



Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST)

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

ODBST Level 1 Statutory Policy:	ALL Schools require this policy with no changes allowed to core text. No changes are necessary to personalise this with school name and branding, as this is a Trust level policy for use, without change, by all schools, except where a school contact is required as identified in the content of the policy. LGBs will note adoption in LGB meetings. Review will take place at Trust level, and schools will be notified of updates and review dates as necessary.
Other related ODBST policies and procedures:	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy- 2023 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 ODBST Staff Code of Conduct 2023 Mobile Phone Policy E-safety Policy 2023
Committee responsible:	SEC
Approved by:	SEC
Date Approved:	22 nd November 2023
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1. Introduction

The ODBST Policy has used the policy templates and assistance issued and updated by the South West Grid for Learning Trust. The SWGfL is an educational trust with an international reputation in supporting schools with online safety and a commitment to provide educational establishments with safe, secure and reliable teaching & learning resources and services.

SWGfL is a founding member of UKCCIS (UK Council for Child Internet Safety). Additional information about its services for schools can be found on the SWGfL website – www.swgfl.org.uk

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as You Tube have social media elements to them.

The ODBST recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and pupils are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some 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 our schools and ODBST, its staff, parents, carers and children.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy is subject to the ODBST staff code of conduct and acceptable use agreements in other policies and should be signed by all staff on an annual basis.
- 2.2. This policy:
 - applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school and ODBST;
 - 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 school/academy.
- 2.3. ODBST respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications that is likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.
- 2.4. Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school or MAT name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.
- 2.5. 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 or ODBST, 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.
- 2.6. Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school or ODBST are outside the scope of this policy.
- 2.7. Digital communications with pupils/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.*

3. Organisational control

3.1. Roles & Responsibilities

3.1.1. Headteacher and SLT

- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use
- Developing and implementing this 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

3.2. Administrator/Moderator

- Create the account following Headteacher 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)

3.3. Staff

- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content an individual has posted via school or ODBST accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school or ODBST

3.4. Process for creating new accounts

The school and ODBST community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a “Friends of the school” Facebook page or a school ‘YouTube’ channel. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Headteacher 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 or ODBST has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school/academy, including volunteers or parents.

4. **Operational matters**

4.1. Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently, and at least weekly, including during school holidays. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 48 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 is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

4.2. Behaviour

- ODBST 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 and ODBST 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 ODBST.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must follow the ODBST media policy before responding.
- 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. School filtering systems will identify any the usage of all online activity including that of personal social media accounts when using the school internet. *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 and ODBST HR will be informed. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies and may take action according to the disciplinary policy. ODBST HR will always be informed.

4.3. 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.

4.4. Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the school or ODBST, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school or ODBST 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 to ODBST HR.

4.5. Tone

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:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative

- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

4.6. Use of images

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

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought from parents and staff in advance of using their images. 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 pupil pictures online other than via school or ODBST owned social media accounts.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload pupil pictures online other than via school or ODBST equipment; personal devices should never be used.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school or ODBST, social media accounts. 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.

5. Personal use

5.1. Staff

- Personal communications are those made via a personal social-media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on ODBST, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school or MAT 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 or MAT 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 and ODBST permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.

5.2. Pupil/Students

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

5.3. 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 a positive 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 or ODBST. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school

and Trust will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the ODBST complaints procedures.

5.4. Monitoring posts about the school

As part of active social media engagement, each school should pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school and Trust.

The school or ODBST should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Appendix A

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. Don’t use the school/academy logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test 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/academy social media accounts

The 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.

The Don’ts

- ✗ Don’t make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school or ODBST 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 or ODBST 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.