



# Pendle Education Trust



## **Policy/Procedure/Guideline Review**

<b>Policy/Procedure/Guideline:</b>	Social Media Policy
<b>Senior Manager Responsible:</b>	J Pilkington, Principal
<b>Review date:</b>	April 2026
<b>Review schedule:</b>	Annual



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## 1. Purpose and scope

### 1.1 Introduction

This policy and its effectiveness is monitored to take into account any significant new developments in the use of digital technologies, new threats to online safety or incidents that have taken place, this policy may be reviewed at any time.

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft and video sharing platforms such as YouTube also have social media elements to them. For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp.

The academy recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the academy, its staff, parents/ carers and students. Through online safety education, students will be taught the principles of safe use of social media as well as the age restrictions and risks of popular social media platforms.

### 1.2 Aims and Objectives

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the academy.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the academy.



This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of academy's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the academy community engage with each other online
- Support the academy's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

### 1.3 Scope

Staff are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy.

Parent/carer use of social media is included in our Parent/carer/visitor code of conduct; and for students it is covered in our Behaviour Policy and ICT Acceptable Use Agreement.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during academy/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Personal equipment/devices
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

The academy respects privacy and understands that staff and parents/carers and students may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the academy's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a academy account or using the academy name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the academy, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the academy with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the academy are outside the scope of this policy.

Under no circumstances should staff communicate with students (or former students under the age of 18) using social media. Staff must not communicate with parents/carers about the academy using social media. Where personal relationships exist between parents/carers and staff (or where a staff member is a parent/ carer) social media posts must not reference the academy or claim to be made on behalf of the academy.

All members of the academy should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the academy's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

### 1.4 Roles and Responsibilities

#### SLT

- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.



- Developing and implementing the Social Media policy.
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.

#### **Administrator/Moderator (PET Marketing Team)**

- Manage and monitor the academy social media accounts
- Store account details, including passwords securely.
- Be involved in curating, producing and publishing content to the account.

#### **Staff**

- Ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.
- Attending and complete appropriate training.
- Sharing appropriate content with the marketing team to shared on academy social media accounts.
- Not creating accounts or making use of accounts that are set up to appear as official academy accounts.

## **2. Related policies**

- › Child protection and Safeguarding policy
- › Keeping Children Safe in Education
- › Online Safety policy
- › Staff acceptable use of ICT policy
- › Student acceptable use of ICT policy
- › Behaviour policy, including mobile phone use
- › Staff code of conduct
- › Managing discipline policy
- › GDPR Policy
- › Home-Academy Agreement
- › Parent and visitor code of conduct
- › Visitor acceptable use of ICT policy

## **3. Use of official academy social media**

The academy's official social media channels are:

- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ColnePrimetAcademy](http://www.facebook.com/ColnePrimetAcademy)
- Instagram: [www.instagram.com/ColnePrimetAcademy](http://www.instagram.com/ColnePrimetAcademy)

The accounts are managed by the Pendle Education Trust marketing team. Other staff members who have not been authorised by the marketing team or Academy Principal to manage, or post to, the account, must not access, or attempt to access, these accounts. Suggested content for something to appear on our academy social media channel(s), should be emailed to the marketing team.

**No other social media platforms can be used.**



The academy **will not** post on our social media channels:

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent)
- Harmful or abusive comments
- Messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the academy
- Links to staff members' personal accounts

### **Tone**

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- *Engaging*
- *Conversational*
- *Informative*
- *Friendly*

### **Use of images**

School use of images on social media can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the academy's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via academy owned social media accounts.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on academy social media accounts. Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any academy list of children whose images must not be published.

### **3.1 Moderation**

The academy requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.

Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the academy.

Unacceptable conduct using social media, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the academy and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments we consider to be spam



- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the academy's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the academy community.

### 3.2 Following or connecting to other social media users

The academy:

- Will only 'like' pages and accounts with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind
- May 'follow' and/or 'friend' other users with a non-commercial interest – being followed/friended by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind

### 3.3 Monitoring

Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a academy social media account. School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays) to ensure that any comments do not breach the above points.

Any complaints made through those accounts must be responded to (ideally within 24 hours or on the next working day if received at a weekend) to acknowledge the message and direct all communications through the academy enquiries email address and main office phone number.

## 4. Personal use of social media by staff

The academy expects all staff (including governors and volunteers) to consider the safety of students and the risks (reputational and financial) to the academy when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

Staff should declare to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or Principal any social media connections to current or former students, which should only be where they are family members or similar appropriate connections outside of school. The DSL or Principal will advise on the appropriateness of this connection, and if there is any breach of policy.

When using social media, staff **must not**:

- Use personal accounts to conduct academy business
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate with, students past or present
- Complain about the academy, individual students, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about individual students, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of students



- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the academy
- Link their personal social media profile(s) to their work email account
- Use personal social media during timetabled teaching time or other directed time work activities

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff conduct policy.

Any communication received from current students (unless declared as above) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should not have contact via personal accounts with past students (unless declared as above); if ongoing communication is required, this should be using official academy channels. Any contact from past students should not be responded to.

The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with academy policies. The academy permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.

The academy will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the academy will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the academy will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

<b>For clarity of the above information, the following applies to all staff:</b>	<b>Yes but should be declared to DSL / Principal</b>	<b>Not under any circumstances</b>
Parents / carers of current and/or former students, without any direct personal connection		X
Parents / carers of current and/or recent former students, with a direct personal connection	X	
Current, prospective or former students under 18yo, without any direct personal connection		X
Current, prospective or former students under 18yo, with a direct personal connection	X	
Former students over 18yo, where there is an appropriate social connection made that is beyond the former student-teacher relationship	X	

## 5. Personal use of social media by students

The academy encourages students to

- Be respectful to members of staff, and the academy, at all times
- Be respectful to other students and parents/carers
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the academy's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the academy's complaints procedure

Pupils **should not** use social media to:



- Complain about individual members of staff
- Complain about the academy
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other students or parents/carers
- Post images of other students without their permission

Any concerns about a student's social media use will be dealt with in line with the academy's behaviour policy, this includes use of mobile phones within the academy which is not allowed.

## 6. Personal use of social media by parents/carers

The academy expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our students.

The parent code of conduct, available on our website, should be followed and also applies to any parent/carer conduct online related to the academy.

When communicating with the academy via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the academy, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the academy at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other students and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the academy's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the academy's complaints procedure

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or students
- Complain about the academy
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers or students
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- Post images of students other than their own children

## 7. Monitoring and review

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The Principal will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the academy. This policy will be reviewed annually, and published on the academy website.

