

Aspire Academy Trust



Aspire Social Media Policy

Date: June 2023

Date of Approval: 16th June 2023

Approved by: Chief Executive Team

Policy Owner: Communications Officer

Policy Type: Recommended

Review Period: 3 years

Review Date: June 2026

This policy was written alongside consulting the following roles in the Trust:

- IT Manager
- HR, Wellbeing & Payroll Manager
- Director of Safeguarding

Revision Log (last 5 changes)

Date	Version No.	Brief detail of change
24.11.20	1.2	Scheduled revision for tighter control/consistency
02.05.23	1.3	Required update to include professional use by staff

Aspire Vision

Nurturing curiosity, resilience, respect and excellence; our children will thrive and live life well.

Aspire mission statement

By working together and inspiring excellence; we enable our children to excel both academically and in character.

Aspire Strapline

'working together, inspiring excellence'

Aspire Values

Aspiration	We imagine possibilities and make them real
Self-belief	We believe in ourselves - in heart, mind and soul
Passion	We dare to be different and follow our dreams
Integrity	We nurture trust and respect and do what is right
Resilience	We find a way or make a way
Excellence	We strive to achieve our absolute best

Policy Intent

All Aspire Academy Trust policies are written in line with statutory guidance or recommended best practice. These comply with each school's funding agreement, plus ESFA and DfE frameworks or complement Aspire's working practices. We have a centralised approach to policies, so they become trust wide and include all ages from 0-11.

This policy seeks to set out the high standard for online personal, and professional, conduct expected of "school stakeholders". The policy focusses on the safe and responsible use of social media, safeguarding, maintaining the reputation of the school and ensuring online mutual trust and respect is demonstrated at all times.

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Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, 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 YouTube have social media elements to them.

The Aspire Academy Trust 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 the individual academy, its staff, parents, carers and children (where applicable).

Scope of Policy

This policy is subject to the Aspire Code of Conduct and Aspire Acceptable Use Agreements. Other key policies to cross refer include the Aspire Complaints Procedure, Aspire Digital Safeguarding Policy, Aspire IT Acceptable Usage Policy, CAPH Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and academy-specific Home School Agreement.

This policy:

- Applies to all staff who directly or indirectly represent the trust
- Applies to all online communications which directly or indirectly represent the academy *(to include comments by parents/stakeholders on academy social media platforms)*
- 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 trust*

The academy respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the trust's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a trust account or using the trust/academy name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the academy, 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.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the academy are outside the scope of this policy.

Organisational control

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Trust Communications Officer**
 - Facilitating training and guidance on social media use
 - Developing and implementing the social media policy
 - Approve social media account creation
 - Create the account following SLT approval
- **Academy Leadership**
 - 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
 - Any inappropriate activity/content to be escalated in accordance with trust policy
- **Administrators (Academy & Aspire Core Service Team)**
 - 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)
- **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 he/she has posted via academy accounts
 - Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the academy

Process for creating new accounts

The Aspire community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a rationale to the trust Communications Officer 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)

Following consideration by the Communications Officer an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Communications Officer must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the trust/academy has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the trust, including volunteers or parents.

Behaviour

- The trust requires that all users using trust social media platforms (either directly by Aspire staff or indirectly by 3rd parties, to include parents), adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies
- Digital communications by staff must always be professional and respectful 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. Trust/Academy 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 the academy
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff should not respond and must contact the Communications Officer immediately
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be taken extremely seriously by the academy and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate. Screenshots of unacceptable content should be recorded
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with academy policies. *The trust 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 trust will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the academy will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the trust will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the Aspire Staff Disciplinary Policy

Tone of Content

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
- Conversational⁴
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images & video

Academy use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Consent to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the academy's data protection policy. 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 student pictures online other than via trust/academy owned social media accounts
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on academy social media accounts. Students should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any academy 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
- For videos less than 320mb, staff should upload directly to an academy's eSchools' webpage
- For videos exceeding 320mb, there is the option to upload to YouTube. All trust content must be marked as 'Unlisted' and embedded in the relevant webpage using the 'Embed' link. This will avoid trust material being displayed alongside unsuitable or inappropriate content

