



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Date of last review:	November 2019	Review period:	2 years
Date of next review:	November 2021	Owner:	CEO
Type of policy:	Trust	LGB or Board approval:	Board

1. Introduction

Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped. This gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and staff within Victoria Academies Trust. It will also provide guidance for parents.

There are four key areas:

- The use of social networking sites by pupils within the Trust.
- Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity
- Comments posted by parents/carers
- Dealing with incidents of online bullying

2. The use of social networking sites by pupils within academy

Each academy will have an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which outlines the rules for using technology in academies and these rules therefore apply to use of social networking sites. Such sites should not be used/accessed in academies unless under the direction of a teacher and for a purpose clearly apparent from the learning objective of the relevant learning experience. If social media sites are used, then staff should carry out a risk assessment to determine which tools are appropriate.

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered, including Facebook and Instagram to name two.

3. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

Guidelines are issued to staff:

- Staff must never add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are strongly advised not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff must not post comments about the academy, pupils, parents or colleagues including Academy Councillors and Trustees.
- Staff must not post information or opinions about Victoria Academies Trust, or any academy within the Trust, or pictures of academy events.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).

- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Headteacher or Head of Academy in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

4. Comments posted by parents/carers

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking. Methods of academy communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. Academy policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for the child.

- Parents must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at an academy event.
- Parents should make complaints through official academy channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the academy community.

5. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites

The academy's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the academy roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Governing Body will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy and will send a letter.

The Academy Council understands that, there are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged. Furthermore, Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written which:

- expose (*an individual*) to hatred, ridicule or contempt
- cause (*an individual*) to be shunned or avoided
- lower (*an individual's*) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (*an individual in their*) business, trade, office or profession.