



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Approved and signed by the Board of Trustees

JANUARY 2017

CHANGES

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Policy adopted by Discovery MAT, with appropriate amendments

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I KEY PRINCIPLES

All employees in Discovery Multi Academy Trust ('the MAT'), including staff, pupils, parents, Board Members, Local Advisory Board Members, volunteers, external services providers and friends should ensure they conduct themselves, at all times, in such a way that serves to protect the reputation of the MAT, and treat colleagues, pupils and others associated with the MAT with professionalism and respect.

It is important to protect all employees in the MAT from being the subject of inappropriate statements and comments placed on social networking sites. This could include statements referring to confidential issues, making inappropriate comments, making false or vexatious allegations, derogatory, insulting or offensive remarks and threats or intimidating comments. The posting of such comments will be viewed as a potential breach of the MAT's policy and appropriate action will be taken. Where such actions are committed by employees of the MAT, it may be viewed as misconduct or gross misconduct and steps may be taken in accordance with the MAT's agreed Disciplinary Policy.

Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that all employees in the MAT consider this and act responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of work. Anyone working in the MAT either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking sites.

By 'social media', we mean web-based tools that allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online.

This includes blogs, messages boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook and Twitter), content sharing websites (such as Flickr and YouTube), and many other similar online channels.

This policy relates to the use of social networking both inside and outside of working hours. Staff are able to use social media during their lunch break, and before and after working hours, with appropriate professional conduct.

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively, flexibly and responsibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation. This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise MAT leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

2 AIMS

- To set out the key principles and Code of Conduct expected of all employees in the MAT including, staff, pupils, parents, Board Members, LAB Members, volunteers, external service providers and friends of the MAT with respect to social networking
- To support the Board of Trustees' overriding commitment to safeguard and protect children, staff and other employees in the MAT

3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES IN THE MAT

The following are **not considered acceptable** in Discovery Multi Academy Trust:

- The use of the MAT, or any of the academies within the MAT's name, logo, or any other published material without prior written permission from the CEO. This applies to any published material including both electronic and paper communications
- The posting of any communication or images which links the MAT to any form of illegal activity or any other action which may damage the reputation of the MAT. This includes defamatory comments
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of any of the MAT's academies
- The unauthorised posting of any images of employees, children, Board Members, Local Advisory Board Members, or anyone directly connected with the MAT whilst engaged in school activities
- Making derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the MAT, or anyone at or connected with the MAT

In addition to the above requirements, employees are advised to use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal or professional reputation, nor the MAT's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.

Employees should also be aware of risks associated with online identity fraud and be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.

Employees have a duty to be supportive of the MAT. Employees should not air internal grievances on social media.

A MAT stakeholder's relationship with social media changes if they identify themselves as a MAT employee, speak in any kind of professional capacity, or use social media on MAT business.

4 USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DISCOVERY MAT EMPLOYEE

A MAT employee's relationship with social media changes as soon as a person identifies themselves as a MAT employee, speak in any kind of professional capacity, or use social media on MAT business.

Employees should remember that they are the public face of the MAT and should participate in the same way as they would with other media, public meetings or forums.

Employees should remember that their comments are permanently available and open to being republished in other media.

Employees should consider the following when using social media:

- You are personally responsible for any content you publish and need to remember it is in the public domain and on the record for a long time.
- If you are authorised to take part as a MAT employee, you should clearly identify yourself and your role. Make it clear whether you are acting in your professional capacity – and remember, even if you do not intend to, your professional role or status as a MAT employee will affect the way you and the organisation are perceived, and therefore brings certain responsibilities
- Be aware of your association with the MAT and any of its academies in online spaces. If you identify yourself as a MAT employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and customers
- Be professional. Make sure you are seen to act in an honest, accurate, fair and responsible way at all times
- Be aware of your language and conduct. The policy governing staff conduct still applies. Also, as in all publishing, you should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander
- Never share confidential or sensitive information
- You should be aware that you may attract media interest in yourself or the MAT, so proceed with care, whether you are participating in a business or a personal capacity

5 POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

In instances where there has been a breach of the terms of this policy by an employee of the MAT, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this policy by an employee of the MAT will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. Depending on the circumstances, a

breach of this policy may be viewed as misconduct which could result in disciplinary action being taken, or gross misconduct, which may result in summary dismissal.

- Any breach of this policy by a stakeholder who is not an employee of the MAT, the Board of Trustees will take appropriate action in order to protect the MAT's reputation and that of its staff, parents, Board and Local Advisory Board Members, children and anyone else directly linked to the MAT.