Social Media (Staff) Policy

Policy Code:	HR22
Policy Start Date:	September 2023
Policy Review Date:	September 2026

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR3 Grievance Policy
- HR5 Acceptable Use Policy
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy
- HR29 Code of Conduct
- HR42 Low-Level Concerns Policy
- ICT2 Online Safety (Staff) Policy
- SW5 Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy

1 Policy Statement

1.1 Social media technology can serve as a powerful tool to enhance education, communication and learning. This technology can provide both educational and professional benefits. This policy is in place to minimise the risk to The Trust through use of social media, while recognising any benefits its use may present.

1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire SCITT.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Head of Human Resources.

2.2 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 Aims

3.1 To ensure that all stakeholders who utilise social media technology for the professional and personal purposes described below, including staff and pupils, do so in a safe and responsible manner.

3.2 To ensure all staff, pupils, trainees, Trustees, governors and volunteers follow the guidelines and recommended practices for professional social media communication between staff, as well as social media communication between staff and pupils.

3.3 To ensure The Trust recognises the public and pervasive nature of social media communications, as well as the fact that in this digital era, the lines between professional and personal endeavours are sometimes blurred. All staff, trainees, volunteers, Trustees and governors should follow the guidelines and recommended practices for use of personal social media by staff.

4   Definition of Social Media

4.1   Social media are defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including, but not limited to, social networks, blogs, Internet websites, Internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Snapchat and WhatsApp.

Professional social media is a work-related social media activity that is either school-based (e.g., a Facebook page for an Academy or a teacher establishing a blog for their class), or non-school-based (e.g. a twitter account to promote a Trust service).

Personal social media use is a non-work-related social media activity (e.g. a member of staff establishing a Facebook page or a Twitter account for their own personal use).

5   Maintaining Separate Professional and Personal E-mail Accounts

5.1   Staff who decide to engage in professional social media activities should maintain separate professional and personal e-mail addresses. As such, staff should not use their personal e-mail address for professional social media activities; rather, they should use their professional e-mail address that is completely separate from any personal social media they maintain.

6   Trust Expectations Regarding Professional Social Media Sites

6.1   Professional social media sites that are Academy-based should be designed to address reasonable instructional, educational or extra-curricular programme matters. For Section 6 the term 'staff' is used to incorporate a member of staff employed by the Trust, as well as any individual undertaking a training placement at any of the Trust's settings.

6.2   If a trainee teacher, undertaking a training placement within a Trust setting, wishes to set up and/or contribute to a professional social media site, then a member of staff must oversee the trainee's activities and take ultimate responsibility for the site and any content.

6.2   Staff should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. The same standards expected in professional settings are expected on professional social media sites. If a particular type of behaviour is inappropriate in the classroom or a professional workplace, then that behaviour is also inappropriate on the professional social media site. Staff should refer to the Trust's Code of Conduct if unsure of the Trust's expectations.

6.3   Staff should exercise caution, sound judgment and common sense when using professional social media sites. Staff must not use professional social media to express a personal opinion, in particular on matters of public policy, politics, or controversial subjects.

6.4   When establishing professional social media sites, staff should consider the intended audience for the site. Staff must also consider the level of privacy assigned to the site; specifically whether the site should be a private network (e.g. it is limited to a particular class or particular class within an academy) or a public network (e.g. anyone within the setting, a larger group). It is recommended practice for professional social media sites to be private networks, unless there is a specific educational need for the site to be a public network.

6.5   Staff should obtain Academy SLT approval by using a registration form before setting up a professional social media presence. These forms can be obtained from the Federation's Strategic ICT Co-ordinator.

6.6   A list should be maintained of all professional social media accounts within the Academy. A member of staff setting up a professional social media account will be asked to share their login details with a nominated member of SLT.

6.7   Professional social media sites should include language identifying the sites as professional social media sites to differentiate them from personal sites.

6.8   Staff should use privacy settings to control access to their professional social media sites with the objective that professional social media communications only reach the intended audience. However, staff must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change an individual's current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, each member of staff has a responsibility to understand the rules of the social media site being utilised.

6.9   Professional social media communication must remain legal. Confidential information must not be disclosed and prohibitions must be placed on the use of harassing, obscene, discriminatory, defamatory or threatening language. The Trust must remain politically impartial on any social media site, and is prohibited from promoting partisan political views.

6.10   If images of pupils are to be posted online, there must be a media consent form on file at the Academy for each child featured. This form can be obtained from the data team at each site. It is not recommended that staff post photos of

colleagues on professional social media sites without prior permission of the member of staff in the photo.

6.11 Staff are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback regarding their work-related professional social media sites. The monitoring responsibilities include reviewing the professional social media sites on a regular basis. If managers discover questionable communications or behaviour on professional social media sites, they are required to contact a member of the SLT for assistance. If members of staff decide to create a professional social media site and they are notified of questionable communications or behaviour on their site, they may remove the material and/or contact SLT.

6.12 If private messaging is a facility provided by the member of staff's professional social media site they must not use this function to communicate with pupils and/or parents/carers. If possible, this function should be switched off. If a pupil or a parent/carer tries to communicate privately with a member of staff on social media, the member of staff should not respond, and should speak to their Line Manager, or the setting's DSL.

6.13 If pupils post anything on a member of staff's professional social media site which causes concern or they disclose abuse then the member of staff must follow their setting's safeguarding procedures and report their concerns immediately.

7   Personal Social Media Use

7.1 In order to maintain a professional and appropriate relationship with pupils, staff, trainees and volunteers should not communicate with or have any direct connection with pupils who are currently enrolled in any of The Trust's settings on personal social media sites and/or online gaming sites. Communication with pupils and/or their parents/carers may be permitted in the following circumstances:

   a) communication with parents/carers of pupils, where the communication does not relate to any pupil enrolled in any of the Trust's settings and is not related to any Trust business;
   b) if an emergency situation requires such communication, in which case, the member of staff should notify SLT of the communication as soon as possible (please note this type of communication would not be undertaken by a trainee or volunteer); or
   c) if the pupil is an existing friend or familial relation of the member of staff, trainee or volunteer, subject to the approval of the SLT. Such approval is at the absolute discretion of the SLT or the Trust.

7.2   Staff, trainees or volunteers should not communicate privately on personal social media sites and/or online gaming sites with learners from Priory Apprenticeships who are under the age of 18. In the event that the learner is an existing friend or familial relation of the member of staff or trainee, or there are believed to be exceptional circumstances, the member of staff or trainee must speak to, and seek approval from, a member of SLT.

8   Guidance Regarding Personal Social Media Sites

8.1   Staff, trainees and volunteers (collectively referred to in section 8 as 'staff') should exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites:

a)   As a recommended practice, staff are encouraged to use appropriate privacy settings to control access to their personal social media sites. However, staff must be aware that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the Internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change an individual's current default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, staff are responsible for understanding the rules of the social media site being utilised.

b)   It is not recommended that staff "tag" photos of their colleagues, volunteers, contractors or vendors without the prior permission of the individuals being tagged.

c)   Staff are prohibited from posting or disclosing personally identifiable pupil information or confidential information via personal social media sites.

d)   Staff should not use any of the Academies' or Trust logos or make representations that their personal social media sites speak in an official capacity. Staff should make it clear in personal social media postings, or in their personal profiles, that they are speaking on their own behalf. Staff should write in the first person and use a personal email address. Personal social media should not be linked to a member of staff's professional email address.

e)   If staff see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on The Trust, they should contact their setting's management team.

f)   Staff should not use personal social media to participate in any form of cyberbullying (bullying, harassment or victimisation), Any reported cases of cyberbullying will be investigated through the Trust's HR12 Disciplinary Policy.

g)   If, through their own social media use, staff become concerned that a pupil's activity online may be putting them at risk of harm, e.g. using online dating websites inappropriately/accessing age inappropriate sites, then they must follow their setting's safeguarding procedures and report this immediately.

h)   Where staff use personal social media as a means of networking/engaging with other professionals, e.g. LinkedIn, they must not have connections with current pupils (this includes learners under the age of 18 for Priory

Apprenticeships), and there should be a justifiable business reason for any connections with ex-pupils.

i) Where staff have any concerns or are uncertain about the appropriateness of their online connections, they should speak with their Line Manager, setting DSL and/or Head of Setting.

j) If staff have any concerns about the online behaviour of another member of staff or adult working with the Trust's children and young people, they should report this in line with their setting's safeguarding procedures.

9   Applicability of Policies and Other Laws

9.1   This policy provides guidance intended to supplement, not supersede, existing child protection procedures and laws, the Acceptable Use, Code of Conduct and Data Protection Policies.

10   Social Media Misuse

10.1   Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal. Any member of staff, volunteer or trainee suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the Trust's investigation.

10.2   Staff, volunteers or trainees may be required to remove any social media that the Trust considers to be a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

10.3   Staff, volunteers and trainees must avoid making any social media communications that could damage The Trust's business interests or reputation, even indirectly.

10.4   Staff, volunteers and trainees must not use social media to defame or disparage the Trust, its staff or any third party, to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties, to make false or misleading statements, or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.

10.5   Staff, volunteers and trainees must avoid being linked to anything inappropriate, prejudicial or discriminatory, for example, racist material, whether this is through posting directly or through follows, likes, retweeting or other forms of sharing.

10.6   Staff, volunteers and trainees must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as the Trust's performance, or do anything to jeopardise the Trust's confidential information or intellectual property unless authorised to do so and only on professional social media.

10.7 Staff, volunteers and trainees must not post any communications that would amount to a breach of any of the Trust policies or will bring the Trust into disrepute.

11 Monitoring

11.1 To ensure that Trust policies are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes, the Trust reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff, volunteers and trainee activities using Trust IT resources and communications systems. This includes, but is not limited, to social media postings and activities. Staff, volunteers and trainees consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems.

12 Recruitment

12.1 The Trust may use internet searches to perform due diligence on shortlisted candidates in the course of recruitment. When this occurs, The Trust will act in accordance with its Data Protection and Equal Opportunities obligations.

13 Policy Change

13.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust
Social Media (Staff) Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Pay, Performance and HR Committee:

Signed…………………………… Name.. Date:

Trustee

Signed…………………………… Name.. Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed…………………………… Name.. Date:

Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.

Appendix 1

Key Terms

Blogs - Short for 'web-logs', these are sites that can function as on-going journals with multiple entries. Typically, entries are categorized with 'tags' (content labels or captions) for easy searching. Most blogs allow for reader comments. Examples: Blogger, Wordpress, TypePad.

Micro-Blogs - These blogs allow for shorter content posts, typically with a limited set of typed characters allowed. Micro-blogs can be used for status updates and to quickly communicate information to 'friends' or 'followers.' Examples: Twitter, Tumblr.

Networking - These sites allow people to connect with each other around common interests, pursuits and other categories. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Ning, StumbleUpon

Photo/Video - These sites allow people to share videos, images, slideshows, and other media. Often these sites allow viewers to comment and share posted content. Examples: YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr.