

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy applies to all TMET employees.

Employees not based in an academy should substitute Principal with CEO or appropriate representative.

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Author:	S Gadzik
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Revision History:

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes:
4.0	Dec 2022	S Gadzik	Updated to acknowledge the professional use of social media in the workplace and to refer to the Trust's Recruitment Policy in section 9. Sections renumbered.
3.0	Jan 2020	TMET	Updated policy to reflect Trust name change and branding and the addition of the Trust's Online Safety policy to section 5.1.
2.0	March 2018	D Stanley	Policy rewritten.
1.0	September 2016	C Johnston	New policy.

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 We recognise that social media is a powerful tool that allows individuals to expand their professional networks, participate in interactive discussions, share information on particular topics, and create and share content.
- 1.2 For schools it offers the opportunity engage with parents and other stakeholders, to promote the achievements of pupils and the school, advertise jobs and share a glimpse of day-to-day life with prospective parents and staff.
- 1.3 Therefore we allow and encourage staff in their professional capacity to use social media to enhance their professional learning and facilitate the sharing of information with parents and the wider community. Each Mead school has the autonomy to set their own expectations for how staff use social media in the context of the school, and this policy should be read alongside any supplementary school guidelines.
- 1.4 While social media has many positive aspects, we are also mindful that social media use can pose risks to our ability to safeguard children and young people, protect confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. This could also be the case during off duty time.
- 1.5 Employees using social media should be aware of the risk of others misunderstanding the intent behind online communications and the blurring of professional boundaries between children and young people and their parents or carers. This policy therefore sets out the Trust's expectations regarding the use of social media.
- 1.6 To minimise these risks and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, and that the use of personal devices does not have an adversary impact on our business, we expect employees to adhere to this policy.
- 1.7 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. Who is covered by the policy

- 2.1 This policy covers all employees working at all levels and grades. It also applies to consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy).
- 2.2 Third parties who have access to our electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

3. Scope and purpose of the policy

- 3.1 This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including Wikipedia and blogs.
- 3.2 It applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using TMET IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

- 3.3 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. 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 login details.
- 3.4 Staff may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

4. Use of social media in the workplace

- 4.1 For some staff, social media use forms part of their role in school, for instance, teachers sharing examples of pupils' work and activities on their professional social media account or the school's social media. Staff may also use social media to share ideas and gather good practice to enhance their professional roles. These professional activities are reasonably permitted during work time and on work devices, subject to schools' own social media protocols and guidelines.
- 4.2 As stated in the TMET Code of Conduct, under no circumstances should staff be expected or allowed to use their personal equipment to take images of pupils at or on behalf of the school or setting.
- 4.3 As stated in the TMET Code of Conduct, use of personal mobile devices and personal social media activity must be restricted to non-contact time, and to areas of the school where pupils are not present (such as a staff room).

5. Responsible use of social media

- 5.1 The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely, in order to protect staff and the Trust. They apply whether you are posting in a personal capacity or on a school account.
- 5.2 Employees should be mindful that irresponsible use of social media can pose risks to our ability to safeguard children and young people and protect our confidential information and reputation, and it can jeopardise our compliance with our legal obligations. This could also be the case during off duty time.
- 5.3 Safeguarding children and young people:
- (a) You should not communicate with pupils over social network sites. You must block unwanted and inappropriate communications from pupils.
 - (b) You should never knowingly communicate with pupils in these forums or via personal email account.
 - (c) You should not interact with any ex-pupil of the Trust who is under 18 on social media sites.
 - (d) Communication with pupils should only be conducted through schools' usual channels. This communication should only ever be related to professional business.

- 5.4 Protecting our business reputation:

- (a) You must not post anything that is obscene, disparaging, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity. You should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's or our schools' reputation, even indirectly.
- (b) You should make it clear in social media postings that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.
- (c) You are personally responsible for what you communicate in social media. Remember that what you publish, even if it is to 'friends' only, might be reposted and available to be read by the masses (including the Trust itself, future employers and social acquaintances) for a long time. Keep this in mind before you post content.
- (d) You are welcome to state that you are an employee of our Trust. However, you should make clear that your views do not necessarily represent those of the Trust or school. For example, you could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer".
- (e) You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to students and colleagues.
- (f) Avoid posting comments about sensitive Trust-related topics, such as schools' performance. Even if you make it clear that your views do not represent those of the Trust, your comments could still reflect on our reputation.
- (g) If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with the principal or a member of the Executive Team in the case of central staff.
- (h) All staff are responsible for protecting our Trust's and schools' reputation. If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on our Trust, any Mead schools or our stakeholders, you should print out the content and contact the principal or a member of the Executive Team.

5.5 Respecting intellectual property and confidential information:

- (a) Staff should not do anything to jeopardise our confidential information and intellectual property through the use of social media.
- (b) In addition, staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals, which can create liability for the Trust, as well as the individual author.
- (c) Do not use our logos, brand names, slogans or other trademarks, or post any of our confidential or proprietary information without prior written permission.
- (d) To protect yourself and the Trust against liability for copyright infringement, where appropriate, reference sources of particular information you post or upload and cite them accurately. If you have any questions about whether a particular post or upload might violate anyone's copyright or trademark, ask before making the communication.

- 5.6 Respecting colleagues, students, parents and carers, governors and other stakeholders:
- (a) Be respectful of all individuals and communities with which you interact. Be polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in heated discussion and debate.
 - (b) Do not post anything that your colleagues or our pupils, parents and carers, academy councillors and other stakeholders would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.
 - (c) Do not post anything related to your colleagues, pupils, school community (including parents) or our business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders without their written permission. (In the case of pupils and staff, this is covered by the annual permissions sought by schools.)

6. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

- 6.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the principal at each school and the CEO in respect of central staff. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks lies with the CEO and Executive Team.
- 6.2 All managers have a specific responsibility for operating 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.
- 6.3 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 principal or CEO for central staff. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to a member of the Executive Team.

7. Compliance with related policies and agreements

- 7.1 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, employees are prohibited from using social media to:
- (a) breach our ICT User Policy;
 - (b) breach our Online Safety Policy;
 - (c) breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
 - (d) breach any obligations you may have relating to confidentiality;
 - (e) breach our Disciplinary Rules;
 - (f) defame or disparage the school or Trust or its affiliates, governors, students, parents and carers, staff, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders;
 - (g) harass or bully other staff in any way;
 - (h) unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties;

- (i) breach our Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague, student or parent online);
 - (j) breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, never use social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than you or by making misleading statements).
- 7.2 Staff should be careful if they provide formal references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the Trust. Seek advice from the principal or a member of the Executive Team before acting if unsure.
- 7.3 Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 The contents of TMET's IT resources and communications systems are our property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, files, data, social media post conversation or message, or any other kind of information or communications transmitted to, received or printed from, or stored or recorded on our electronic information and communications systems.
- 8.2 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 purpose. You consent to such monitoring by your acknowledgement of this policy and your use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.
- 8.3 We may store copies of such data or communications for a period of time after they are created and may delete such copies from time to time without notice.
- 8.4 Do not use Trust IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you wish to be kept private or confidential from the school or Trust.

9. Recruitment

- 9.1 In relation to recruitment of staff, any social media searches will be carried out in line with the Trust's Recruitment Policy.

10. Review of policy

- 10.1 This policy is reviewed as required in consultation with the recognised trade unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.