



Inspiring All to Excellence

The Fierté Multi-Academy Trust

Social Media Protocol



Document and Version Control

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01	Spring 2019	Linda Webster	Issued
02	Spring 2020	Linda Webster	Updated
03	Spring 2021	Linda Webster	New paragraph (1 st) added and third bullet point amended 1 st bullet point - Added Technical Manager for approval 2 nd bullet point – change in authorisation to designated member of staff New section added: 6.0 - Parental / Carer use of Social Media
04	Spring 2022	Linda Webster	No changes
05	Summer 2023	Linda Webster	Changed from policy to protocol New section added: 3.3 - Staff Recruitment
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Section	Changes Made

1.0 Introduction

This protocol has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any individual and it helps to promote equality across Fierté Multi- Academy Trust.

The availability and use of social media bring opportunities to understand, engage, and communicate in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services safely, effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our academies, the community, our legal responsibilities and our own reputations.

For example, how we use social networking could have implications towards our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Fierté Multi-Academy Trust have a duty of care to provide a safe learning environment for pupils and staff. As a trust we could be held responsible, indirectly for acts of employees in the course of their employment. Staff members who harass, engage in online bullying, discriminate on the grounds of sex, race or disability or who defame a third party may render the academy or trust liable to the injured party. Reasonable steps to prevent predictable harm must be in place.

The requirements in this protocol provide a framework of good practice. They apply to all members of staff, trustees, governors, pupils and volunteers across the trust.

The purpose of the protocol is to:

- Protect the trust from legal risks.
- Safeguard all children.
- Ensure that the reputation of the trust, its staff, trustees and governors is protected.
- Ensure that any users are able clearly to distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of our academies across the trust.

2.0 Definition of Scope

Social networking includes, but is not limited to: blogs, online discussion forums, collaborative spaces, media sharing services, 'microblogging' applications, and online gaming environments. Examples include but are not limited to X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Skype, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Xbox Live, LinkedIn. Many of the principles of this policy will also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

All members of the trust community should consider that any information they share through social networking, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 in association with the Safeguarding Children 2018 and other legislation.

Within this protocol there is a distinction between use of academy-sanctioned social media for professional educational purposes, and the personal use of social media.

3.0 Use of Social Media in Practice

3.1. Personal use of social media

Academy staff are strongly encouraged not to identify themselves as staff members of their School in their personal social media platforms. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with named Schools/Academy Trust and to safeguard the privacy of staff members. This does not include professional networking sites.

Academy staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with parents or children from the trust community in any personal social media, whilst employed by the Fierté Multi Academy Trust.

- Any communication received from children on any personal social media sites must be reported to the designated senior leader(s) for Child Protection.
- If any member of staff is aware of any inappropriate communications involving any child in any social media, these must immediately be reported as above.
- Members of the academy staff are strongly advised to ensure that they set up and regularly review the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.
- Staff should avoid posts or comments that refer to specific, individual matters related to the trust or any of our academies and members of its community on any social media accounts. This includes commenting on such posts or 'liking/disliking' them.
- Staff are also advised to consider the reputation of the trust in any posts or comments related to any of our academies on any social media accounts.
- Staff should not accept any current pupil of any age or any ex-pupil of the academy under the age of 20 as a friend, follower, subscriber or similar on any personal social media account.

3.2 Academy sanctioned use of social media

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum and to support pupil learning. For example, the academy has an official X (Twitter) account (ie: @fierte). There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupil's learning.

If using social media for educational purposes, the following practices **must** be observed:

- Staff may not set up social media accounts linked to the academy. All accounts may only be set up under the direction and management of the Senior Leadership Team and with the knowledge and approval of the Headteacher / Principle and Technical Manager.
- Staff wishing to publish information on social media (eg tweeting) may request a message to be sent via their designated member of staff who may then only send such communication once agreed by a member of the SLT.
- The content of any trust/academy-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect positively on the trust/academy in all communications.

- Staff must not publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents / carers, identify by full name or class any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on any trust / academy social media accounts.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.
- High regard must be made to the child protection register and looked after children, hence why only SLT members (who are DSLs) may authorise the publishing of information online.
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of trust/academy-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of the senior leadership team.
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of pupils through social media whether publicly or privately.
- Staff should understand systems for reporting and dealing with abuse and misuse.
- Staff need to be aware of how incidents may be dealt with under academy disciplinary procedures.

The Trust provides the following measures to ensure reasonable steps are in place to minimise risk of harm to pupils, staff and the trust/academy through:

- Ensuring that personal information is not published.
- Training is provided including: acceptable use; social media risks; checking of settings; data protection; reporting issues.
- Clear reporting guidance, including responsibilities, procedures and sanctions.
- Risk assessment, including legal risk.

3.3 Staff Recruitment

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education as part of our recruitment process shortlisted candidates will be subject to an online search. This search will be conducted by HR Insight as an external body who will not be involved in the recruitment procedure. The purpose of the online search is to help identify any incidents or issues relevant to suitability to work with children, that have happened and are publicly available online, which the Trust may want to explore with the applicant at interview.

4.0 Breach or Potential Breach of Protocol

Should a member of staff breach the terms of this protocol, the following will apply:

- Any breaches of this protocol by an employee of the Trust will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the protocol this may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure. Depending on the circumstances a breach of this protocol may be viewed as misconduct which could result in disciplinary action being taken or gross misconduct which may result in summary dismissal.
- Any breach of this protocol by a stakeholder who is not an employee of the Trust, (ie: Trustee, Governor, Volunteer), the Trust Board will take appropriate action in order to protect the Trusts reputation and that of its staff, parents, carers, trustees, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the trust.

5.0 Monitoring of Public Social Media

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

Trust wide use of social media for professional purposes will be checked regularly by the members of the IT Strategy Forum to ensure compliance with Trust policies.

6.0 Parental / Carer Use of Social Media

Fierté Multi-Academy Trust recognises that parents / carers have personal social media accounts which are a source of knowledge, support and advice, and we encourage parents / carers to participate in a positive way.

We ask that social media, whether public or private, should not be used to fuel campaigns and voice complaints against the trust / academies, school staff, parents or pupils. We take very seriously inappropriate use of social media by a parent carer to publicly humiliate or criticise another parent, pupil or member of staff. If parents have any concerns about their child in relation to the school they should contact the Headteacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Chair of the Governing Body, to discuss their concerns or use the trust / school's formal complaints process. Should it be a concern regarding the Trust then contact should be made with a member of the Executive Leadership Team or the Chair of the Trust Board.

The following online activities are examples the trust consider inappropriate use of social media sites (this list is non-exhaustive and are only given as examples):

- Identifying or posting images / videos of pupils
- Abusive or personal comments about staff, pupils or other parents
- Bringing the Trust / academy into disrepute
- Posting defamatory or libelous comments
- Emails circulated or sent directly with abusive or personal comments about staff or pupils
- Using social media to publicly challenge trust / academy policies or discuss issues about individual children
- Threatening behaviour, such as verbally intimidating staff, or using bad language
- Breaching trust / academy security procedures

Parents/ carers should also monitor their children's online activities which includes the use of social media bearing in mind that most sites require users to be at least 14 years of age.

Fierté Multi-Academy Trust take safeguarding and wellbeing responsibilities of all members of the trust community seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately taking legal advice where necessary.

7.0 Links with other Policies

This protocol is linked to our:

- Data Protection Policy
- Internet Safety Policy/Acceptable Use Agreement
- Policy for the Safe Use of Children's Photographs
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equalities Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy