

DOVE HOUSE SCHOOL ACADEMY TRUST

Social Media Policy

Policy Title		Social Media Policy	
Author / Reviewer		Senior Leadership Team/Governance Lead	
Trustee Committee		Delegated to the Headteacher	
Signed by: David Dupont (Acting Headteacher)			
Reviewed: July 2020	Approved: July 2020	Next Review: July 2023	

1. **Policy Statement**

1.1 Dove House School Academy Trust recognise 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, Twitter, blogs and wikis. However, employees' use of social media can pose risks to the safeguarding of our students, our confidential information, reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations.

It is therefore essential that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of students and staff members and the reputation of the school are safeguarded. In this context, staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

1.2 To minimise these risks and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, we expect employees to adhere to this policy.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. **Who Is Covered by the Policy?**

2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including members of the senior leadership team, teachers, support staff, all employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as "**staff**" in this policy).

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

3 Scope and Purpose of the Policy

- 3.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Google+, Pinterest, Reddit and any other similar social networking sites and internet posting sites including blogs.
- 3.2 It applies to the use of social media for any personal purpose, whether during working hours or otherwise.
- 3.3 The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 3.4 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 our 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. If a criminal offence is considered to have been committed, further action may be taken to assist with the prosecution of the offenders.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The internet is fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media therefore the principles set out in this policy must be followed closely, irrespective of the medium or platform.

4 Personnel Responsible for Implementing the Policy

- 4.1 The Board of Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Headteacher. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with all senior and middle leaders.
- 4.2 All managers 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 acting when behaviour falls below its requirements.
- 4.3 All 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 line manager. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to a senior member of staff.

5 Compliance with Related Policies and Agreements

- 5.1 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:
 - 5.1.1 breach our Acceptable Use Policy

- 5.1.2 breach our Child Protection Policy or Safeguarding Policy
 - 5.1.3 breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies
 - 5.1.4 breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality
 - 5.1.5 breach our Staff Code of Conduct
 - 5.1.6 defame or disparage the Dove House School Academy Trust
 - 5.1.7 harass or bully other staff in any way
 - 5.1.8 unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties
 - 5.1.9 breach our Data Protection policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online)
 - 5.1.10 breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than yourself or by making misleading statements).
- 5.2 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 Dove House School Academy Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Dove House School Academy Trust.
- 5.3 Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

6 **Legal Ramifications**

Staff should be aware that there are a number of legal implications associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Liability can arise under the laws of:

Defamation
 Copyright
 Discrimination
 Contract
 Human Rights
 Protection from harassment
 Criminal Justice
 Data Protection

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. Any communication beyond work time must not bring the school into disrepute.

8 **Contact with Students/Parents/Carers**

- 8.1 You must not contact any student and / or parent / carer on any form of social media. If a student and / or parent / carer contacts you on social media, you must immediately notify the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. You are not permitted to add students', parents' and/or carers' contacts made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts. **Should you be aware when joining the school that you have students, parents and/or carers as personal social network contacts, then this should be disclosed to the Headteacher.**

- 8.2 You must not contact any student and / or parent / carer on any form of social media. If a student and / or parent / carer contacts you on social media, you must immediately notify the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 8.3 Staff should refrain from contacting / entering into correspondence with previous students and / or parents / carers of the Dove House School Academy Trust on any form of social media, particularly where such contact could jeopardise the reputation of the Dove House School Academy Trust and / or member of staff.
- 8.4 If your duties require you to contact students and / or parents / carers by email on behalf of the Dove House School Academy Trust, you must ensure the content is professional and consistent with written communication sent by the Dove House School Academy Trust.
- 8.5 All staff have a duty towards safeguarding our students' wellbeing. Therefore, if you become aware of any act which may breach any of the terms of our Child Protection Policy on any form of social media, you must immediately report the matter to the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

9 **Monitoring**

- 9.1 The contents of our IT resources and communications systems are our 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.
- 9.2 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, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by 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, logins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.
- 9.3 We 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.
- 9.4 Do not use our IT resources and communications systems for any personal matter as you will not be afforded privacy and confidentiality.
- 9.5 For further information, please refer to our Acceptable Use Policy and Data Protection Policy.

10 **The Dove House School Academy Trust - Use of Social Media**

- 10.1 If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the Dove House School Academy Trust in a social media environment, you must seek approval for such communication from the Headteacher, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.
- 10.2 Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the Dove House School Academy Trust for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the enquiry to the Headteacher and do not respond without written approval.

10.3 The use of social media for Dove House School Academy Trust purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

11 **Responsible Use of Social Media**

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

11.2 You should be aware that any comments made via the use of social media are subject to exactly the same legal rules as any other written comments. As such both you and the Dove House School Academy Trust may be at risk of legal proceedings if the comments breach the legal rules, in particular those relating to any breach of confidentiality or any disparaging or defamatory statements etc.

11.3 To protecting our reputation, staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

- The Dove House School Academy Trust
- Our students and / or parents / carers
- Our employees
- Our trustees
- Other affiliates and stakeholders

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

11.3.1 Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.

11.3.2 Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by the masses (including the Dove House School Academy Trust itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind before you post content.

11.3.3 It is recommended that you do not disclose your affiliation as an employee of our Dove House School Academy Trust. You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to students and colleagues.

11.3.4 You must not post comments about sensitive work-related topics, such as our performance. Even if you make it clear that your views on such topics do not represent those of the Dove House School Academy Trust, your comments could still damage our reputation.

11.3.5 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with the Headteacher.

11.3.6 If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Dove House School Academy Trust or our stakeholders, you should contact the Headteacher. All staff are responsible for protecting our reputation.

11.4 Respecting confidential information:

- 11.4.1 Staff should not do anything to jeopardise our confidential information through the use of social media.
 - 11.4.2 Do not use our logos or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission.
 - 11.4.3 You are not permitted to add current or past students', parents and / or carer's contacts made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts, such as Facebook accounts or LinkedIn accounts.
- 11.5 Respecting colleagues, students, parents / carers, trustees and partners:
- 11.5.1 Do not post anything that your colleagues or our students, parents / carers, trustees, partners would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.
 - 11.5.2 Do not post anything related to your colleagues or our students, parents, carers, trustees, partners or other stakeholders without their written permission.
 - 11.5.3 Where the school takes photographs and/or videos for use on the school website or social media pages, appropriate parental consent will be sought. Consent can be refused or withdrawn at any time. If consent is withdrawn, we will delete the photograph or video and not distribute it further.

12 **Monitoring and Review of the Policy**

- 12.1 The Headteacher will monitor the efficacy of the policy. The Headteacher and Board of Trustees have responsibility for ensuring that any person who may be involved with administration or investigations carried out under this policy is appropriately trained to assist them with these duties.
- 12.2 The Senior Leadership Team and Governance Lead will review this policy at least every 3 years to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice. The Headteacher will approve the policy.