Ocean Academy

SOCIAL MEDIA (STAFF) POLICY

Version control	
Social Media (Staff) Policy [2024-09-01]	Reviewed and no changes required.
Social Media (Staff) Policy [2022-09-01]	Reviewed and updated to reflect obligations under keeping children safe in education, and additional consents.
Social Media (Staff) Policy [2021-04-01]	Reviewed and updated previous version to align with new DPO appointment.

Date of next review:	**September 2026**	**Owner:**	**Director of HR & Compliance**
Type of policy:	**Trust Template**	**Approving Body:**	**Executive Operational Board**

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy is based on the Aspirations Academies Trust template Social Media Policy.

1.2. This policy applies to all Academy staff regardless of their employment status. It is to be read in conjunction with the Academy's **Electronic Information and Communications Systems** and **Acceptable Use Policy**. This policy does not form part of the terms and conditions of employee's employment with the Academy and is not intended to have contractual effect. It does however set out the Academy's current practices and required standards of conduct and all staff are required to comply with its contents. Breach of the provisions of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary offence which may result in disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal in accordance with the Academy's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

2. Purpose of this Policy

2.1 The Academy recognises 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, LinkedIn, blogs, Instagram, Tik Tok, WhatsApp and Wikipedia.

2.2 However, staff use of social media can pose risks to the Academy's confidential and proprietary information, its reputation and can jeopardise the Academy's compliance with its legal obligations.

2.3 To minimise these risks, avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate work related purposes, all Academy staff are required to comply with the provisions in this policy.

3. Who is covered by this policy?

3.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades within the Academy, including senior managers, officers, governors, trustees, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **Staff** in this policy).

3.2 Third parties who have access to the Academy's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

4. Scope and Purpose of this Policy

4.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wikipedia, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.

4.2 It applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

4.3 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

4.4 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours and regardless of whether the Academy's 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 the Academy's investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

4.5 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.

5. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

5.1 The Regional Board (which is the local Governing Board of the Academy) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Principal.

5.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the Principal in liaison with the IT Manager.

5.3 All senior Academy Staff 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.

5.4 All Academy staff are expected to comply with 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 Principal in the first instance. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed by email to the Principal or Jane Burry -

Office Manager.

6. Compliance with related policies and agreements

6.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Academy's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of the Academy's policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, staff are prohibited from using social media to:

a) **Breach the Electronic Information and Communications Systems Policy;**
b) **Breach the Academy's obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;**
c) **Breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;**
d) **Breach the Academy's expectations of good conduct (e.g as set out in the staff code of conduct/and or disciplinary policy);**
e) **Defame or disparage the Academy, its staff, its pupils or parents, its affiliates, partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders;**
f) **Harass or bully other staff in any way**
g) **Unlawfully discriminate against other Staff or third parties or breach the Equal opportunities policy;**
h) **Breach the Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online);**
i) **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).**
j) **Breach our obligations for Keeping Children Safe in Education**

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

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

7. Personal use of social media

7.1 Personal use of social media is never permitted during working time or by means of the Academy's computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems.

7.2 Staff should not use a work email address to sign up to any social media and any

personal social media page should not make reference to their employment with the Academy (excluding LinkedIn, where prior permission is sought from the Principal).

7.3 Staff must not take photos or posts from social media that belong to the Academy for their own personal use.

8. Monitoring

8.1 The contents of the Academy's IT resources and communications systems are the property of the Academy/Trust. 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.

8.2 The Academy reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff members' activities using its IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that its rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

8.3 The Academy 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.

8.4 All staff members are advised not to use the Academy's IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential from the Academy.

9. Educational or Extra Curricular Use of Social Media

9.1 If a staff member's duties require them to speak on behalf of the Academy in a social media environment, they must follow the protocol as outlined below.

9.2 The Principal may require staff members to undergo training before they use social media on behalf of the Academy and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to their activities.

9.3 Likewise, if a staff member is contacted for comments about the Academy for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they must direct the inquiry to the Principal and must not respond without advanced written approval.

