



Inspiration Innovation Integrity

This policies applies across the LiFE Multi Acadaemy Trust (MAT)

# Social Media Policy



in association Leicestershire Traded services last amended June 2016

Documentation Information			
Reviewed By	Head of School	Responsibility	Directors of the LiFE MAT
Last Reviewed	March 2017	Next Review	March 2019
Review Cycle	Every 2 years or if legislation changes	Ratified by Directors of LiFE MAT	June 2017

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff (*and within this policy will be referenced as employee(s) or Academy or MAT staff*), based in Academy or MATs, Colleges or Academies across the LiFE MAT (*and within this policy will simply be referenced as Academy or MAT(s)*).

This policy also applies to Academy or MAT Governors as detailed below.

## Application of this Policy to Academy Governors or MAT Members or Directors

Whilst some aspects of this Policy are clearly more targeted at Academy staff, many have equal application to governors. For example, the Policy provides guidance for all on what is considered to be inappropriate use of social media/internet sites. All governors/members/directors should ensure that they comply with the spirit of the Policy.

Though governors/members/directors would not be subject to the same disciplinary process as staff, there are still forms of redress available where a governor/member/director behaves in an inappropriate manner. The appropriate procedures would be followed in such cases.

## Purpose

The primary purpose of the Social Media Policy is to clarify how employees should conduct themselves when using all forms of social networking websites and blogs, whether conducted through the Academy or MAT's media, personal media and, in work time or in one's own time.

Employees wanting to create a work-related social media site must discuss this with and obtain the relevant approval from, the Head of School / Executive Head Teacher.

If followed, it will guide employees on how to minimise the risk they may place themselves and pupils in, when they choose to write about their work or matters relating to the Academy or MAT and their personal lives. This in turn will minimise situations where safeguarding concerns could arise, employees' integrity or professional standing could be undermined, or Academy, MAT and / or the Local Authority brought into disrepute and professional relationships with colleagues and pupils compromised.

Additionally, adhering to the policy reduces the risk of employees inadvertently contravening sections of the Data Protection Act or falling foul of any breaches of confidentiality, privacy, libel, defamation, harassment and copyright laws.

This policy is not intended to prevent employees from using social media sites, but to make them aware of the risks they could face, when sharing information about their professional and/or personal life. Employees should be encouraged to report any concerns that they have regarding content placed by employees on social media sites to the Head of School / Executive Head Teacher.

## Social Media Definition

Social media can be defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to

participate in social networking, resulting in a number of different activities.

These activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a profile page on social / business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn or Google+
- Writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person / informational site
- Taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards
- Leaving product or service reviews on business websites or customer review websites
- Taking part in online polls
- Uploading multimedia on networking sites such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Tumblr
- Liking, re-tweeting and commenting on posts of your own, another person or other social media account

## Use of Social Media

As with all personal internet use, employees using social media sites must observe the specific requirements of the Academy or MAT's E-Safety Policy.

Misuse of social media websites can, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against employees and the Academy or MAT. It may also cause embarrassment to the Academy / MAT and other parties connected to the Academy / MAT or bring such parties into disrepute.

Any such action would likely be addressed under the Disciplinary Policy and could result in summary dismissal.

Where evidence of misuse is found, a more detailed investigation in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy may be necessary, involving the examination and disclosure of monitoring records to those nominated to undertake the investigation and any witnesses or leaders involved in the investigation. If necessary such information may be handed to the police.

Prohibited use

- You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage our business interests or reputation, even indirectly;
- You must not use social media to defame or disparage us, our 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;
- You must not express opinions on the Academy's or MAT's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your leader. You may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation;
- You must not post comments about sensitive Academy related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our Academy or MAT confidential information and intellectual property. You must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.

If you become aware of any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this policy then the matter should be reported to the Head of School / Executive Head Teacher.

## Employee Responsibility

- Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites, including likes/re-tweets etc. Employees should assume that everything that is written, is permanent and can be viewed by anyone at any time.
- Employees should assume that everything can be traced back to them personally as well as to their colleagues, the Academy, the MAT and parents.
- To avoid any conflict of interest, employees should ensure that personal social networking sites are set at

private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts. An exception to this may be if the child is the employee's own child, or relative.

