



Wessex Multi Academy Trust

Social Media Policy

Approved By: Board of Trustees / Senior Leadership Team

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1. Scope and purpose

The Wessex Multi Academy Trust understands that social media is a growing part of life both within and outside our schools. New technologies are an integral part of our lives and are powerful tools which open up teaching and learning opportunities for Trust staff in many ways. We have a responsibility to safeguard our pupils against potential dangers when accessing the internet at school, and to educate our pupils about how to protect themselves online when outside of school.

This social media policy is for all members of the school community at Wessex Multi-Academy Trust (WMAT), including staff, governors, volunteers, pupils and parents/carers. These members of our school community are required to read, understand and comply with this policy.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Encourage safe, respectful use of social media among our school community
- Set guidelines and rules on interacting with and using the school's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Protect the reputation of the school and the wellbeing of our community
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of the school community
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of the school community should bear in mind that information they share through social media, even if they are in private online spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. It is expected that where matters arise that are not covered in this policy, staff will always advise the Headteacher and seek guidance for the appropriate action to be taken. Headteachers will in turn seek advice from HR where appropriate.

1.1 Definition of social media

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp and online forums.

2. Use of official school social media

The Trust's official social media channels are listed in Appendix A.

Individual school's social media sites will only be created and monitored by staff members designated and approved by the Headteacher. There will be a strong pedagogical or business reason for the creation of social media accounts on behalf of the individual school; official school profiles and accounts will not be created for trivial reasons.

If members of staff wish to create a new social media account, they will seek approval from the Headteacher.

School social media passwords are stored by the Headteacher (in some schools this may be delegated to an appropriate person) – these are not shared with any unauthorised persons, including pupils, unless otherwise permitted by the Headteacher. Staff will adhere to the data protection principles outlined in **Section 3** of this policy at all times.

If you have suggestions for something you'd like to appear on our school social media channel(s), please speak to the school office, or email nmarsh@wessex.ac

2.1 Use of Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube

Each school may post on the above listed social media platforms:

- Alerts about changes (e.g. changes to procedures, severe weather updates, staffing changes)
- Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- Advertisements for school events or activities
- Job vacancies and requests for volunteers
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers
- Achievements of pupils and staff
- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals
- Invitations to provide feedback

The school will seek individual consent before sharing any information that could identify an individual (e.g. names or photos), such as posts about staffing changes, achievements of pupils and staff, or school trips, events and activities, for example.

The school **will not** post on the above listed social media platforms:

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent)
- Harmful or abusive comments
- Messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school
- Links to individuals personal accounts
- Any content in breach of copyright, data protection or freedom of information legislation.

2.2 Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments we consider to be spam
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the school's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is grammatically correct, accurate, objectively justifiable, reasonable, age appropriate, and relevant to the school community and the school's activities.

2.3 Concerns and complaints

If members of the school community have any concerns or complaints (either about the school or anything shared on the school's social media channels), they should raise these following the [Trust's complaint policy](#). Concerns or complaints should not be raised through social media.

2.4 Following other social media users

The school:

- Will only 'like' or otherwise rate social media content with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' or rated by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind
- May follow other users relevant to the school's activities (e.g. an education project) – being followed by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind

3. Data Protection Principles

The Trust will obtain consent from pupils and parents via the data collection exercise for joiners carried out by individual schools. The consent will remain valid for the duration of time that the pupil remains at the individual school however this can be removed at any time by notifying the individual school. Consent provided for the use of images and videos only applies to Trust/school accounts – staff, pupils and parents are not permitted to post any images or videos on personal accounts.

Where a pupil is assessed by their individual school to have the competence to understand what they are consenting to, the school will obtain consent directly from that pupil; otherwise, consent is obtained from whoever holds parental responsibility for the pupil.

A record of consent is maintained throughout the academic year, which details the pupils for whom consent has been provided. The Data Lead in each individual school is responsible for ensuring this consent record remains up to date.

Parents and pupils are able to withdraw or amend their consent at any time. To do so, parents and pupils must inform the individual school in writing. Where parents or pupils withdraw or amend their consent, it will not affect the processing of any images or videos prior to when consent was withdrawn or amended. Processing will cease in line with parents' and pupils' requirements following this. Wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so, the school will take measures to remove any posts before consent was withdrawn or amended, such as removing an image from a social media site.

Consent can be provided for certain principles only, for example only images of a pupil are permitted to be posted, and not videos. This will be made explicitly clear on the consent form provided. The individual school will only post images and videos of pupils for whom consent has been received.

