



Social Media Policy

'We seek to ensure that all our children learn and thrive in an environment completely free from the fear of intimidation by others.'

Reviewed January 2025

Next Review due January 2027

Preston Primary Academy Trust

Social Media Policy

As a Trust, with members who are Church of England Schools, this policy reflects the Christian values of honesty, compassion, respect, and encouragement. We seek to ensure that all our children learn and thrive in an environment completely free from the fear of intimidation by others.

Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform, which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft, Roblox, Fortnite and video sharing platforms such as You Tube have social media elements to them. The policy also applies to personal web pages, personal space provided by internet providers and any other internet presences which make available personal information (including images) and opinions to the general public.

Preston Primary Academy Trust recognises that social media is a growing part of life outside of school and that there are numerous benefits and opportunities which social media and the internet offer. However, there are some risks associated with their use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage their safe use by all those who are part of Preston Primary Academy Trust community including staff, volunteers, parents, carers, and children.

Scope

This policy should be read alongside the Trust's Codes of Conduct and Acceptable Use Agreements.

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and volunteers, and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the Trust and its schools.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.

- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education.
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the Trust and its schools.

Preston Primary Academy Trust respects privacy and understands that staff, volunteers, and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the Trust and/or schools' reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a Trust or school account, or using the Trust or school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media or other personal account. In all cases, where any personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Staff must not link their own sites to the Trust or to their school's website or use the Trust's or their school's or any other identifiers on their personal web pages.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with pupils are also under regular consideration. If Preston Primary Academy Trust decides to implement individual school social media accounts in the future, staff will be permitted to use this to communicate with learners for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and understand the potential implications of doing so.

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Senior Leadership Team**
 - Facilitate training and guidance on social media use.
 - Implement the social media policy.

- Take a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
- Make an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
- Receive completed applications for social media accounts.
- Approve account creation.
- **Administrators / Moderators**
 - Create the account following SLT approval.
 - Store account details, including passwords securely.
 - Assist in monitoring and contributing to the account.
 - Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)
- **Staff and Volunteers**
 - Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is conducted in line with this and other relevant policies.
 - Attend appropriate training.
 - Regularly monitor, update, and manage content he/she has posted via school accounts.
 - Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school.
 - Staff must not “friend,” follow or engage with current or past pupils of their school, or other schools within the Trust, on any personal social media network account.
 - Staff and volunteers should report any pupil-initiated communication with their personal accounts to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Pupils**
 - The school’s PSHE curriculum will teach our pupils to be safe and responsible users of social media.
 - Pupils are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved using the school’s behaviour policy.
- **Parents/Carers**

- The schools have active family learning education programmes which support the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the web.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person.

Process for creating social media accounts.

The Trust community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to their School Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or, in the case of the central team, to the Chief Executive Officer, which covers the following points:

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- Who will be able to contribute content to the account
- Will the account be open or private/closed?

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the Trust or school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the Trust or school, including volunteers or parents.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Monitoring posts about the school

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school.
- The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be always professional and respectful and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.
- Staff must not 'friend', 'follow' or otherwise contact pupils through their personal social media accounts. If pupils attempt to 'friend' or 'follow' a staff member, they will report this to the headteacher.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff and escalated, where appropriate, under the Trust Disciplinary Policy.
- Conduct that raises safeguarding concerns will be reported to the local authority designated officer (LADO).
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal

with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must follow this policy before responding.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the Trust or its schools, manage offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, Trust and school users should block, report, or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Tiktok)

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the Trust's digital photography and images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts

- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Pupils should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Safeguarding

- Any disclosures made by pupils to staff about online abuse, harassment or exploitation, whether they are the victim or disclosing on behalf of another child, will be handled in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Concerns regarding a staff member's online behaviour will be reported to the headteacher or CEO, who will decide on the best course of action in line with the relevant policies, e.g. the Staff Code of Conduct, Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy, and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. If the concern is about the headteacher, it will be reported to the chair of governors.
- Concerns regarding a pupil's online behaviour will be reported to the DSL, who will investigate any concerns with relevant staff members, e.g. the headteacher and ICT technicians, and manage concerns in accordance with relevant policies depending on their nature, e.g. the Behaviour Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Where there is a concern that illegal activity has taken place, the headteacher will contact the police. The Trust will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils, e.g. calling the police, where criminal behaviour is thought to be inadvertent and as a result of ignorance or normal developmental curiosity, e.g. a pupil has taken and distributed indecent imagery of themselves. The DSL will decide in which cases this response is appropriate and will manage such cases in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- As part of the usual communication with parents, the school will reinforce the importance of pupils being safe online and inform parents what systems the school uses to filter and monitor online use. The school will also make it clear to parents what their children are being asked to do online for school. including what platforms they will be asked to access and who from the school, if anyone, they will be interacting with online.

Appendix A

Managing your personal use of social media and the internet:

- “Nothing” on social media is truly private.
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don’t use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy.
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint.
- Keep your personal information private.
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online consider; Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post.
- If you want to criticise, do it politely.
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Remember the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance suggests that schools and colleges might want to consider an online search as part of their due diligence of shortlisted candidates.
- Know how to report a problem.

Managing school social media accounts

- Don’t make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute.
- Don’t publish confidential or commercially sensitive material.
- Don’t breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation.
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts, and don’t link to, embed, or add potentially inappropriate content.
- Don’t post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing, or discriminatory content.
- Don’t use social media to air internal grievances.