



Social Media Policy

Communication

In order to realise shared goals and achieve the very best for learners we work collaboratively with parents/carers, schools, academies and other stakeholders. We will communicate the highest standards and expectations at all times. their success widely.

Respect

Respect is the foundation on which our schools values are based. We promote care, trust and honesty with our learners, their families/carers, schools, academies and all other partners and stakeholders.

Date:	September 2021
Date approved by Management Committee:	16.9.21
Signature of Chair of Management Committee:	<i>A. Cunningham</i>
To be reviewed:	Annually

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1. About this policy

- 1.1 This policy is in place to minimise the risks to The Link School (Sunderland) through use of social media.
- 1.2 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn and all other social networking sites, internet postings, blogs and chat apps. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our school in any way.
- 1.3 This policy covers all employees, consultants, contractors, officers, volunteers, casual workers, agency workers, trustees, members and governors.
- 1.4 This policy ensures The Link School maintains their duty to safeguard children, the reputation of The Link School and those who work for it and the wider community.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.
- 1.6 References to "learners" throughout this policy shall mean learners other than the staff members own child or relation.

2. Personnel responsibility for implementing the policy

- 2.1 The Link School has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but have delegated day to day responsibility for its operation to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and specific members of staff.
- 2.2 Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks lies with the SLT and School Management Committee (SMC), who will review this policy annually to ensure that it meets the legal requirements and reflects best practice.
- 2.3 SLT have a specific responsibility for operation 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.
- 2.4 All staff are responsible for the success of 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 Head Teacher. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should also be directed to the Head Teacher.

3. Compliance with related policies and agreements

- 3.1 Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:
 - (a) breach our ICT policies and procedures;
 - (b) breach our Staff Code of Conduct;
 - (c) breach our school Disciplinary Policy or procedures;
 - (d) breach our Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy;
 - (e) breach our Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - (f) breach our Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague or learner online);
 - (g) breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.
- 3.2 Staff who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including the termination of employment.
- 3.3 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 organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

3.4 Staff must make themselves aware of and act in accordance with their duties under the DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 as these relate to:

- their own on-line activity
- the on-line activity of learners and other colleagues and
- information of which they become aware on-line

including their duties relating to Children Missing from Education, Child Sexual Exploitation, FGM and Preventing Radicalisation (Prevent).

4. Personal use of social media

- 4.1 Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with this policy.
- 4.2 You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage our business interests of reputation, even indirectly.
- 4.3 You must not use social media to defame or disparage us, our staff, learners, parents/carers or any third party; to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against learners, parents/carers, staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- 4.4 You must not express opinions on our behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager. You may be required to undergo training in order to obtain such authorisation.
- 4.5 You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our confidential information and intellectual property.
- 4.6 You must not accept learners or their parents/carers as friends or use social media to send any personal messages to them directly or indirectly – personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and may put you and/or your colleagues vulnerable to allegations.
- 4.7 You are strongly advised not to be friends (on or offline) with recent learners (the potential for colleagues at the school to be compromised in terms of

content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking) and colleagues at the school are also strongly advised not to be friends with learners at other schools (on or offline) as this is likely to make them vulnerable to allegations and may be open to investigation by The Link School or police. Where a colleague is considering **not** following this advice, they are **required** to discuss the matter, and the implications with the Head Teacher or designated safeguarding lead.

- 4.8 You must not share any personal information with any learner (including personal contact details, personal website addresses/social networking site details) and ensure good safeguarding practice.
- 4.9 Caution is advised when leaving work colleagues to be “friends” in a personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.
- 4.10 You must not post or share photographs of learners under any circumstances.
- 4.11 Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Head Teacher .

5. Guidelines for responsible personal use of social media

- 5.1 You should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address.
- 5.2 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for The Link School and your personal interests.
- 5.3 Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.
- 5.4 If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media platform or postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer. You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to The Link School community and colleagues.
- 5.5 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. All communication via social networking sites

should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended (social networking sites are public forums). You are strongly advised, in your own interests, to take steps to ensure as far as possible that their on-line personal data is not accessible to anybody who they do not want to have permission to access it. For example, you are strongly advised to check the security and privacy settings of any social media platform you subscribe to and set these to maximum and, where relevant use strong passwords and change them regularly. For further information see the get safe website which can be found on the Sunderland City Council website <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/> or a direct link for the Learning Resources <https://www.getsafeonline.org/about-us/>

- 5.6 For further information about the safe, secure and proper use of the internet, please see The Link School's E-Safety policy <https://www.linkschool.org.uk/policies/e-safety-policy/>.
- 5.7 For further information about the safe, secure and proper use of social media and networking sites, please see <https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Social-Media-Guide-teachers-and-professionals.pdf>
- 5.8 If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact a member of the SLT or Headteacher.

6. Business use of Social Media

- 6.1 There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support learner learning. For example, the School and often departments within the School have individual Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts for the purposes of employment. There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop learners' learning.
- 6.2 There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school social media sites. Staff must not create sites unnecessarily or for trivial reasons which could expose the School to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage. As a guideline, we would expect accounts to be limited to one "School" account and one individual account per social media provider if possible. Staff should remember that the greater the number of accounts the greater the risk to The Link School Sunderland of those accounts being "hacked."
- 6.3 When using social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:
 - (a) Staff should set up a distinct and educational social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any

- personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account;
- (b) The URL and identity of the site should be notified to the appropriate SLT or Headteacher before any account is activated;
 - (c) The current password or log in details for all social media accounts must be provided to IT who will retain a record of such information;
 - (d) The content of any The Link School sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on The Link School;
 - (e) **Staff must ensure that The Link School has parent/carer consent to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of the learner. Please see paragraph 7 below in a respect of parent/carer consent;**
 - (f) **Staff must ensure that they do not identify a learner using their full name. Only first/forenames or initials may be used;**
 - (g) Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe;
 - (h) Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of The Link School sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of the Leadership Team;
 - (i) Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of learners through social media where the message is not public;
 - (j) Staff should not seek to view/link up with view learner accounts. For example, in the case of a Twitter staff should not “follow back” those who follow, share or like The Link School comments/posts.

6.4 The failure to follow rules set out in clause 6.3 may give rise to disciplinary action.

6.5 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

6.6 When a learner is inducted into The Link School, parents/carers are asked whether they object to the School (and thereby its authorised staff) using photographs and video images of their child for school related purposes. The Schools assume consent is granted in the absence of an objection.

7. Parent/Carer consent

7.1 When a learner is inducted into The Link School, parents/carers are asked whether they object to the School (and thereby its authorised staff) using photographs and video images of their child for school related purposes. The Schools assume consent is granted in the absence of an objection.

7.2 The Headteacher retains a list of those parents/carers who have objected to or who have placed any restrictions or limitations on the use of images of their child. **Staff should familiarise themselves with the names of learners on that list. It is a disciplinary offence to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of a learner contrary to the instructions of their parent/carer.**

8. Monitoring

8.1 We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems.

8.2 In the event of any member of staff noticing anything detrimental to the reputation of The Link School they should not reply in person but immediately pass on the information to the Leadership Team/ Headteacher.

9. Recruitment

9.1 We may use social media to advertise vacancies within The Link School. Such advertisements will be prepared and posted by the School.

10. Breach of this policy

10.1 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and log in details.

10.2 You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.