



# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Reference this policy is aligned to with LCC	<b>2016 Ma1-v2</b>
Agreed with Support Staff Trade Unions	n/a
Adopted by the Governing Body	<b>Sep 2020</b>
Next Review Due	<b>Sep 2021</b>
Agreed with Teacher Trade Unions and Professional Associations	n/a

## Contents

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This guidance applies to all staff, including the Principal, Teachers and all Support Staff regardless of whether they are permanent, fixed term, casual, agency or volunteers. It provides guidance on what measures are to be taken to ensure the safe use of social media and defines what is considered to be inappropriate conduct when using social media/internet sites for both professional and personal purposes.

Breaches of this guidance may be dealt with via the Academy Disciplinary Policy or where it is appropriate will be referred to the police.

Documents to support this Guidance: Staff Handbook, Acceptable Use Policy, DPA Policy & Disciplinary Policy.

In addition Welland Park Academy will take account of any current and relevant legislation.

## Purpose

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The primary purpose of this policy is to clarify how all employees should conduct themselves when using all forms of social media whether this is executed via platforms from Welland Park or personal media, during work time or personal time. The aim is to minimise the risk for employees and potentially students when they choose to write about their work or matters relating to the Academy and/or their personal lives.

This in turn will minimise situations where safeguarding concerns could arise, employees' integrity or professional standing could be undermined, professional relationships with colleagues and pupils are compromised or the Academy is brought into disrepute.

Additionally, adhering to the Guidance reduces the risk of employees inadvertently contravening sections of the General Data Protection Regulation or falling foul of any breaches of confidentiality, privacy, libel, defamation, harassment and copyright laws.

Whilst this Guidance is not intended to prevent employees from using social media sites, it does aim to make employees aware of the risks they could face whilst doing so and highlight what is deemed to be unacceptable when sharing information about their professional and/or personal life. Employees should be encouraged to report any concerns that they have regarding content placed by employees on social media sites to the Principal.

When an employee(s) wishes to create a work-related social media site they must discuss this with and obtain the relevant approval from the Principal. Creators of these groups are responsible for monitoring the content of the site and ensuring that it is appropriate and not in breach of any of the terms in this Guidance.

**Application of the Guidance** - The Social Media Guidance will be managed by either the Principal or another member of the Leadership Team. If the matters are regarding the Principal, then the Chair of Governors will be responsible for overseeing this guidance.

## What is social media?

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For the purposes of this policy, the term social media is used to describe a type of interactive website or online tool that allows parties to communicate or interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests and to share data in a public forum or to participate in social networking, resulting in a number of different activities.

Social Media activities include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a profile page on social / business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or LinkedIn
- Writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person / informational site.
- Taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards such as YouTube.
- Leaving product or service reviews on business websites or customer review websites.
- Taking part in online polls.
- Uploading multimedia on networking sites such as You Tube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and Tumblr.
- Liking, re-tweeting and commenting on posts of your own, another person or other social media account.

Many other forms of social media also exist which are not listed in this policy. Employees need to be aware that this is an area that is constantly changing and they are reminded of their continued responsibility to keep up to date with developments and review their privacy settings on a regular basis when using social media sites.

## The use of social media

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Welland Park Academy recognises that employees will use social media in a personal capacity. However, it is important that employees understand that they are personally responsible for all comments, images or information that they post on line. Therefore all employees must ensure that when posting any information, images or making comments, they do not:

**Bring the Academy into disrepute.** E.g. by making derogatory or defamatory comments, either directly or indirectly, about the Academy, colleagues, individuals, students or parents etc that could negatively impact on the Academy's reputation or cause embarrassment. This includes posting images or links to inappropriate content or using inappropriate language.

**Breach confidentiality.** E.g, revealing confidential information owned by the Academy relating to its activities, finances, employees or pupils.

**Undertake any behaviour which may be considered discriminatory, or as bullying and/or harassment of any individual.** E.g, making offensive or derogatory comments (either directly or indirectly) relating to sex, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age; using social media to bully ("Cyberbullying") another individual; or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or linking to such content.

