Executive Headteacher/ Head of Schools will have overall responsibility for this. Should you wish for any reminders to be issued, you should contact the Executive Headteacher/Head of School by email to ensure that any post can be issued.
5. The proposed post must be presented to the Executive Headteacher/Head of School for confirmation that the post can 'go live' before it is posted on any social media site.
6. Authorised users will post the information, but all staff have a responsibility to ensure that the Social Media Policy has been adhered to.
7. Personal information shared/published on social media will be required to be disclosed under a subject access request.

Protecting our business reputation:

Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

- i. The Trust;
- ii. Current, past or prospective Staff as defined in this policy
- iii. Current, past or prospective pupils
- iv. Parents, carers or families of (iii)
- v. The Trust's suppliers and services providers; and
- vi. Other affiliates and stakeholders.
- vii. Current, past or prospective governors

Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's reputation, even indirectly.

If Staff are using social media, they should make it clear in any social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal rather than Trust e-mail address when communicating via social media.

Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate on social media. Staff should be mindful that what they publish might be available to be read by the masses (including the Trust itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Staff should keep this in mind before they post content.

If Staff discloses directly or indirectly their affiliation to the Trust as a member of Staff, whether past, current or prospective, they must also state that their views do not represent those of the Trust.

Staff must ensure that their profile and any content posted are consistent with the professional image they are required to present to colleagues, pupils and parents.

Staff must avoid posting comments about confidential or sensitive trust-related topics. Even if Staff make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of the Trust, such comments could still damage the Trust's reputation and incur potential liability.

If a member of staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from communicating until they have discussed it with their line manager or Executive Headteacher/Head of Schools.

If a member of Staff sees content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust, including its Staff, pupils, parents, service providers, stakeholders or governors, they are required to report this in the first instance to the Headteacher without unreasonable delay. All staff are responsible for protecting the Trust's reputation.

Respecting intellectual property and confidential information:

Staff should not do anything to jeopardise the Trust's confidential information and intellectual property through the use of social media.

In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing on the intellectual property of other trusts, organisations, companies, and individuals, which can create liability for the Trust as well as the individual author.

Staff must not use the Trust's logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without express prior written permission from the Headteacher.

To protect yourself and the Trust against liability for copyright infringement, the Staff member should, where appropriate, reference sources of particular information you post or upload and cite them accurately. If you have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, ask the Headteacher in the first instance before making the communication.

Respecting colleagues, pupils, parents, clients, service providers and stakeholders:

Staff must not post anything that their colleagues (past and/or current), pupils (prospective and/or current), parents, service providers, stakeholders or governors may find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

Staff must not post anything relating to colleagues (past and/or current) or pupils, parents (prospective and/or current) service providers, stakeholders or governors without their advanced written permission.

Monitoring and Review of This Policy

The Chief Information Officer, together with the CEO, shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practices. The Board of Directors is responsible for approving any amendments prior to implementation.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that any person who may be involved with administration or investigations carried out under this policy receives regular and appropriate training to assist them with these duties.

If staff have any questions about this policy or suggestions for additions that they would like to be considered for review, they may do so by emailing Chief Information Officer in the first instance.