Only school-owned devices will be used to take images and videos of the school community, which have been pre-approved by the School's IT Department for use. Only appropriate images and videos of pupils will be posted in which they are suitably dressed, i.e. it would not be suitable to display an image of a pupil in swimwear.

When posting on social media, the school will use group or class images or videos with general labels, e.g. 'sports day'.

When posting images and videos of pupils, the school will apply data minimisation techniques, such as pseudonymisation (blurring a photograph), to reduce the risk of a pupil being identified where consent has not been provided. The school will not post pupils' personal details on social media platforms and pupils' full names will never be used alongside any videos or images in which they are present.

Before posting on social media, staff will:

Refer to the consent record log to ensure consent has been received for that pupil and for the exact processing activities required.

Ensure that there is no additional identifying information relating to a pupil.

Any breaches of the data protection principles will be handled in accordance with the Trust's Data and Cyber-Security Breach Prevention and Management Plan.

Where consent has been provided, images may be utilised by WMAT for the purposes of advertising or marketing, for example the use of banners or on the Trust web site.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Everyone

All members of the school community are expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully online, particularly when engaging with the school's social media channels.

4.2 Staff managing the school's social media channels

The staff who manage the school's accounts on social media will:

- Act on comments posted on the school's social media that go against this policy (please see section 2 above)
- Aim to respond to comments in a timely manner, where appropriate
- Always remain professional and polite
- Inform a member of senior leadership about anything inappropriate or likely to escalate

4.3 All staff (including trainee teachers), governors and volunteers

The school expects all staff, governors and volunteers to consider the safety of pupils and colleagues and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff, governors and volunteers are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons, including use of social media, in front of pupils throughout the school day except where it is appropriate or necessary (e.g. to set homework, or use multi-factor authentication).

Staff, governors and volunteers will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) in line with the school's child protection policy. Staff should be aware of online security threats and be cautious when giving out personal information which may compromise their own personal safety and security, or that of another individual in the school community.

When using social media, staff, governors and volunteers **must not:**

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate with, pupils past or present
- Give their personal social media information to parents/carers
- Complain about the school, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about the school individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers

- Post images of pupils
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school
- Link their social media profile to their work email account
- Use personal accounts during timetabled teaching time except in a professional capacity
- Publish any content which may result in action against the school, e.g. content which breaches data protection obligations
- Publish any content which may bring the school into disrepute, including material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature

Staff, governors and volunteers will report any communication received from current pupils (unless the pupils are family members) on any personal social media accounts to the DSL or a member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff, governors and volunteers should not have contact via personal accounts with past pupils. If ongoing communication is required, this should be done via official school channels.

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff behaviour policy.

Breaches of this policy by members of staff will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content, could lead to prosecution, disciplinary action or dismissal. Members of staff will be aware that if their out-of-work activity brings the Trust into disrepute, disciplinary action will be taken.

4.4 Pupils

The school recognises that most social media platforms have a minimum age requirement of 13+. However, we are aware that many pupils under this minimum age still actively use social media. Therefore, the expectations and guidelines regarding safe and respectful online behaviour set out in this policy apply to all pupils, regardless of their age.

The school does not allow the use of mobile phones and other smart technology (e.g. smart watches) with similar functionality to mobile phones (including the ability to access social media) throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.

Pupils are not permitted access to social media during the school day unless it forms part of a curriculum activity and permission has been granted. Pupils must not access social media platforms using either the school's WiFi network or their own personal mobile data connection unless prior permission has been obtained from the Headteacher and, where access is via the school's network, the School IT Technician has ensured that appropriate network security measures are in place. Schools with Sixth Form students may permit those students to carry mobile phones during the school day; however, use of such devices will be limited to break times or free periods, in designated areas only, and must not be used to access social media platforms unless specifically authorised as outlined above.

The school encourages pupils to be, at all times:

- Respectful towards and about members of staff, and the school, at all times
- Respectful to other pupils and parents/carers

Pupils **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff
- Complain about the school. Where a pupil has a complaint or concern, they should share this with the school through the school's official channels, so it can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints policy
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other pupils, parents/carers, or other members of the school community
- Send or post abusive, harassing, misogynistic, or misandrist messages
- Send unwanted sexual comments and messages
- Create or spread rumours about members of staff, pupils, parents/carers, or other members of the school community
- Post images of members of the school community or individuals engaged in school activities without their permission
- Create or share consensual or non-consensual nudes and semi-nudes, including images or videos that are digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence (AI) (e.g. deepfakes)

The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to online abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Any concerns about a pupil's social media use will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy and child protection policy.

4.5 Parents/carers

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers, other pupils and children, and members of the school community
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Parents/carers **should not** use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- Complain about the school

- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers, pupils, or members of the school community
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- Post images of pupils whilst engaged in school activities who are not their own
- Create or spread rumours about members of staff, pupils, parents/carers, or other members of the school community

Any parents that are seen to be breaching the guidance in this policy will be required to attend a meeting with the Headteacher and may have their ability to interact with the social media websites removed. Parents should immediately report any breaches of this policy to the Head Teacher / Wessex MAT.

Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content could lead to prosecution.

5. Training and awareness

The Trust recognises that early intervention can protect pupils who may be at risk of cyberbullying or negative social media behaviour. As such, teachers will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils. Staff will receive training on social media as part of their new starter induction. Teachers and support staff will receive ongoing training as part of their development.

Pupils will be educated about online safety and appropriate social media use on a termly basis through a variety of mediums, including assemblies, PSHE lessons and cross-curricular links. Pupils will be provided with material to reinforce their knowledge.

Training for all pupils, staff and parents will be refreshed in light of any significant incidents or changes.

6. Monitoring and review

The school reserves 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, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The headteacher will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

7. Related policies

- [Child protection policy](#)

- [Internet and E-Safety Policy](#)
- IT acceptable use policy (see school website)
- Behaviour policy (see school website)
- [Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable IT Use](#)
- Mobile phone use policy (see school website)
- [Complaints Policy](#)

Appendix A – School Social Media platforms

Wessex Multi Academy Trust

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/WessexMAT/>
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/wessex-multi-academy-trust/>
- Instagram (Trust) - <https://www.instagram.com/wessexeducation/>
- Instagram (Wessex Schools Music) - <https://www.instagram.com/wessexschoolsmusic/>

Bere Regis Primary School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/bereregisprimary/>

Damers First School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/p/Damers-First-61555629310104/>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/damersfirst/>

Dorchester Middle School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/DorchMiddle/>

Frome Valley First School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61584552740925>

Manor Park First School

- Facebook (Main School) - <https://www.facebook.com/ManorParkDorchester>
- Facebook (Buds of Manor Park) - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61570600070497>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/manorparkfirst/>

Milborne First School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/MilborneFirstSchool/>

Piddle Valley First School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557185347367>

Puddletown First School

Currently no official social media platforms are active at this school.

St Mary's Middle School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/SMCEMIDPUDD/>
- Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/stmpudd/>

St Osmunds Middle School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/stosmundsschool/>
- X - <https://x.com/stosmundss>
- YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC1Bs24WIfm3BPHwWwKZ_Lw

The Purbeck School

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/PurbeckSchool/>
- Instagram (Main School) - <https://www.instagram.com/purbeckschool/>
- Instagram (Sixth Form Alumni) - <https://www.instagram.com/purbecksixthform/>
- Instagram (Art Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/purbeckcreatives/>
- Instagram (DT & Food Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/purbeckdtfood/>
- LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/school/the-purbeck-school/>
- YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@purbeckyoutube6696>

The Thomas Hardy School

- Facebook (Main School)- <https://www.facebook.com/thomashardyeschool/>
- Facebook (Sixth Form) - <https://www.facebook.com/thomashardyesixthform>
- Facebook (Music Department) - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556738091636>
- Facebook (Science Department) - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61587368305395>
- Instagram (Main School) - <https://www.instagram.com/thomashardyeschool>
- Instagram (Sixth Form) - <https://www.instagram.com/thssixthform/>
- Instagram (Art Department) - https://www.instagram.com/th_s_art_dept/

- Instagram (English Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/thseenglish/>
- Instagram (Food Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/foodths/>
- Instagram (Geography Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/thsegeog/>
- Instagram (History Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/thshistory/>
- Instagram (Music Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/thsmusicdept/>
- Instagram (Science Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/thsscience/>
- Instagram (Textiles Department) - <https://www.instagram.com/textilesthsh/>
- Instagram (Library) - <https://www.instagram.com/thsebookworm/>
- Instagram (STEM) - <https://www.instagram.com/thsestem/>
- Instagram (Student Union) - https://www.instagram.com/thomashardye_studentunion/
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-thomas-hardye-school/>

Appendix B – Relevant Legislation

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2023) – ‘Data protection: a toolkit for schools’
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2026) ‘Keeping children safe in education 2026’