<u>Social Media Policy</u>

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UNITED WE ARE WORLD CLASS>

The Prince Albert Community Trust

Contents

Rationale

Social media is a broad term for any kind of website or app which enables people to directly interact with each other (including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, Telegram and Instagram). Some games (e.g. Minecraft or World of Warcraft) and video sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube) have social media elements to them.

The Trust recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and reputation.

This policy sets out clear procedures for how we expect stakeholders (staff, parents/carers, students) to conduct themselves on social media, when using messenger apps, and our school platforms, with regard to our schools, the Trust, and its reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by all stakeholders.

Scope

This policy is subject to the Trust Code of Conduct (for staff), Trust Acceptable Use Agreements, and the Parental Conduct Policy (for parents/carers). It is essential that this policy is read in conjunction with the following policies:
- the Trust Data Protection Policy; and
- the Trust Online Safety Policy.

This policy:
- applies to all stakeholders and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the Trust and/or its schools;
- applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere; and
- encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education.

The Trust respects privacy and understands that staff and students may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the Trust's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a Trust or school account or using the Trust or school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used by staff which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy. Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with students are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.

For the fullness of clarity , this policy does not seek to censor the experiences of students and parents/carers at our schools - we encourage families to contact the Trust or relevant school in the first instance, regarding their experiences when interacting with us, prior to posting online.

We ask that all stakeholders read this document and ensure that they always act in accordance with the stipulations detailed throughout.

Roles & responsibilities of the Trust and our schools

The Trust are responsible for:
- facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use;
- developing and implementing the Social Media policy;
- taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents;
- receiving completed applications for Social Media accounts; and
- approving account creation.

Heads/SLT at our schools are responsible for:

- making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff, the Trust and external agencies as required;

The Administrator/Moderator is responsible for:
- creating the account following SLT approval;
- storing account details, including passwords securely;
- being involved in monitoring and contributing to the account; and
- controlling the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring).

Staff are responsible for:
- ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies;
- attending appropriate training;
- regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via school accounts; and
- adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the Trust or one of its schools.

Process for creating new Trust/school social media accounts

The Trust/school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a Physical Education and Sports department Twitter account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Central Support Team which covers the following points:
- the aim of the account;
- the intended audience;
- how the account will be promoted;
- who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named); and
- whether the account is to be open or private/closed.

Following consideration by the Central Support Team, an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Central Support Team must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the Trust/school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the Trust, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring of Trust/school social media accounts

Trust/school accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (during working days and business hours) by senior leaders. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to at the earliest opportunity during business hours (i.e., on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Behaviour of Trust/school social media account users

The Trust requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and all other relevant policies such as the Trust Code of Conduct.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy.
- Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff.
- Trust/school social media accounts must not be used for personal gain.
- Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the Trust.
- Unacceptable conduct (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the Trust and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with Trust policies. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The Trust will take appropriate action in the event of a breach of the Trust Social Media Policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the Trust will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the Trust will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action

according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations for Trust/school social media account users

Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing. Users must also ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

When acting on behalf of the Trust and its schools, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, Trust users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken.

If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed protocols.

Any concerns should also be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:
- engaging;
- conversational;
- informative; and
- friendly.

Use of images by Trust/school social media account users

Trust/school use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:
- permission to use any photos or video recordings of students should be sought in line with the Trust's policy on digital and video images as set out in the Trust Online Safety Policy;
- if anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected;
- under no circumstances should staff share or upload student pictures online other than via Trust/school owned social media accounts;
- staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on Trust/school social media accounts;
- students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published; and
- if a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

Staff
- Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the Trust/school or impacts on the Trust/school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the Trust/school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- A suitable disclaimer would read 'all views are my own and not the views of my employer'.
- No digital images of students should be uploaded via personal social media accounts. Any staff in breach of this will be asked to remove the images immediately and parents will be informed as soon as is practicable. Any breach will be investigated fully and may result in disciplinary action being taken. For more details, see 'Responding to incidents of misuse' in the Trust Online Safety Policy.
- Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.

