

### **Changes made to the attached policy (Nov 2024)**

1. The policy has been significantly revised and restructured. This work was completed by the Director of IT Services. This policy has been based on policy developed by the Education Inclusion Partnership Team EIPT, Northamptonshire Police, the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Governors, Parents/Carers and Children, and in partnership with Professional Associates, following Becta Guidelines and review of this policy by Becta.
2. Consistency has been imposed so that capital letters and hyphenation are more consistent; bullet point lists have been reformatted.
3. A contents page has been added and updated.
4. Inclusive language has been used. Headmaster has been replaced by Headteacher.
5. Language has been updated to reflect the organisation of the Trust Board (rather than the previous *Governing Body*). It is also designed to reflect the multi-school nature of an academy trust.

# The NSB Trust

## Social Media Policy

To be reviewed annually

Personnel associated with this Policy:

**Data Controller**

**Data Protection Officer**

**Barry Jeffery**

**Judicium**

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## 1. Introduction

This applies to all Trust staff regardless of their employment status. This policy does not form part of the terms and conditions of employee's employment with the Trust and is not intended to have contractual effect. However, it does set out the Trust's current practices and required standards of conduct and all staff are required to comply with its contents. Breach of the provisions of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary offence which may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal in accordance with the school's Disciplinary policy and Procedure.

This policy may be amended from time to time and staff will be notified of any changes no later than one month from the date those changes are intended to take effect.

## 2. Purpose of the policy

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 such as Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, blogs, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and Wikipedia. However, staff use of social media can pose risks to the Trust's confidential and proprietary information, its reputation, and it can jeopardise our compliance with our legal obligations. To minimise these risks, avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate work-related purposes, all School staff are required to comply with the provisions in this policy.

## 3. Who is covered by this policy?

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within the Trust, including senior managers, officers, governors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as Staff in this policy).

Third parties who have access to our electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

## 4. Scope and purpose of the policy

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and all other social networking sites and all other internet postings including blogs.

It applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours and regardless of whether the school's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

#### 5. Personnel responsible for implementing this policy

The Board of Governors have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but have delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Executive Headteacher.

Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the Executive Headteacher in liaison with the Trust's Director of IT.

All senior school staff have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements.

All school staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the specific school's Headteacher in the first instance. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed by email to the Director of Information Services.

#### 6. Compliance with related policies and agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- a) Breach our electronic information and communications systems policy
- b) Breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies
- c) Breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality
- d) Breach our Disciplinary Rules
- e) Defame or disparage the school, its staff, its pupils or parents, its affiliates, partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders
- f) Harass or bully other staff in any way or breach our anti-harassment and our anti-bullying policy
- g) Unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties or breach our Equal Opportunities policy
- h) Breach our Data Protection policy (for example, never disclosing personal information about a colleague online)
- i) Breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never using social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements) *and*
- j) Breach our obligations for the Keeping Children Safe in Education publication

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

Staff who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

#### 7. Personal use of social media

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems.

Staff should not use a work email address to sign up to any social media. Staff personal social media pages should not make reference to their employment with the school (excluding LinkedIn, where prior permission is sought from the Director of Information Services).

Staff must not take photos or posts from social media that belong to the Trust for their own personal use.

## 8. Monitoring

The contents of our IT resources and communications systems are the Trust's property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, document, facsimile, telephone conversation, social media post conversation or message or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems.

The Trust reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, Staff members activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. By your acknowledgement of this policy consent to such monitoring of this policy and your use of such resources and systems. This might include without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

The school may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.

All Staff are advised not to use our IT resources and communications systems for any matter that he or she wishes to be kept private or confidential from the Trust.

## 9. Educational and extra-curricular use of social media

If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the Trust in a social media environment, you must follow the protocol outlined below. The Headteacher may require you to undergo training before you use social media on behalf of the Trust and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities. Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the school for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, you must direct the inquiry to the Headteacher and must not respond without advanced written approval.

## 10. Recruitment

The Trust may use internet searches to perform pre-employment checks on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where the School does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

## 11. Responsible use of social media

The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

**Photographs for use with social media:** any photos for social media posts may only be taken using Trust cameras/devices or devices that have been approved in advance by the Trust's Communications officer. Where any device is used that does not belong to the Trust, all photos must be deleted immediately from the device, once the photos have been uploaded to a device belonging to the Trust.

**Staff protocol for use of social media:** where any post is going to be made on the Trust's own social media the following steps must be taken:

- a) Ensure that specific permission from the child's parent/carer has been sought before the information is used on social media (via Parent/carer Photo Consent form). Note: A parent/carer may have provided permission for one social media platform but not another. Staff should ensure that the appropriate permission is specific.
- b) Ensure that there is no identifying information relating to a child/children in the post - for example, any certificates in photos are blank/without names or the child's name cannot be seen on the piece of work. The school should seek additional consent to include any names when posting on social media.
- c) The post must be a positive and relevant post relating to the children, the good work of staff, the Trust, or any achievements.
- d) Social Media can also be used to issue updates or reminders to parents/guardians. The Communications Officer will have overall responsibility for this. Should you wish for any reminders to be issued on the main school social account, you should contact the Trust communications officer by email to ensure that any post can be issued.
- e) The communications officer will post the information, but all staff have the responsibility to ensure that the Social Media policy has been adhered to.
- f) Personal information shared/published on social media will be required to be disclosed under a subject access request.

**Protecting our business reputation:**

Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about: The Trust, current, past or prospective Staff as defined in this policy, current, past or prospective pupils, Parents, carers or families of current, past or prospective pupils, the school's suppliers and services providers, other affiliates and stakeholders, and current, past or prospective governors

Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the school's reputation, even indirectly.