SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

September 2023

Date for review: September 2024

Definitions

The JMAT defines "members of the school community" as any teacher, member of support staff, pupil, parent/carer of pupil, governor or ex-pupil.

This policy applies to any electronic communication software, including those running on mobile devices such as social networking sites, blogs, chatroom forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias, social bookmarking sites and content sharing sites, such as:

- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com.
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Media sharing services, such as YouTube.
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, such as Twitter.

It is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media hence the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

Statement of intent
James Montgomery Academy Trust understands that social media is a growing part of life outside of school. The widespread use of social media applications brings opportunities to engage and communicate in new ways. We have a responsibility to safeguard our school community against potential dangers when accessing the internet at school, and to educate our pupils about how to protect themselves online when outside of school.

We are committed to:
- Encouraging the responsible use of social media in support of the Trust's mission, values and objectives.
- Protecting our school community from the dangers of social media and online abuse.
- Preventing and avoiding damage to the reputation of the school through irresponsible use of social media.

The school community should be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate. They should not engage in activities which could bring the school into disrepute.

The school community should not present their own views as those of the school on any public platform.

The school community must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame any person or organisation.

It is important that all staff adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's **Mobile Phone Policy** and **Staff Code of Conduct** at all times, and all staff have read and signed the Acceptable Use Agreement to safeguard themselves and others.

Staff are required to employ the highest security settings on any personal profiles they may have.

Staff will not engage in inappropriate use of social networking sites; this includes contacting pupils, accepting or inviting friend requests from pupils, or following pupils on social media. The school understands that some staff members are also parents/carers of pupils at the school and, therefore, may wish to make contact with other parents/carers. When doing so, staff will exercise their professional judgement and will not contact family members on social media if this would lead to a conflict of interest.

Key roles and responsibilities
The **local governing body (LGB)** has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Social Media Policy and procedures at all school in the Trust.

The **LGB** has a responsibility for ensuring that the Social Media Policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to: ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

The **LGB** has responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy.

The **Headteacher** will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Social Media Policy and procedures in each school in the academy.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, will be responsible for following the Social Media Policy and for ensuring pupils do so also. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently in the classroom.

Parents/carers will be expected to take responsibility for the social media habits of their child/children at home and will be expected to promote safe social media behaviour.

Pupil expectations

Pupils are responsible for following the school rules and will be expected to follow requests from teachers.

Social media use - staff

- The Headteacher is responsible for the school's social media accounts.
- Teachers may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.
- The use of smartphone/smartwatch/Android technology is outlined in our Mobile Phone Policy.
- Teachers may use social media during their break times.
- Members of staff should avoid using social media in front of pupils.
- Members of staff must not "friend" or otherwise contact pupils through social media.
- If pupils attempt to "friend" or otherwise contact members of staff through social media, they should be reported to the Headteacher.
- Members of staff should avoid identifying themselves as an employee of the James Montgomery Academy Trust and its schools on social media.
- Members of staff must not post content online which is damaging to the academy or any of its staff or pupils.
- Where teachers or members of staff use social media in a personal capacity, they should make it clear that their views are personal.
- Teachers or members of staff must not post any information which could identify a pupil, class or the school.
- Members of staff should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this 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 should be aware that if their out-of-work activity brings James Montgomery Academy Trust and its schools into disrepute, disciplinary action will be taken.
- Members of staff should regularly check their online presence for negative content via search engines.
- If inappropriate content is accessed online, an inappropriate website content report form should be completed and passed on to the Headteacher.
- Attempts to bully, coerce or manipulate members of the academy community, via social media, by teachers and members of staff will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- Members of staff should not leave a computer or other device logged in when away from their desk, or save passwords.
- Staff members should use their school email address for school business and personal email address for their private correspondence; the two should not be mixed.

Social media use – pupils and parents/carers

- Pupils may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.
- Breaches of this policy by pupils will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content could lead to prosecution, or exclusion.
- Pupils must not attempt to "friend" or otherwise contact members of staff through social media. If attempts to contact members of staff through social media are made, they will be reported to the Headteacher.
- If members of staff attempt to "friend" or otherwise contact pupils through social media, they should be reported to the Headteacher.
- Pupils and parents/carers should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.
- Pupils and parents/carers must not post content online which is damaging to the academy or any of its staff or pupils.
- Pupils at our academy must not sign up to social media sites that have an age restriction above the pupil's age.
- If inappropriate content is accessed online on school premises, it must be reported to a teacher.

Blocked content
The following social media websites are blocked by the network's firewalls:
- Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat and other similar sites

Attempts to circumvent the network's firewalls will result in a ban from using school computing equipment, other than with close supervision.

Inappropriate content which is accessed on the school computers should be reported to the Headteacher and the site will be blocked.

Requests may be made to access erroneously blocked content by submitting a request to the Headteacher.

The final decision on whether access should be granted to a site will be made by the Headteacher.

Online Abuse
At the JMAT and its schools online abuse is taken seriously. Incidents of online abuse will be dealt with and reported along the same chain as the Anti-Bullying Policy and/or Child on Child Abuse Policy.

Staff members should never respond or retaliate to online abuse incidents. Incidents should instead be reported as inappropriate, and support sought from their line manager or senior staff member. Evidence from the incident should be saved, including screen prints of messages or web pages, and the time and date of the incident.

Where the perpetrator is a current pupil or colleague, most cases can be dealt with through the JMAT's own disciplinary procedures.

Where the perpetrator is an adult, in nearly all cases, the Headteacher should invite the victim to a meeting to address their concerns. Where appropriate, the perpetrator will be asked to remove the offensive content.

If the perpetrator refuses to comply, it is up to the Headteacher to decide what to do next. This could include contacting the Internet service provider in question through their reporting mechanisms, if the offensive content breaches their terms and conditions. If the material is threatening, abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitutes a hate crime, the Headteacher should consider contacting the police.
As part of our on-going commitment to the prevention of online abuse, regular education and discussion about online safety will take place as part of the curriculum.

Be SMART online
We encourage pupils to take a SMART approach to social media behaviour:

Safe – Do not give out personal information, or post photos of yourself to people you talk to online. Follow age restriction rules.

Meeting – Do not meet somebody you have only met online. We encourage parents/carers to speak regularly to their children about who they are talking to online.

Accepting – We advise that pupils only open emails and other forms of communication from people they already know.

Reliable – We teach pupils about the dangers of believing everything they see online.

Tell – We encourage pupils to tell a teacher, parent or carer if they see anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy review
The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the JMAT schools.

This policy will be assessed for its implementation and effectiveness **annually** by the **Trust Safeguarding Lead**.

The scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2024.**