



Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose, scope and definitions

Greensand Multi Academy Trust (“the Trust”) understands the benefits of using social media, however, if misused, the Trust and/or school community can be negatively affected. We expect everybody to behave in a positive manner, engaging respectfully with our schools / Trust and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face.

This policy sets out clear procedures and expectations for how staff, parents/carers and the wider community should conduct themselves when using social media.

This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of the Trust’s and its schools’ social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Support the Trust’s / schools’ policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

Staff, pupils and parents/carers are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy (or relevant section of) .

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and pupils
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

Our schools should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the Trust / school’s equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate, create and share content or information (including photos and video). It includes, but is not limited to:

- Blogging and microblogging sites e.g. X / Twitter, LinkedIn
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces & chat apps e.g. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp
- Media sharing platforms e.g. YouTube, TikTok

"Staff" refers to any individual who is employed by the Trust (including any agency workers or contractors) or volunteers who operate on the Trust's behalf, e.g. Trustees, Members, Governors, in-school volunteers.

A "Parent" includes the natural or adoptive parent of a pupil as well as any non-parent / carer who has parental responsibility including being involved in the day-to-day care of a pupil.

A "Pupil" includes any incoming or current pupil at any school within the Trust. It also includes any individual who was previously a pupil at any school within the Trust and who has left within the appropriate timeframe for consideration as necessary, e.g. complaints.

"Abusive" can be summarised as making any posts or comments which are bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting, illegal, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate (e.g. racist, homophobic, transphobic etc.).

2. Use of official school or Trust social media

Greensand Multi Academy Trust and its schools use a variety of official social media channels/platforms including, but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok & YouTube.

These accounts are managed responsibly and securely by more than one authorised member of staff within the schools or Trust Central Team. Staff members who have not been authorised to manage, or post to, the accounts must not access, or attempt to access, these accounts. If staff have suggestions for the social media channel(s), please speak to the designated members of staff in the school or Trust Central Team.

School staff should take photos/videos of pupils for use on the school social media accounts with official school camera / mobile phone / iPad / other IT equipment, rather than their personal mobile phone.

School staff must send any photos/videos/wording for posts to the member of staff responsible for the official school social media accounts to post on the official school social media accounts and not their own personal social media accounts.

The Trust Central Team / schools will post or share on their social media channels:

- Content relevant to the Trust / school or families
- Content which is in line with Trust / school values
- Photos / videos of pupils who have photographic consent
- Only first names of pupils who have photographic consent

The Trust Central Team / schools will occasionally:

- Share relevant posts to local Facebook community groups for the purpose of promotion within, or information for, the local community, for example hall/swimming pool available for hire, celebrating an achievement
- Take out paid advertising within the local community, for example for upcoming Open Events

The Trust Central Team / schools will not post or share on their social media channels:

- Surnames of pupils who have photographic consent
- Images of any pupils who do not have photographic consent
- Harmful or abusive comments
- Political statements or opinions
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the schools e.g. notice of spaces available in an after-school activity club
- Links to staff members' personal accounts
- Any misinformation, fake news or other content that could harm the reputation of the Trust or its schools.

2.1 Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments we consider to be spam
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the schools' complaints policies. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, appropriate actions as outlined in section 7. of this policy will be considered.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the school community.

2.2 Following other social media users

The Trust / school will only 'like' or 'follow' social media with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind.

3. Personal use of social media by staff

The Trust expects all staff to consider the safety of pupils and the risks (reputational and financial) to its schools when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts. We consider it best practice for staff to set their social media accounts to 'private' and politely request that staff follow this best practice.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

Staff **should always**:

- Ensure that their own personal or political opinions, including those posted on social media platforms, do not interfere with any policy of the Trust and make it clear they are personal opinions and not aligned with, or a wider representation of, the teaching or views of the Trust

- Be responsible for ensuring that their private interests and personal associations do not conflict with their professional duties.