Use of children's names

- The use of children's names – either first name only OR full name – is **not** permitted on trust/academy social media platforms e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- If an image containing a child's name e.g. on a certificate or badge, is posted on a trust/academy social media platform, the name must be blurred out
- Parents should be regularly reminded that children's names are NOT to be used in 'Comments' section by parents/3rd parties when responding to an academy/trust post

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 data protection legislation, or breach confidentiality

Managing academy social media accounts

DO:

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the academy/trust
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other people's materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Avoid responding to comments – reminding parents regularly via newsletter of appropriate school communication channels i.e. email/telephone
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the academy's reporting process
- Turn off tagging people in images

DON'T:

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the academy/trust 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 academy 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

Monitoring posts from the trust/academy

- Trust/academy accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently
- The 'message' function on an academy Facebook page must be turned off to encourage complaints to be made via the correct channels
- Any negative comment made in relation to an academy post must be referred to within 24 hours (next working day if a weekend), if only to acknowledge receipt, and be passed onto the Head of School

- Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on an academy social media account
- No conversation to be entered into via post 'comments' – parents should be regularly reminded to use appropriate school communication channels

Monitoring posts about the academy

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to proactively monitor online regularly and frequently for public postings about the trust/academy e.g. community Facebook page
- Any negative or inappropriate comment made about the academy must be passed onto the Head of School/Aspire Communications Officer, to be dealt with in the appropriate manner

Handling abuse

- Any abusive comments made via trust/academy social media channels must be dealt with immediately by the Head of School or relevant line manager
- The academy/trust must request that any abusive comments are taken down immediately and the individual invited in to talk to the Head of School who will inform them of the academy's complaint procedure
- Should the situation continue, the academy should block and delete the user and inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
- Should the online abuse qualify as bringing the academy and/or its staff into disrepute i.e. litigious, the relevant legal and/or law enforcement authorities should be notified
- 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 using the agreed school protocols

Personal use

- Staff
 - Personal communications are those made via a personal social media account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the academy/trust or impacts on the academy/trust, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the

academy/trust 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 academy/trust are outside the scope of this policy
- Where excessive personal use of social media at work is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken
- *The trust permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites*
- Pupils
 - Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils (under the age of 18) of the trust on any personal social media network account
 - The trust's eSafety education programme should enable the pupils to be safe and responsible online users and communicate clearly that no pupil under the age of 13 should have a social media account
 - Primary school pupils are strongly advised and encouraged not to have social media accounts. If any offensive or inappropriate comments are made by pupils on academy social media platforms or relating to the academy in any way; the matter will be resolved by the use of the academy's behaviour policy
- Parents/Carers
 - If parents/carers have access to an academy learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use
 - Children's names (first name **or** full name) are NOT to be used in 'Comments' section by parents/3rd parties when responding to an academy/trust post
 - The academy has an active parent/carer eSafety section on the academy website which supports the safe and positive use of social media
 - In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made in response to an academy post (e.g. Facebook), the trust/academy will ask the parent/carer to remove the comment and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the trust's complaints procedures. Also see 'Handling Abuse'

Professional use

- Staff
 - Social media channels e.g. WhatsApp/Messenger closed groups, are not appropriate for professional communication purposes

- All professional communication is to be conducted via established school staff communication channels/forums, e.g. staff meetings/email/face-to-face/Teams to ensure appropriate level of professionalism and spirit of openness adhered to at all times
- Professional communications conducted via social media channels will by definition refer to, and potentially impact upon, the academy/trust and as such are within the scope of this policy
- In the event of any negative or inappropriate comments being made in a working capacity via a social media channel/group, and which relate to other staff members/academy or trust, disciplinary action may be taken

Regular social media reminders

The academy should regularly remind its staff, volunteers, parents & pupils via the academy website, newsletter and appropriate media channels that:

- NOTHING on social media is truly private
- Children's names are NOT to be used in 'Comments' section by parents/3rd parties when responding to an academy/Trust post
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don't use the trust/academy logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Check your privacy settings regularly
- Keep your personal information private
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online consider 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

If you have any queries relating to this policy, please contact
the Aspire Communications Officer