



The Athelstan Trust

Social Media Policy

Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
May 2018, May 2021 May 2024	Board	23/5/24	May 2027	Yes

1 **Introduction:** The 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 and all other internet postings including blogs and wikis and other interactive websites. It is also a valuable educational tool. However, there are some risks associated with social media use and this Policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by Trust schools and staff.

2 **Scope:** This policy applies to the use of social media for Trust and your own personal purposes, whether during normal working hours or in your personal time. The Trust respects privacy and understands that staff may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and / or the Trust's or School's reputation are within the scope of this Policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school 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 school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school 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 school are outside the scope of this policy.

The purpose of the Policy is to help staff avoid the potential pitfalls of sharing information on such social media sites and should be read in conjunction with the acceptable use policy for pupils.

3 **IT facilities:** The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's IT facilities and equipment or your personal equipment.

4 **Personal use during work time and on Trust equipment:** The Trust permits the incidental use of the internet and social media so long as it is kept to a minimum and takes place substantially out of normal working hours. Use must not interfere with your work commitments (or those of others). Personal use is a privilege and not a right. If the Trust discovers that excessive periods of time have been spent on the internet provided by the Trust either in or outside working hours, disciplinary action may be taken and internet access may be withdrawn without notice at the discretion of the Headteacher.

5 **Process for creating new accounts:** The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department X account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a summary to the School SLT which considers the aim of the account, the intended audience, how the account will be promoted, who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named), whether the account be open or private/closed. Following consideration by the SLT the account will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on



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behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

- 6 **Monitoring Social Media accounts** – school social media accounts should be monitored regularly and frequently by the member of staff who created the account, with involvement from members of the school SLT as appropriate. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention are essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.
- 7 **Guiding principles:** Digital Communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times, and in accordance with Trust Policies. 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 school. Staff are required to adhere to the following principles:
 - 7.1 The tone of the content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards.
 - 7.2 You should not be "Friends" with "Followers" or connect with pupils on any personal social media network. It would be considered inappropriate to add pupils as Friends on a personal account. Depending on the circumstances, it may also be inappropriate to connect with parents, guardians or carers as Friends.
 - 7.3 You must be mindful of how you present yourself and the Trust and its Academies on such media. Staff are entitled to a social life like anyone else. However, the extra-curricular life of an employee at the Trust has professional consequences and this must be considered at all times when sharing personal information.
 - 7.4 You should ensure you do not infringe upon data protection laws or breach confidentiality. You must not publish anything which could identify pupils, parents or guardians on any personal social media account, personal webpage or similar platform without the prior consent of the Headteacher in writing. This includes photos, videos, or other materials such as pupil work. It is the responsibility of the person who is posting on social media to take appropriate measures to safeguard pupils who may be referenced/photographed.
 - 7.5 You should consider the copyright of the content you are sharing, and where necessary, seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
 - 7.6 You should always represent your own views and must not allude to other people's personal views in your posts.
 - 7.7 When writing a post, you should consider whether the contents would be more appropriate in a private message. While you may have strict privacy controls in place, information could still be shared by others. It is always sensible to consider that any information posted may not remain private.
 - 7.8 You should protect your privacy and that of others by omitting personal information from internet posts such as names, email addresses, home or work addresses, phone numbers or other personal information.



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- 7.9 You should familiarise yourself with the privacy settings of any social media you use and ensure that public access is restricted. If you are not clear about how to restrict access, you should regard all your information as publicly available and behave accordingly.
- 7.10 You must not post anything that may offend, insult or humiliate others, particularly on the basis of their sex, age, race, colour, national origin, religion, or belief, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity.
- 7.11 You must not post anything that could be interpreted as threatening, intimidating or abusive. Offensive posts or messages may be construed as cyber-bullying.
- 7.12 You must not post disparaging or derogatory remarks about the Trust, its Academies or its Governors, officers, staff, volunteers, pupils or parents, guardians or carers.
- 7.13 If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media staff must follow the Trust Communications policy before responding.
- 7.14 When acting on behalf of the school, respond to harmful and /or offensive comments in line with the Trust Communications Policy. The comments should be responded to swiftly and with sensitivity. If a conversation becomes unacceptable, the school user should block, report or delete other users. Where appropriate, issues should be reported to a member of the school SLT.
- 7.15 You must not post anything that could be interpreted as glorifying or supporting terrorism, extremism or organisations promoting terrorist or extremist views, or encouraging others to do so.
- 7.16 You must not use social media in a way which could constitute a breach of other Trust or School policies.
- 8 **Removing postings:** You may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. If you fail to remove postings, this could result in disciplinary action.
- 9 **Breach:** A breach of this policy may be treated as misconduct and could result in disciplinary action including in serious cases, dismissal.
- 10 **Monitoring:** The Trust regularly monitors the use of the internet, social media and email systems to check that the use is in accordance with this policy. Please see the IT acceptable use policy for further information on monitoring. If it is discovered that any of the systems are being abused and / or that the terms of this policy are being infringed, disciplinary action may be taken which could result in your dismissal.