Staff **must not** use social media in such a manner that may bring the reputation of the school, Trust or any Trust employee into disrepute. For example:

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business
- Accept friend invitations or become friends with any pupil of the Trust on any social media platform. You should also refrain from following any pupil on Twitter / X, Instagram or other similar social media accounts of pupils. Contact with pupils should be through the individual School's authorised mechanisms e.g. Study Bugs, Show my Homework, Marvellous Me, ParentMail, Satchel. Personal phone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via all social media platforms should not be used and you should not share your home address with pupils. If contacted via an inappropriate route, you must inform the Headteacher or DSL immediately. This applies to pupils up to the age of 18.
- Complain or make abusive or defamatory posts / messages about the Trust or any of its schools, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of pupils
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school or Trust
- Link their social media profile to their work email account (unless you are the designated member of staff responsible for social media within the Trust Central Team / school).
- Use personal social media during your normal working day, except in a professional capacity.
- With the exception of pre-existing or otherwise reasonable relationships (e.g. extended family member, neighbour, family friend etc.), accept friend invitations or become friends with or follow any parent of pupils within the Trust on any social media platform.

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct.

Any communication received from current pupils (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should also not have contact via personal accounts with past pupils up until the age of 18 (if ongoing communication is required, this should be using via official school channels).

Greensand Multi Academy Trust retains the right to request that any potentially damaging comments or material are removed from social media platforms.

Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously by the Trust and its schools and, in the event of illegal, defamatory, or discriminatory content, breaches could lead to prosecution.

4. Personal use of social media by pupils

We expect everybody to behave in a positive manner online, engaging respectfully with our schools / Trust and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face.

The Trust & its schools encourage pupils to:

- Be respectful to members of staff, and the Trust / school, at all times
- Be respectful to other pupils and parents/carers
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints policy
- Pupils **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other pupils or the Trust / school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other pupils or parents/carers
- Post images of other pupils without their permission
- 'Follow' or make 'friend' requests to any member of staff, governor, volunteer (with the exception of pre-existing or otherwise reasonable relationships (e.g. extended family member, neighbour, family friend)).

Any concerns about a pupil's social media use will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy.

5. Responsibilities of parents/carers with social media

We expect everybody to behave in a positive manner online, engaging respectfully with our schools / Trust and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face. Making or sharing grievances or complaints on social media is unlikely to help resolve any issues, but can cause upset to staff, pupils and parents/carers, also undermining staff morale and the reputation of the school / Trust (which is important for the pupils we serve).

We expect parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.

We ask parents discuss with their child(ren) their activity on social media. We ask parents/carers to respect age ratings on social media platforms wherever possible and not encourage or condone underage use. Talk to your children about the apps, sites and games they use, with whom, for how long, and when (late at night / in bedrooms is not helpful for a good night's sleep and productive learning at school the next day).

'Social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate, create and share content or information (including photos and video). It includes, but is not limited to:

- Blogging and microblogging sites e.g. X / Twitter, LinkedIn
- Online discussion forums
- Collaborative spaces & chat apps e.g. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp
- Media sharing platforms e.g. YouTube, TikTok

"Abusive" can be summarised as making any posts or comments which are bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting, illegal, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate (e.g. racist, homophobic, transphobic etc.).

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, social media or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers **should**:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of Greensand staff and the school/Trust at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints policy

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils, the school or Trust. If you have a grievance or complaint to make, please contact the school directly to resolve the matter through the normal channels. Our complaints policy can be found on the Trust and schools' websites.
- Make inappropriate or abusive comments or posts about members of staff, other parents/carers, pupils or the school / Trust
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents

- Post images or videos of or comments about children other than their own, for privacy and child protection reasons, without the express advance permission of those pictured (or their parent/carer if under 18).

6. Monitoring and review

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, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The Trust will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of its schools.

7. Actions to be considered by the Trust or individual schools in the event of non-compliance with or breach of this policy

Following any non-compliance with or breach of this policy, the Trust and/or individual schools will consider a response that could involve one or more of the following actions dependent upon the nature of the non-compliance:

- Contact individuals directly, to stop issues continuing
- Request a meeting with individuals
- With the permission of the individuals concerned, view messages sent between individuals to deal with problems quickly and effectively
- Ask individuals to remove comments or posts immediately
- Blocking the individuals
- Request that 'group chats' are closed down, should any problems exist between individuals
- Report the matter to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the particular social media site
- Set out the school's concerns to the individual in writing, giving them a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed
- Contact the host/provider of the social media site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information
- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this
- Contact the police if considered appropriate by the Trust or school

8. Related policies

- Child protection / Safeguarding Policy
- School ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention & Destruction Policy