

# Personal Use of Social Media Policy

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## Introduction

This policy is one of a set of policies governing the conduct of employees of The Education Fellowship. This policy provides guidance to employees who use social media sites in their personal time (either at home or during an authorised break at work), with the aim of protecting both staff and the organisation from disrepute. The policy will be applied to all permanent, temporary and casual employees employed by The Education Fellowship.

This policy relates to employees *personal* use of social media, rather than professional use, which may form part of their role. This policy has been prepared to reflect and complement the guidance provided in The Education Fellowship Acceptable Usage Policy.

## What is it?

Social media is a form of interactive online communication that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share information in a public forum. There are various online technology tools that enable people engage in social media.

Examples of social media sites are provided at the end of this policy.

## When does it apply?

This policy applies at all times when The Education Fellowship employees are making use of social media sites in a personal capacity. It applies whether the employee is at home or at work and whether they are using work equipment or their own device.

## When does it not apply?

This policy does not cover the use of social media sites by employees within their role on behalf of The Education Fellowship. Where employees use social media sites as part of their work, the Trust will make them aware of the expectations and standards in the use of social media via the Acceptable Usage Policy.

## Social media etiquette

Social media allows people great freedom in how they communicate and express themselves. To help ensure everyone is able to equally benefit from social media sites employees at The Education Fellowship must abide by the following principles.

- ♥ Tell the truth
- ♥ Write deliberately and with accuracy
- ♥ Acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly
- ♥ Preserve the original post, using notations to show where changes have been made, so as to maintain the integrity of any material published
- ♥ Never delete someone else's post, although a poster could delete their own post
- ♥ Give due consideration when posting comments and have regard to the advice within this policy
- ♥ Strive for high quality with every post – including basic spellchecking;
- ♥ Disagree with other opinions respectfully
- ♥ Link to online references and original source materials directly;
- ♥ Disclose conflicts of interest
- ♥ Keep private issues and topics separate from work issues and topics

## Main Points

Many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity and this policy is not intended to limit their use or enjoyment of social media.

However, employees should remember that even when not acting on behalf of the organisation, they can be held accountable for content that they post on social media sites, which could be potentially damaging to The Education Fellowship.

Damaging content includes any communication made in a personal capacity through social media which:

Brings TEF into disrepute	E.g. criticising the Trust or colleagues in an inappropriate manner, posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
Breaches confidentiality	E.g. revealing information owned by the Trust; divulging confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague) or discussing The Education Fellowship's internal workings (such as budget spending that have not been

	communicated to the public)
Is discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any group or individual	E.g. making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including ethnicity), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age; using social media to bully another individual; or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content.
Breaches copyright	E.g. by using someone else's images or written content without permission.

Employees must consider who can read what is posted, they must be aware that some sites are open to all and other sites allow the employee to control who can see what has been posted.

Employees need to ensure that they have reviewed privacy settings so that only those who they wish to read the content are able to do so.

Employees should not include their workplace and/or job title on their profile – being aware that this may make it easier for pupils/students, parents and members of the public to contact them in their personal time.

If an employee chooses to comment in a personal capacity on any issues relating to The Education Fellowship they should make it clear that they are not representing the organisation and that the views expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Trust.

Staff should not establish or seek to establish contact through social media with any young people they encounter through the course of their work, for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish such contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgment in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile number; home or e-mail address to children or young people unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management

### **Accessing social media in work time**

At the discretion of their line manager, employees may make occasional and reasonable personal use of the Internet and social media (for example during

their lunch break), as long as this does not interfere with the performance of their duties or the work of other colleagues.

Employees accessing social media for personal use on their own equipment (e.g. mobile phone, smartphone etc.) is only acceptable during official breaks.

Viewing, circulating, or downloading pornographic material on The Education Fellowship premises or on the Trusts owned equipment is a serious abuse of this policy and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure as gross misconduct.

Viewing of illegal material by staff must be reported to the police.

### **How The Education Fellowship protects itself**

The Education Fellowship will monitor social media websites in the same way as it monitors other media channels (e.g. local press etc.) for relevant content about the organisation.

The Education Fellowship will not routinely monitor the webpages that an employee can access from their work computer, however full logs are retained and can be accessed as part of a genuine investigation. However, The Education Fellowship, for various legitimate business practices, may on the authority of The Chief Executive need to monitor the use of staff email and internet access from time to time

The Trust does not monitor employee's personal social media pages without reason. However, as with any allegation of misconduct, The Education Fellowship will investigate where breaches of this policy are brought to its attention by any means (e.g. via members of the public, employees, pupils/students).

### **Investigations which involve social media content**

Any investigation that involves social media content will take into consideration:

-  The intent of the content;
-  The “moral intensity” of the content – what damage has been done;
-  The implications – including the level of risk it poses for the Trust (including reputation, data etc.) and management time;
-  The impact – on work colleagues, the public perception of the Trust, morale etc.;

-  The individual's right to freedom of expression (provided it is not discriminatory, damaging, malicious or libellous).

Inappropriate content posted on social media sites either during, or outside of work time, may lead to either informal or formal disciplinary action.

Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues, discriminatory behaviour or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

Social media content, which proves that employees have breached other policies, may be used in disciplinary investigations relating to these matters.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Employee responsibilities**

To carefully consider, before posting content on social media sites, whether this will bring the organisation into disrepute, breach confidentiality or copyright or be considered offensive, defamatory, discriminatory, bullying or is potential harassment.

If you are unsure of whether it is appropriate to post certain content on a social media site advice can be sought from the line manager.

### **Management responsibilities**

The line manager is not expected to monitor personal use of social media by staff. However, if a matter, relating to inappropriate use of social media is brought to their attention, they are responsible for looking into the matter in line with the relevant policy, taking into consideration the factors outlined in point above.

## **Legislation and guidance**

-  Human Rights Act 1998
-  Data Protection Act 1988
-  Equalities Act 2011
-  [ACAS Factsheets "Social Networking"](#)
-  Guidance for safer working practice for adults who work with children and young people in education settings

## Further information

There are a number of related policies and procedures and guidance that employees should be aware of including:

-  Code of Conduct
-  Dignity at work
-  Disciplinary policy and procedure
-  Grievance policy and procedure
-  Whistleblowing policy

In addition, employee's job descriptions contain requirements relating to their conduct. There are also professional code of conducts and standards, that relate to the work an employee does and how it is done.

## Examples of social media sites

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)	Users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organised by common characteristics.
Blogging and micro-blogging sites (e.g. Twitter, Wordpress )	A blog is a type of website or part of a website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary and descriptions of events (blogging). A micro-blog is simply smaller in size.
Professional networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn)	Business-related social networking sites mainly used for professional networking. Users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called connections. This list of connections can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities.
Online communities (e.g. MySpace)	An online community of users' personal profiles. These typically include photographs, information about personal interests and blogs. Users send

	one another messages and socialise within the community.
Video sharing websites (e.g. YouTube)	A website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. A wide variety of user-generated video content is displayed, including film and TV clips as well as amateur content such as video blogging. Most videos enable users to leave and exchange comments.
Collaborative web projects (e.g. Wikipedia)	Web-based projects where articles are written collaboratively by volunteers around the world, and almost all articles are freely editable by any visitor.