- Information must not be posted that would disclose the identity of pupils.
- Employees must ensure content or links to other content does not interfere with their work commitments or be of an inappropriate content.
- Pupils must not be discussed on social media sites.
- Photographs (unless permission of parents has been given) or videos of pupils or their homes must not be posted on social media sites.
- Employees should not post information on sites, e.g. photographs and videos that could bring the Academy or MAT or the Local Authority into disrepute.
- Employees must not represent their own views/opinions as being those of the Academy or MAT or the Local Authority.
- Potentially false or defamatory remarks towards the Academy or MAT, the Local Authority, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, Academy, MAT or Local Authority suppliers and partner organisations should not be posted on social media sites.
- Employees must not either endorse or criticise service providers used by the Academy, the MAT or the Local Authority or develop on-line relationships which create a conflict of interest.
- When posting on social media sites employees must observe the requirements of the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act and must not use any offensive, obscene, derogatory, discriminatory language which may cause embarrassment to Academy or MAT, the Local Authority, employees, pupils, pupils' relatives, Council suppliers and partner organisations.
- Employees must not divulge any information that is confidential to the Academy, the MAT, the Local Authority or a partner organisation.
- Employees must not upload, post, forward or post a link to any pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- Employees must not upload, post, forward or post a link with regards to any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or us); or material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

\* This list is not exhaustive.

## Communication with Students

As the use of technology changes we have to make sure that our policies and practices keep up to date to ensure that staff and students are not placing themselves in vulnerable situations.

The DCSF has produced a booklet entitled '**Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Setting**'

This deals specifically with communication with students using technology. It states:

Communication with children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within professional boundaries and staff should avoid any personal subject matter. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile 'phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, social media videos, web-cams, websites and blogs'.

Adults should be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or behaviour which could be construed as grooming.

Staff should not give their personal contact details to pupils including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers unless the need to do so is agreed with senior leadership. Internal professional g-mail systems should only be used in accordance with Academy policy.



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Staff should, in any communication with pupils, also follow the guidance in section 7 'Propriety and Behaviour'.

This means that adults should:

- Only use equipment provided by Academy to communicate with children.
- Only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any Academy policy.
- Recognise that text messaging pupils is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible.

This means the Academy should:

Ensure that, when it is considered necessary for staff to use equipment to communicate with pupils, this is provided by the Academy.

Adults who come into contact with children through school should only have a professional relationship with them. Whilst we want relationships to be warm and friendly, the purpose of relationships in school is work related. As staff we are in a position of authority. Therefore it is not appropriate for staff or students to be treating each other as friends, it is not appropriate for any adult in school to have contact with students that extends beyond the professional, however innocent and well-intentional that might be. All contact between staff and students must be monitorable by school and parents. Therefore use of social networking sites such as 'Facebook' is not acceptable and staff are advised not to communicate with students in such ways. It is also advised by the LA that this extends to ex-pupils also. Similarly contacting students on their mobile phones, texting or emailing to or from non-school accounts is not acceptable. It is also worthy of note that all information posted on social media or teachers or support staff Facebook pages must not compromise the high standards of professionalism and moral leadership required of our professionalism. This is still the case where colleagues do not have any students or ex-students as friends and have attempted to set their privacy settings to the highest level.

## Disciplinary Action

Employees should be aware that the use of social media sites in a manner contrary to this policy, including if others implicate you in a breach of any of the terms listed above may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases may be treated as gross misconduct, which itself could lead to summary dismissal.

Any instances of "cyber bullying" will initially be addressed under the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure and may result in disciplinary action.

## Social Media Security

Employees should be mindful when placing information on social media sites that this information is visible to a large audience and could identify where they work and with whom, thereby increasing the opportunity for false allegations and threats. In addition it may be possible through social media sites for children or vulnerable adults to be identified, which could have implications for their security.

Furthermore there is the scope for causing offence or unintentionally causing embarrassment, for example if pupils find photographs of their teacher which may cause embarrassment and/or damage to their professional reputation and that of the Academy or MAT. In addition, it may be possible for other social media site users to identify where employees live, which could have implications for individual security.

Therefore, first and foremost consideration should be given to the information posted on social media sites and employees are advised to use appropriately the security settings on such sites in order to assist in limiting the concerns above.

## Monitoring the use of Social Media Websites



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Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the Disciplinary Policy.

The Academy or MAT considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- been using social media websites when he/she should be working; or
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

### Employee Groups / Networks

Employee groups can be created on social media sites such as Facebook. Creators of these groups are responsible for monitoring the content of the site and ensuring that it is appropriate and not in breach of any of the terms in this policy.

Other policy links (This list is not exhaustive):

- Safeguarding / Child Protection
- E-safety
- Safeguarding in Education Induction – Child protection Information Safer Working Practice
- ICT policies
- Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Setting
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)