



St John's
Educational Trust

Social Media Policy for Employees

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Social Media Policy for Employees

1. PREAMBLE

“Because, as wonderful as the digital age is, getting it wrong online has the potential to get you into some very serious trouble. Every status update, every tweet, every picture, is stored in a digital dossier of your life, and has the potential to bring about life-changing legal, reputational and disciplinary consequences for you.”

Emma Sadleir & Tamsyn de Beer - attorneys and authors who specialise in Social Media

The widespread availability and use of social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter, bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. It is also important, however, to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school, the community, our legal responsibilities and our reputation.

Working in a school, requires us all to maintain professional boundaries in all forms of communication whether or not it involves electronic/digital technology. This is vital to maintain public trust and appropriate professional relationships with students, our colleagues, and our parents

1.1 Note:

- 1.1.1 The following policy is not intended in any way to limit or curtail any personal freedom of opinion or curtail any form of preferred communication regarding Social media. It's simply a call to common sense and an appeal to exercise caution and discretion at all times by virtue of the fact that, as an employee of the Trust Schools, a member of staff is a public figure.
- 1.1.2 This document applies to all Trust Schools Staff, including temporary or part-time staff, volunteers, governors or anyone working within the school and using the school's systems and equipment whether on or off the premises.



2. DEFINITION

- 2.1 In this Policy Document, 'Social Media' means electronic communication software, applications (including those running on mobile devices including texting, SMS, and videos), e-mail and web sites, which enable users to interact, create and exchange information online. Examples include, but are not limited to, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, as well as online discussion forums, blogs, the use of webcams and any other method or means.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 Access to Social Media Sites using School Equipment/Systems:
- 3.1.1 With the exception of communication sites created by or approved by the Trust Schools for internal use, the Schools do not allow access to social networking websites from its computers or systems within the school day unless directly related to teaching and creating teaching resources.
- 3.2 A St John's Trust School Employee is under an obligation to:
- 3.2.1 Maintain proper professional boundaries with students, parents and guardians even when students, parents or guardians initiate electronic interaction.
- 3.2.2 Seriously consider whether a Social Media communication would be appropriate to be said in public or be shown in public or be written for the public to read before it is posted and in entirety in accordance with the guidelines of this Policy. If not, or if there is some doubt, then it should not be posted because one may not be able to control who sees the information and how it is interpreted.
- 3.3 A St John's Trust School Employee is under an obligation NOT TO:
- 3.3.1 Disclose confidential information without express authority of the Schools' Management especially information about students, parents or guardians, staff, voluntary or other workers at the schools nor breach their right to privacy.
- 3.3.2 Engage in posts or activities which are detrimental to maintaining effective working relationships between individuals 'working' at a Trust school and detrimental to the effective working relationships between the Trust Schools.
- 3.3.3 Deliberately expose himself/herself to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material (for example pornography) disseminate 'fake' news,



- identify with, promote or disseminate racist or radical and extremist views especially in matters of Religion and Politics.
- 3.3.4 In line with the above point, avoid any insensitive or offensive Social Media comment that will provoke a negative reaction from any sector of the St John's Community and the Community at large.
 - 3.3.5 Bring the reputation of the schools into disrepute.
 - 3.3.6 Engage in activities which compromise, or might be seen to compromise, the professional standards of teaching or the professional standards applicable to support staff.
 - 3.3.7 Share information with students or parents/guardians in any environment that they would not willingly and appropriately share in a school or school related setting or in the community.
 - 3.3.8 Post comments which incite others to make discriminatory or other professionally unacceptable comments.
 - 3.3.9 Post school logos or similar images that may lead readers of posts etc. to believe the individual is speaking on behalf of the Trust Schools.
 - 3.3.10 Post messages of any form on school WhatsApp groups between 7pm and 6am unless there is an emergency; and may not pass on messages posted on a Staff WhatsApp group to any third party.
- 3.4 More specifically, following on from Point 3.3.10 above, an employee is to:
- 3.4.1 With discretion, limit exchanging private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses or photos of a personal nature with students/ parents or guardians.
 - 3.4.2 Decline student initiated 'friend' requests and not issue 'friend' requests to students nor communicate with students on any social network site or similar website or forum.
 - 3.4.3 Maintain a formal, courteous and professional tone in all communications with students to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained.
 - 3.4.4 Decline to accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the school under the age of 18 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal Social Media account.
- 3.5 A St John's Trust School Employee MUST NOT initiate or be part of:
- 3.5.1 Any form of bullying and harassment via Social Media– such conduct against any colleagues via social media sites is taken as seriously as workplace bullying and harassment.



- 3.5.2 Any incitement of racial, ethnic or religious hatred or similar activities.
 - 3.5.3 The 'grooming' of students or similar activities with an aim to develop an inappropriate relationship(s).
 - 3.5.4 Breaches of confidential information about the Trust Schools or any of its students, staff, governors, volunteers or other individuals associated with the schools.
 - 3.5.5 Publishing anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage a student, employee, governor, volunteer or supplier.
 - 3.5.6 Breaches of copyright or other similar infringements – passing on text, photos etc that may infringe the owner's copyright.
- 3.6 Sanctions:
- 3.6.1 The Governors, Heads, and Senior Management Teams of the St John's Trust Schools take this Policy and all matters outlined above seriously. Disciplinary action will be taken against defaulters in accordance with existing school regulations and procedures.
 - 3.6.2 If any serious violations of the above Social Media Policy become evident and are substantiated, swift dismissal is a likely outcome.

