

Topic: Social Media (Employees) – Addendum to Code of Conduct

For additional information and support please contact the HR Team on the above details.

WeST holds a deep seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the children and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Person(s) responsible for updating the policy:	Louise Rowe, HR Business Partner
Dates consulted on:	From: 15/05/2019 To: 20/11/2019
Date Approved:	12/12/2019
Date of next review:	December 2021
Status:	Interim guidance appended to Code of Conduct pending development of ICT Use Policy

Introduction

Social media is a part of everyday life for many. Social media is the term used for internet-based tools used on computer, tablets, and smart phones to help people keep in touch and enable them to interact. This can include a blog, social network, photo-sharing sites, chat room, question and answer-based networks, review systems, and discussion forums among other platforms. Social media is a place where people exchange information, opinions, ideas and experiences to learn, develop and have fun. This guide is for employee considerations and operates alongside the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy, and other relevant processes for professional responsibilities.

Company Representation Online

The Trust recognises that social media offers a platform for the organisation and its schools to perform marketing, stay connected with learners/parents and build its profile online. However any such accounts representing the Trust will be maintained by an allocated representative; operating on the most-appropriate social media platforms and with consideration to the type and frequency of appropriate posts. New social media accounts in the company's name must not be created unless approved by the CEO.

The Trust also recognises that its employees may be involved in industry conversations on social networks. Social media is an excellent way for employees to make useful connections, share ideas and shape discussions on the future of education and best practice.

Employees should not respond to any negative comments they identify online relating to the Trust or its stakeholders, however they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the Principal / Headteacher / Director TLI.

Personal Representation Online

While the Trust recognises its employees may choose to operate personal accounts on social media platforms, and the implications of The Human Rights Act regarding a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence', the Trust also provides the following guidance for best practice:

- Employees should exercise reasonable professional caution in their use of all social media, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed.
- Employees should consider the security settings of their account and personal profiles.
- Employees must only contact students via Trust authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students.
- Employees must report to the Principal/Headteacher/Director TLI any contact by a student by an inappropriate route.
- Employees should consider including a disclaimer on their personal social media profile to clearly identify that the account does not represent the Trust's views or opinions. For example: 'The views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer.'

The intention of this guidance is to provide clarity on the considerations for reasonable professional caution in posting on social media however it is recognised much of this is down to perception and common sense approaches. In particular, any **content that is inappropriate** should not be included in messages, status updates or links to other materials.

Inappropriate content includes: pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs. This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs in support of proscribed terrorist groups or organisations, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

This guidance on inappropriate content extends to avoiding the sharing of intellectual property such as trademarks on a personal account without approval of the copyright owner and is intended to protect WeST's intellectual property and to protect the Trust from risk of claim for the use of images/quotes etc. without approval of copyright.

Furthermore, employees are reminded of their responsibility and boundaries – for example they may have privileged information not in the public domain and should not promote or share this online as it could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive.

Use During the Working Day

Systems across the Trust and its devices may provide access to the internet and social media platforms for employees to reasonably use during their break times. In addition individuals may have access to their own devices while at work, such as mobile phones or tablets.

However it is expected that employees act responsibly and ensure their productivity isn't affected by such use. Using social media excessively while at work can reduce efficiency and concentration. Any excessive or inappropriate use may be considered a disciplinary matter.

Monitoring

The Trust ICT and internet resources (including computers, smart phones and internet connections) are provided for legitimate business use and any personal use should be limited to the employee break period. The Trust therefore reserves the right to monitor how social networks are used and accessed through these resources.

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Any such examinations or monitoring will only be carried out by authorised staff and reported to the senior manager of the individual employee for consideration on appropriate action which may include performance management or disciplinary matters in accordance with the relevant policies.

It should be noted that the Trust can be legally compelled to show that information to law enforcement agencies or other parties as applicable.

Further Information

Please contact the WeST HR team for further information and advice on specific circumstances. This guidance is intended to provide best practice considerations and potential implications on employment.