10. Recruitment

10.1 The Academy may use internet searches to perform pre employment checks on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where the Academy does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

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.

12. Photographs for use of Social Media

Any photos for social media posts may only be taken using Academy cameras/devices or devices that have been approved in advance by the school business manager or the Principal. (Please also refer to the Photography and Videos at School Policy).

13. Staff Protocol for use of Social Media

Where any post is going to be made on the Academy's own social media the following steps must be taken:

a. Ensure that permission from the child's parent has been sought before information is used on social media. The form that is used should be based on the template provided in the Photography and Videos at School Policy.
b. Ensure that there is no identifying information relating to a child/children in the post - for example any certificates in photos are blank/without names or the child's name cannot be seen on the piece of work. The Academy should seek additional consent to include any names when posting on social media
c. The post must be a positive and relevant post relating to the children, the good work of staff, the Academy or any achievements.
d. Social Media can also be used to issue updates or reminders to parents/guardians. Chris Beedie will have overall responsibility for this. Any staff member wishing for a reminder to be issued should contact Chris Beedie so their request can be progressed.
e. The proposed post must be presented to a member of SLT or the school business manager for confirmation that the post can 'go live' before it is

posted on any social media site.

f. Chris Beedie will post the information, but all staff have responsibility to ensure that the Social Media post meets expectations and criterias above.

14. Protecting our business reputation

i. Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

- The Academy or the Aspirations Academies Trust (references to the Academy in this section, should also be considered as relating to the Trust as well) ;
- Current, past or prospective staff as defined in this policy
- Current, past or prospective pupils (or their parents, carers or families)
- The Academy's suppliers and services providers; and
- Other affiliates and stakeholders.

14.1. Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Academy's reputation, even indirectly.

14.2. If staff are using social media they should make it clear in any social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal rather than Academy e-mail address when communicating via social media.

14.3. Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Staff should remember that what they publish might be available to be read by the masses (including the Academy itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Staff should keep this in mind before they post content.

14.4. If staff disclose whether directly or indirectly their affiliation to the Academy as a member of staff whether past, current or prospective, they must also state that their views do not represent those of the Academy.

14.5. Staff must ensure that their profile and any content posted are consistent with the professional image they are required to present to colleagues, pupils and parents.

14.6. Staff must avoid posting comments about confidential or sensitive Academy related topics. Even if staff make it clear that their views on such topics do not represent those of the Academy, such comments could still damage the Academy's reputation and incur potential liability.

14.7. If a member of staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until

they have discussed it with their line manager or Head of Department.

14.8. If a member of staff sees content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Academy, its staff, pupils, parents, service providers or stakeholders, they are required to report this in the first instance to the Principal without unreasonable delay. All staff are responsible for protecting the Academy's reputation.

14.9. Respecting intellectual property and confidential information.

14.10. Staff should not do anything to jeopardise Academy confidential information and intellectual property through the use of social media.

14.11. In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other Academies, organisations, companies and individuals, which can create liability for the Academy, as well as the individual author.

14.12. Staff must not use the Academy's logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks, or post any of the Academy's confidential or proprietary information without express prior written permission from the Principal.

14.13. To protect yourself and the Academy against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, reference sources of particular information you post or upload and cite them accurately. If you have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, ask the Principal in the first instance before making the communication.

14.14. Respecting colleagues, pupils, parents, clients, service providers and stakeholders.

14.15. Staff must not post anything that their colleagues, the Academy's past, current or prospective pupils, parents, service providers or stakeholders may find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

14.16. Staff must not post anything related to colleagues, the Academy's past, current or prospective pupils, parents, service providers or stakeholders without their advanced written permission.

15. Monitoring and review of this policy

15.1. SLT together with the Principal shall be responsible for reviewing this policy from time to time and liaising with the Trust' s Director of HR and Compliance to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

15.2. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that any person who may be involved with administration or investigations carried out under this policy receives regular and appropriate training to assist them with these duties.

15.3. If staff have any questions about this policy or suggestions for additions that they would like to be considered on review, they may do so by emailing the Principal in

the first instance.