As with all personal internet use, employees using social media sites must also observe the specific requirements of the documents named at the beginning of this policy.

## Employee responsibilities

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Employees are personally responsible for the content that they publish on social media sites, including “Likes” (on Facebook)/“re-tweets” (on Twitter), Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, Yammer, WhatsApp etc. Employees should assume that everything that is written is permanent and can be viewed by anyone at any time. It is fair and reasonable to take disciplinary action against employees for inappropriate use of social media, including use of social media conducted outside of working hours.

Employees must observe and note the following listed guidance (which is not exhaustive).

Employees should assume that everything can be traced back to them personally as well as to their colleagues, the Academy, pupils and parents.

To avoid any conflict of interest, employees must ensure that personal social networking sites are set to private and students are never listed as approved contacts. An exception to this may be if the child is the employee’s own child, relative, or family friend.

Information must not be posted that would disclose the identity of students or could in any way be linked to a student(s). This includes photographs or videos of pupils or their homes.

Students must not be discussed on social media sites.

Employees should not post information on sites including photographs and videos that could bring the Academy into disrepute.

Employees must not represent their own views/opinions as being those of Welland Park Academy.  
Employees must not divulge any information that is confidential to the Academy or a partner organisation.

Potentially false, derogatory, offensive or defamatory remarks directly or indirectly towards the Academy, employees, pupils, pupils’ relatives, the Academy suppliers and partner organisations should not be posted on social media sites.

Employees must ensure content or links to other content does not interfere with their work commitments, or be on an inappropriate content.

Employees must not either endorse or criticise service providers used by the Academy or develop on-line relationships which create a conflict of interest.

Employees must not upload, post, forward or post a link to any pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature).

When posting on social media sites employees must observe the requirements of the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act and must not use any offensive, obscene, derogatory, discriminatory language which may also cause embarrassment to Academy, the Local Authority, employees, pupils, pupils’ relatives, Council suppliers and partner organisations.

Employees must never impersonate another person.

Employees must not upload, forward or post a link which is likely to: create any liability for the Academy (whether criminal or civil), breach copyright law or affect other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

**Think before you post.** There is no such thing as a private social media site. Social networking platforms/ Chat Rooms and discussion forums etc are in the public domain and it is not always possible to be sure what is being viewed, shared or archived, even if material is posted on a closed profile or group. There can be no reasonable expectation that posts will remain private and will not be passed on to other people, intentionally or otherwise.

## Disciplinary action

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Employees should be aware that the use of social media sites in a manner contrary to this policy, including if others implicate you in a breach of any of the points listed within this document may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases may be treated as gross misconduct, which itself could lead to summary dismissal.

In certain circumstances, such misuse may constitute a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against employees and the Academy. Such cases will be referred to the police (and, where necessary the nominated safeguarding lead at the County Council) to investigate further.

Employees who become aware of any use of social media by other members of staff in breach of this guidance must report the matter to the Principal.

## Social media security

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Employees should be mindful when placing information on social media sites that this information is visible to a large audience and could identify where they work and with whom, thereby increasing the opportunity for identity fraud, false allegations and threats. In addition it may be possible through social media sites for children or vulnerable adults to be identified, which could have implications for their security. Employees should therefore be mindful that they:

- Do not reveal personal or private information about themselves such as date of birth, address details and bank details etc. Posting such information could increase the risk of identity theft.
- Remember that there is the scope for causing offence or unintentionally causing embarrassment, for example if students find photographs of their teacher which may cause embarrassment and/or damage to professional reputation and that of the Academy.
- Be mindful that posting images, comments or joining on line campaigns may be viewed by colleagues, parents, ex-students etc.
- Ensure that where you do post comments you make a clear statement that any comments expressed are your own and not those of the Academy.
- Finally, consideration should be given to the information posted on social media sites and employees are advised to use appropriately the security settings on such sites in order to assist in limiting the concerns above.

## Monitoring the use of social media websites

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Employees should be aware that any use of social media websites (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the Disciplinary policy.

The Academy considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- been using social media websites when he/she should be working; or
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.