



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Policy Renewal: July 2027

Reviewed by the SLT MAT Board

“The Trustees of the Southport Learning Trust are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at every opportunity and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment”

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1. Introduction

We recognise the benefits of social media, but it also brings potential risk, to the Trust 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, 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.

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 will apply to all postings and messages.

This policy will be read in conjunction with the Trust's HR advice and guidance. This policy has been provided by our DPO and has been subject to formal negotiation and consultation with recognised Trade Unions and Professional Associations. Agreement and adoption were reached by the Board of Trustees for Southport Learning Trust.

2. Scope and Responsibilities

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

- Master privileges and access permissions are held by the Trust.
- The Trust will have editorial oversight of all content.
- The number of staff members with administrative rights will be limited to those necessary.
- 'Quasi school' social media, for example a Twitter account such as 'Miss Stuart History @ Secondary School' are not official Trust platforms unless the above conditions are met.
- The Trust will not accept liability for content and postings on accounts containing the Trust and associated schools' names which have not been authorised and do not meet the official Trust platform' criteria.
- Accounts used will be listed in the Privacy Notice, and personal information and pictures will not be posted without appropriate consent and oversight.
- Authorised accounts will remain the property of the Trust and may be deleted at any time by the Trust.
- The DPO (Data Protection Officer) will provide assistance and further guidance on the use of social media with regards to data protection.
- 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 Trust Channels

Trust official social media channels are:

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- You Tube
- Instagram

- X formerly known as Twitter but will be deactivated from 1st November 2025.

A full list of platforms, account names, role responsible and approved users are available from the Trust DPO.

We use these social media accounts to celebrate successes and events in the Trust. We seek consent, upon admission, from parents / carers (pupils where age appropriate) to include personal data in the form of pictures, names, quotes, displays etc.

The official use of social media sites is limited to activities with educational or community engagement objectives.

Account information and login details will be held centrally in the Trust.

Multi-factor authentication (a method of account security that ensures only legitimate users can access accounts and applications), will be enabled wherever possible.

Official social media sites have appropriate privacy settings, are suitably protected and, where possible, linked to from our website.

Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality, and child protection.

Any official social media activity involving pupils will be moderated. (if appropriate)

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

We 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 KCSiE we may check (and record the outcomes of these checks) the online presence including social media searches of our staff, Governors, Trustees and volunteers.

Any use of social media that could impact on the Trust will 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 Trust,
- Protect privacy and respect your confidentiality of that of others,
- Maintain professional standards,
- If in doubt, don't post!

5. Our Social Media Rules

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

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.

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.

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 the Trust community only official communications channels and accounts will comment or share news or updates.
- Be aware of the potential risks of communicating with current and ex-pupils in ways which may be considered as inappropriate, particularly if it could be shown that the adult-pupil relationship of trust had been breached.
- Only use official Trust platforms to post Trust information, celebration, news, and photographs. Ensure all posts are in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any inappropriate contact from pupils to a member of Senior Leadership at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations from escalating.
- Staff are reminded that, as a safeguarding issue, they will always be careful about who they are 'talking to'. It is very easy to hide an identity in an on-line conversation.

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 Trust 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.

Maintain professional standards:

- Do not 'befriend' or initiate engagement online with pupils, or families of pupils, (including former pupils who have recently left the Trust, unless you are the parent of the pupil or a close family member.
- If you do wish to communicate with or are contacted by a former pupil who has recently left the Trust, via social media, contact the Headteacher before engaging.
- Always be professional and aware that you are an ambassador for the Trust. Remember you are representing the Trust, and the same standards of conduct will 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/trust/academy [school to delete as appropriate], and personal life when making comments and posts.

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 and during your lunchtime) and will not be left running "in the background", whilst at work. Staff

are advised to refer the school's/trust's/academy's [school to delete as appropriate] 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 2024' – in particular, but not exclusively para 133, 134-151 Online Safety.

8. Inappropriate References to the Trust or Staff

Members of staff who find that 'friends' have posted inappropriate material, relating to themselves on a social media site will ask them to remove it. If necessary, users can also report comments and posts to the site. Staff will 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 will be used. Where possible screen captures ('screen grabs') or photos of any post, page, or thread which may be considered harmful, threatening or abusive will be taken.

Where staff find inappropriate references to the school/trust/academy [school to delete as appropriate], staff or pupils posted by parents, colleagues, pupils, or other members of the community, this will 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 Law enforcement agencies e.g. police. Staff will not attempt to deal with the situation personally.

9. Complaints

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

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, governors and trustees, or volunteers will be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Concerns and complaints relating to colleague or pupil social media activity will be directed to a member of Senior Leadership as appropriate.

10. Relevant Legislation

In applying this policy, the school/trust/academy [school to delete as appropriate] will adhere to its rights, responsibilities, and duties in accordance with UK law. The following legislation may be pertinent:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (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.