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LEARNING  
TRUST

# Social Media Policy (LLT)



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ENGAGE, ENABLE,  
EMPOWER

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## INTRODUCTION

Lydiate Learning Trust recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents, carers and students are actively encouraged to use social media to communicate and engage with their community.

However, there are risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by all Trust schools, its staff, parents, carers and children.

The policy applies to all social media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, blogs as well as online games, message boards/forums and comments under news items and other articles.

## SCOPE

This policy is subject to Lydiate Learning Trust's [code of conduct](#) and each school's E-safety Policy and acceptable use agreements.

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the Trust or its schools.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the Trust and its schools

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 school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a 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 which associates itself with, 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 schools 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.

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## ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

### 3.1 Organisational control

#### Roles & Responsibilities

- **Trustees**
  - Trustees have overall responsibility for this policy.
- **Executive Committee**
  - The Executive Committee is responsible for delivering this policy across all academies and ensuring compliance.
- **SLT**
  - Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use
  - Implementing the Social Media policy
  - Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents
  - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required
  - Receive completed applications for Social Media accounts
  - Approve account creation
- **Administrator/Moderator**
  - Create the account following SLT approval
  - Store account details, including passwords securely
  - Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
  - Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)
- **Staff including Trust Directors and Governors**
  - Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is conducted in line with this and other relevant policies
  - Attending appropriate training
  - Regularly monitor, update and manage content they have posted via school accounts
  - Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school

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## 3.2 Process for requesting new accounts

Each Academy and Sixth Form have or can request official school accounts on Twitter and Instagram. Posts from all faculties should be posted via main school accounts and any legacy department accounts must be shut down.

Anyone wishing to create a new account must present a business case to the Leadership 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)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

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

## 3.3 Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently (preferably 7 days a week, including during holidays). Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention are essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

## 3.4 Behaviour

The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.

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. 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 school.

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Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.

If a journalist contacts a staff member about posts made on social media, staff must report this to the Headteacher or Trust CEO and must not respond unless they have authorisation.

Unacceptable conduct (e.g., defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school 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 school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.

The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may act according to the disciplinary policy

## 3.5 Legal Considerations

- 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 ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

## 3.6 Handling abuse

When acting on behalf of the school, manage offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.

If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school 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 school protocols.

## 3.7 Tone of Voice

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:

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- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly
- Trust values – Enthuse, Enable, Empower

## 3.8 Use of Images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- When a student joins an academy, they or their parent/carer will complete a consent form in relation to the use of images and videos of that student. We will not use images or videos of student for any purpose where we do not have consent (see [Data Protection Policy](#) p14 for more information). 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/pupil pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Students/pupils 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.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

## 3.9 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 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.
- Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.

### Students

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- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior students from the school on any personal social media network account.
- The school's education programme should enable the students to be safe and responsible users of social media.
- Students are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy.

## Parents/Carers

- If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
- The school has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the academy's [complaints procedures](#).

## 3.10 Monitoring Posts About the School

- As part of active social media engagement, it is good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school.
- The school social media manager and Trust marketing manager should oversee this regularly during each week.
- All school social media accounts should be used for one way communication only – comments should be switched off and followers encouraged to contact the school office directly if they have any queries.
- All communications with followers who have made comments or sent DMs on social media should be managed offline.
- Any fake school accounts or inappropriate posts or videos should be reported to the Trust marketing manager who will report them to the network provider.

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## APPENDIX

### Managing your personal use of social media

- Nothing on social media is truly private
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Do not use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Check your settings regularly and evaluate your privacy
- 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 the 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

### Managing school social media accounts

#### Do's

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting process
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible

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## Don'ts

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- 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

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