

# Every Child Matters Academy Trust

## Social Media Policy

### 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 policy gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and school staff at the Trust's schools. It will also provide guidance for parents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (including online safety)
- The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- The Anti-Bullying Policy
- The Complaints Policy
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People

There are five key areas:

- A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school
- B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity
- C. Comments posted by parents/carers
- D. Dealing with incidents of online bullying
- E. Training, education and monitoring

### A. The use of social networking sites by pupils within school

- The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) applies to use of social networking sites.
- Such sites should not be used/accessed in school unless under the direction of a teacher and clearly linked to a learning objective.
- Staff must carry out a risk assessment to determine which tools are appropriate.
- Social media sites approved for classroom use include blogging sites (Primary Blogger)
- Parents will give permission for children to access these sites in school and for images of their child / child's work to be included.
- Children under the age of 13 must not be registered users of most commercial social media platforms. The school will remind parents/carers of these age restrictions.

The school will also:

- Teach pupils how to use online platforms safely and respectfully, as part of statutory RSHE and computing curriculum requirements.

- Equip pupils with strategies to recognise, manage and report online risks, in line with the DfE's *Teaching Online Safety in Schools* guidance.

## B. Use of social networking by staff in a personal capacity

Staff are reminded that their professional reputation, and that of the Trust, must be protected.

Guidelines for staff:

- Staff must never add pupils as 'friends' on their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are strongly advised not to add parents as 'friends'. If they do, they must behave professionally and not bring the school into disrepute; otherwise disciplinary action may be taken.
- Staff must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents, governors, trustees or colleagues.
- Staff must not use social networking sites for personal use during lesson times.
- Staff must ensure their use of social networking does not conflict with the Teachers' Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust privacy settings regularly.
- Staff must comply with the Guidance for Safer Working Practice.
- Inappropriate use must be reported to the Headteacher and may lead to disciplinary action.

The school will ensure:

- Training on online safety and social media risks is provided at induction and refreshed annually.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) undertakes specialist training in online risks to support staff and pupils.
- Governors and trustees receive training to provide strategic oversight of online safety.

## C. Comments posted by parents/carers

Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding social networking.

- Parents must not post pictures of pupils (other than their own children) taken at school events.
- Complaints should be made through official channels (e.g. Complaints Policy) rather than via social networking sites.
- Parents should not post malicious, defamatory or fictitious comments about any member of the school community.

- The Trust will provide guidance and resources (e.g., workshops, newsletters, links to NSPCC/UK Safer Internet Centre) to help parents support their child's safe and responsible online behaviour.

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

- The Trust's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out processes and sanctions for any type of bullying, including online.
- Inappropriate use by parents will be addressed by the Governing Body, who may request removal of comments and refer to the Complaints Policy.
- In cases of serious misuse (e.g., racist content, threats of violence, harassment), the Trust will consider police involvement.
- Staff, parents and pupils should be reminded that laws of defamation and privacy apply online.

The Trust Board 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." (National Association of Headteachers)

## E. Training, Education and Monitoring

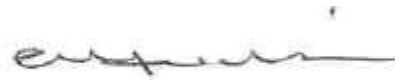
To ensure this policy is effective and up to date:

- Staff Training: All staff will receive online safety training at induction and through annual refreshers.
- Governor/Trustee Training: Governors and trustees will be trained in online safety to fulfil their strategic safeguarding duties.
- DSL Role: The DSL will take lead responsibility for online safety, including training, advice, monitoring incidents and keeping knowledge up to date.

- Curriculum Integration: Online safety education will be embedded across RSHE and computing, including issues such as respectful communication, online bullying, pornography, grooming, misogyny, extremist content and misinformation.
- Mobile Devices: The Trust will operate a clear mobile phone policy in line with government guidance. Mobile phones will not be used during the school day except where explicitly authorised. Schools may require pupils to hand in or securely store devices during school hours.
- Parental Engagement: The Trust will actively involve parents through workshops, newsletters, and recommended resources to build digital resilience at home.
- Monitoring and Review: This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if statutory guidance changes.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

To be next reviewed Autumn 2028.



Chair of Trustees \_\_\_\_\_ CEO \_\_\_\_\_