Students
- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior students of the Trust and its schools on any personal social media network account.
- The Trust's education programme should enable the students to be safe and responsible users of social media.
- Students are encouraged (where age appropriate) to comment or post appropriately about the Trust/school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the Trust's Online Safety and Behaviour policies.

Parents/Carers
The Trust expects that parents/carers will use messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, and permitted school platforms for purposes beneficial to themselves and the school; however, we will not accept any of the following behaviour:
- Sending abusive messages to fellow parents/carers.
- Sending messages, abusive or otherwise, to members of staff. All communications to school staff must be sent via the permitted school platforms.
- Sending abusive messages about members of staff, parents/carers, students or the Trust/school.
- Sharing confidential or sensitive information about members of staff, parents/carers, students or the Trust/school.
- Bringing the Trust, its schools, or its staff into disrepute.

The Trust appreciates the simplicity and ease of keeping in contact with staff, where necessary, through our school platforms. We are happy to help families with queries and concerns within working hours, and within the timescales outlined to families. The Trust does not, however, condone parents/carers sending frequent and unimportant messages to staff on our school platforms. Parents/carers should understand that staff should not be contacted outside of working hours. If parents/carers wish to talk to staff, parents/carers should arrange a meeting with the teacher by getting in contact with the school via the permitted school platforms, or by contacting their school office.

Parents/carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the Trust/school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the Trust/school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, parents will be referred to the Trust's complaints procedure.

It is our expectation that parents/carers will be responsible in supporting the Trust and its schools by monitoring their own use of social media and online messaging. It is expected that parents/carers will adhere to this policy and the Parental Conduct Policy.

Examples of positive practice on social media for parents/carers are as follows:
- Positive contributions to the Trust's/school's social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, are welcomed.
- Any concerns or issues about the Trust/school, its students or staff should be expressed directly to the school and not be voiced on social media.
- Parents/carers must obtain permission before posting pictures that contain other parents or their children, unless sharing or liking a post from the Trust's/school's official social media account.
- If parents/carers become aware of inappropriate use of social media by their own or other people's children, they should contact the school so that the school can work with the parents/carers to educate young people on safe and appropriate behaviour.
- If parents/carers become aware of the inappropriate use of social media by other parents/carers or school staff, they should inform the school so that steps can be taken to remedy the situation.

Monitoring posts about the Trust and its schools

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the Trust and its schools. The Trust and its schools should effectively respond to social media comments made by others as set out in this policy.

The Trust and its schools also take advantage of the SWGfL Reputation Alerts service as part of a subscription to the SWGfL Boost+ package. This provides an additional reporting route that gathers passive intelligence to inform our safeguarding response. This is done by monitoring the internet and social media for content matching our Alert keywords to bring intelligence – both positive and negative – directly to our attention. This allows us to know what people are writing about the Trust and its schools, and respond accordingly.

Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially, or more regularly in the light of any significant new developments or in response to changes in guidance.

Appendix: Guidance for Staff

Managing your personal use of social media:
- Remember "nothing" on social media is truly private.
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life.
- Don't use the Trust/school logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Don't upload images of students on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy settings.
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint.
- Keep your personal information private.
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to.
- When posting online consider scale, audience and permanency of what you post.
- If you want to criticise, do it politely.
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem or concern.

Managing Trust and/or school social media accounts:
The Do's
- Check with your Head or Director before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school/Trust.
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views.
- Use an appropriate and professional tone.
- Be respectful to all parties.
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author.
- Ensure you have permission to use any photos or video recordings of students in line with the Trust Online Safety Policy.
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner.
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion from a senior member of staff.
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the Trust's reporting process.
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible.

The Don'ts
- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the Trust/school into disrepute.
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material.
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation.
- Don't use any photos or video recordings of students unless you have explicit consent to do so in line with the Trust Online Safety Policy.
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts, and don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content.
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content.
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances.