

Inspire Partnership Academy Trust
Social Media Policy



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Social Media Policy

About this policy

- 1.1 This policy is in place to minimise the risks to The Inspire Partnership (the Trust) and all schools within the Trust through use of social media.
- 1.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat and all other social networking sites, internet postings, blogs, and chat apps. It applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our Trust in anyway.
- 1.3 This policy covers all employees including casual and agency workers.
- 1.4 This policy ensures the Trustees maintain their duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the Trust and those who work for it and the wider community.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.
- 1.6 References to "pupils" throughout this policy shall mean pupils other than the staff member's own child or relation.

Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

- 1.7 Trustees have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but have delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Chief Executive Officer and School Headteachers (or equivalent).
- 1.8 All leadership team members 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.
- 1.9 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 your line manager who must report it to the Headteacher or, in the case of central Trust staff, to the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Misuse of social media by the COO must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and misuse by the CEO must be reported to the Chair of Trustees. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the COO.

Compliance with related policies and agreements

- 1.10 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, you are prohibited from using social media to:

- (a) breach our IT policies and procedures.
- (b) breach our Code of Conduct.
- (c) breach our Disciplinary Policy or procedures.
- (d) breach our Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy.
- (e) breach our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- (f) breach our Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague or pupil online).
- (g) breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

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

1.12 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 organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

1.13 Staff must make themselves aware of, and act in accordance with their duties under the *Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges September 2020* as these relate to:

- their own on-line activity
- the on-line activity of pupils and other colleagues and
- information of which they become aware on-line

including their duties relating to Children Missing from Education, Child Sexual Exploitation, FGM and Preventing Radicalisation (Prevent).

Personal use of social media

1.14 The Trust expects that in relation to the use of social networking sites, be they for professional or personal use, the conduct of its employees is such that no justifiable complaint can be made by parents, pupils, colleagues, trustees,

governors, other bodies or agencies or members of the community in relation to conduct and behaviour of school staff.

The way in which staff present and conduct themselves on social networking sites can have an impact on the public perception of the individual school and/or wider trust and influence the way in which those staff members are perceived by pupils and parents of the school. In their use of social networking sites, staff should be aware that their online behaviour could affect their professional standing, dignity, and perception of their integrity

- 1.15 Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities (including any restrictions on the use of personal devices in the workplace), or productivity, and complies with this policy.
- 1.16 You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the business interests or reputation of the Trust, even indirectly.
- 1.17 You must not use social media to defame or disparage the Trust, our staff, pupils, parents/carers or any third party; to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against pupils, parents/carers, staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- 1.18 You must not express opinions on behalf of the Trust via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager. You may be required to undergo training to obtain such authorisation.
- 1.19 You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our trade secrets, confidential information, and intellectual property.
- 1.20 You must not accept pupils or their parent/carers as friends or use social media to send any personal messages to them directly or indirectly. Never enter into social media dialogue with parent/carers or similar over a school related issue, the correct grievance and complaint procedures should be followed at all times. Personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and may put you and/or your colleagues vulnerable to allegations.
- 1.21 You **must not** be friends (on or off-line) with recent pupils and you are also strongly advised not to be friends with pupils at other schools (on or offline) as this is likely to make them vulnerable to allegations and may be open to investigation by the Trust, School, or police. Where a colleague is considering not following this advice, they are required to discuss the matter, and the implications with their Headteacher or the Chief Executive Officer.

- 1.22 You must not share any personal information with any pupil (including personal contact details, personal website addresses/social networking site details) and ensure good safeguarding practice.
- 1.23 Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be “friends” in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives, and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships.
- 1.24 Photos of pupils should only be posted or shared with the permission of parents as identified in paragraph 1.39 and should only be shared from professional, work related accounts..
- 1.25 Any misuse of social media should be reported as set out in paragraph 1.9 above.

Guidelines for responsible personal use of social media

- 1.26 You should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf and, write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address or other personal social media account. For work related communications you should use a work related account with a work signature.
- 1.27 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the Trust and your personal interests and views. For example, using a work-related account to share personal views or communications.
- 1.28 Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- 1.29 If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer. You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to the Trust and your school community and colleagues.
- 1.30 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your manager. All communication via social networking sites should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended (social networking sites are public forums). You are strongly advised, in your own interests, to take steps to ensure as far as possible that your on-line personal data is not accessible to anybody who you do not want to have permission to access it. For example, you are strongly advised to check the security and privacy settings of any social networking site you subscribe to

and set these to maximum and, where relevant, use strong passwords and change them regularly.

- 1.31 For further information see the safer internet website <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>
- 1.32 For further information about the safe, secure and proper use of social media and networking sites, please see <http://www.childnet.com/resources/social-networking-a-guide-for-teachers-and-professionals>
- 1.33 If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact your Headteacher or the Chief Executive Officer.

Business use of social media

- 1.34 There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support pupil learning. For example, the Trust, schools, and many individual staff have Twitter and Linked-In accounts for the purposes of their employment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupils' learning.
- 1.35 There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school social media sites. Staff must not create sites unnecessarily or for trivial reasons which could expose the Trust to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage. Creation of any additional Trust or school social media sites requires the permission of the CEO. Deletion of official school or Trust social media sites also requires express permission of the CEO.
- 1.36 When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:
 - (a) Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account.
 - (b) The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate Central Leader or a member of the Leadership Team before any account is activated.
 - (c) The current password or login details for all social media accounts must be provided to the School Business Manager or Regional Finance Manager who will retain a record of such information.
 - (d) The content of any Trust or school sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the Trust and its schools.
 - (e) Staff must ensure that the school has parent/carer consent to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of the pupil. Please see 1.39 below in respect of parent/carer consent.

- (f) Staff must ensure that they do not identify a pupil using their full name. Only first/forenames or initials may be used without express parent/carer permission. Photographs must not be tagged with names.
- (g) Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.
- (h) Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of Trust-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported in line with paragraph 1.9
- (i) Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of pupils through social media where the message is not public.
- (j) Staff should not seek to link up with or view pupil accounts. For example, in the case of Twitter, staff should not “follow back” those who follow, share or like Trust or school comments/posts.

1.37 The failure to follow the rules set out in clause 1.35 may give rise to disciplinary action.

1.38 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

Parent/carer consent

1.39 In our schools, each academic year parents/carers are asked whether they give their permission for the school to use photographs and video images of their child for school related purposes. Parents/carers will have the right to withdraw this consent at any point.

1.40 Each Trust school retains a list of those parents/carers who have objected to or who have placed any restrictions or limitations on the use of images of their child. Staff should familiarise themselves with the names of the pupils on that list. It is a disciplinary offence to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of a pupil contrary to the instructions of their parent/carer.

Monitoring

1.41 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.

1.42 In the event of any member of staff noticing anything detrimental to the reputation of the Trust they should not reply in person but immediately pass on the information to their Headteacher / CEO.

1.43 For further information, please refer to our Electronic Communications Policy.

Recruitment

- 1.44 We may use social media to advertise vacancies. Such advertisements will be prepared and posted by those responsible for recruitment in the Trust and its schools

Breach of this policy

- 1.45 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. 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.
- 1.46 You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.