Social Media Policy

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Contents

1. Purpose and scope

The Mulberry Schools Trust recognises that social media can be a valuable tool for communication, learning and community engagement. We want everyone in our care and those we work with to feel confident using social media responsibly to celebrate our work and share good practice, while maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct.

This policy sets out how social media should be used across the Mulberry Schools Trust and its schools to protect staff, students, families, governors, trustees and the Trust's reputation.

It applies to:
- all employees, whether full time, part time, fixed-term or casual
- contractors
- agency staff
- volunteers
- trainees
- anyone else carrying out Trust business or using Trust systems or equipment.

All of the individuals listed above will be made aware of this policy and the reasons for its importance. They are encouraged to familiarise themselves with its contents and refer to it if they are unsure about any aspect of social media use. This policy should be read alongside other relevant Trust policies, including those on equality, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, online safety and acceptable use of ICT.

The policy covers both professional use of social media on behalf of the Trust and its schools, and personal use where there is any link to the Trust or its schools.

The policy aims to:

- set guidelines and rules on the use of social media channels by the Trust and its schools
- establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- support other policies in place within the Trust and its schools relating to data protection, online safety and safeguarding.

For Trust staff:

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment.
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and/or students.
- Any other IT/internet-enabled equipment.

Staff members should bear in mind that information they share through social media, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with school and Trust equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

2. Definitions

"Mulberry Schools Trust" or "Trust" – means the Mulberry Schools Trust, its schools and any other subsidiaries.

"Staff" – means employees, contractors, agency staff, volunteers, trainees and anyone carrying out Trust business or using Trust systems.

"Social media" – for the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, TikTok etc. This policy applies to the use of social media for Trust or school purposes, as well as personal use that may affect the Trust in any way.

 "ICT facilities" – means all IT devices, facilities, systems and services including, but not limited to, network infrastructure, desktop computers, laptops, tablets, phones, personal organisers, music players, software, websites, web applications or services and any device, system or service which may become available in the future which is provided as part of the ICT service.

3. General guidance about the use of social media

Social media must never be used to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against anyone, or to make false or misleading statements, or to impersonate others.

Social media must not be used to defame or disparage the Mulberry Schools Trust or any of its schools, members of staff, governors, trustees, students or their families, other members of the Trust or any other third parties.

The Mulberry Schools Trust branding or logos must not be used in any social media posting or in an individual's social media profile without the prior approval of the CEO.

4. General guidance for staff

Staff must not express opinions on behalf of the Mulberry Schools Trust, its schools or subsidiaries unless this forms part of their professional role and they have been authorised to do so by the CEO or Headteacher/Principal.

Staff must not do anything that could lead to the disclosure of, or put at risk, confidential information held by the Mulberry Schools Trust.

Staff must always be respectful to others when making any statement on social media, and must be aware that they are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see.

Staff are strictly prohibited from posting material which is sexually explicit, offensive and derogatory, or which may give rise to a legal claim against the Mulberry Schools Trust.

Staff must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the Mulberry Schools Trust.

If a member of staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from posting it until it has been discussed with the CEO or Headteacher/Principal.

If a member of staff sees social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the Mulberry Schools Trust or another member of the school community, they should contact their Headteacher/Principal or the CEO.

Breach of this Social Media Policy by staff covered by the scope of the policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any staff member suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Staff found to be in breach of this policy may be required to remove any social media content that the Mulberry Schools Trust considers constitutes a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a requirement may in itself result in disciplinary action.

LinkedIn is a professional platform and should be used as such when referencing a role at the Mulberry Schools Trust. Staff who associate themselves with the Trust or one of its schools on LinkedIn are expected to uphold the Trust's values in any professional interactions. Staff are actively encouraged to engage positively with the official Mulberry Schools Trust LinkedIn account, for example, by following it and supporting posts through likes or shares.

4.1 Personal use of social media by staff

Staff should be aware that any use of social media platforms (whether or not accessed for work purposes) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken using the most appropriate policy.

The school expects all staff to consider the safety of students and the risks (reputational and financial) to the Mulberry Schools Trust when using social media platforms, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

When using social media, staff must not:

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business, with the exception of WhatsApp if used to support day-to-day communication as outlined in section 6.
- Accept 'friend requests' from, or communicate via social media with, current students (apart from family members).
- Complain about the school, individual students, colleagues or parents/carers.
- Reference or share sensitive or confidential information about individual students, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of students – unless this forms part of their professional role and they have been authorised to do so by the CEO or Headteacher/Principal.
- Express personal views or opinions in a way that suggests that they represent the views of the Trust.
- Staff must not link their personal social media profiles to their work email account, unless the account has been specifically set up for a school, Trust-related activity or programme and authorised by a senior leader. In such cases, a work email may be used for account access or management purposes only.
- Use personal social media in a way that disrupts teaching, learning or other contractual duties.
- Share material in breach of copyright or other intellectual property rights, or which invades the privacy of any person.

Staff members must not have contact through any personal social media platforms with any student that attends a school within the Mulberry Schools Trust, unless the students are family members. The Mulberry Schools Trust does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain (whether financial or otherwise), nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.

Staff members must not have contact with students' family members through personal social media, except where there is a pre-existing personal relationship (e.g. friends or family). In these cases, professional boundaries must still be maintained.

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the relevant school and Trust policies.

Any communication received by a member of staff from current students (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity, will amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- Pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature).
- A false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation.
- Material which is offensive, obscene, criminally discriminatory, derogatory or which may cause embarrassment to the Mulberry Schools Trust, our partners or our staff.
- Confidential information which you do not have express authority to disseminate about the Mulberry Schools Trust, or any of our staff, students, families or partners.
- Any other statement which is likely to create any liability,whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or the Mulberry Schools Trust.

Any such action will be addressed under the relevant school and Trust policies and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

On leaving the Mulberry Schools Trust service, staff members must not contact any current students within the Mulberry Schools Trust by means of personal social media, unless they are family members. Similarly, we discourage staff members from contacting students from their former schools by means of personal social media, unless they are family members.

Information that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about students and their family members, colleagues and other parties, and school or Trust corporate information, must not be discussed on their personal social media.

Photographs, videos or any other types of images of students and their families must not be shared on personal social media by staff without appropriate authorisation and consent. Staff may occasionally wish to share content from high-profile school or Trust events on their personal social media accounts. This is only permitted with prior authorisation from the Chief Corporate Affairs Officer or the Director of Marketing and Communications, and should support the positive promotion of the Trust's work to a wider audience.

School and/or Trust email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts.

Staff members must not edit, open or access online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

Caution is advised when interacting with work colleagues using personal social media. This can blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships if too much personal information is known in the work place.

Staff members are strongly advised to carefully manage the privacy levels of their personal social media as strictly as they can to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.

5. Expectations for others in the school community

This policy is primarily directed at employees of the Mulberry Schools Trust. However, we recognise that social media is used by many others in our community, including students, parents/carers, trustees and governors. While these groups are not bound by the same employment obligations, we believe it is helpful to outline the Trust's expectations around respectful and responsible use of social media.

The following guidance is intended to promote shared understanding and support a positive culture of communication across all our schools.

5.1 Students

Responsibility for educating and supporting students with the safe and appropriate use of social media sits with individual schools and Headteachers, as part of the curriculum and wider pastoral systems.

Students in our schools are expected to:

- Be respectful towards staff, other students, and the school.
- Raise concerns or complaints through official school channels.
- Think carefully about how their online behaviour and posts may affect others.

When interacting online, we also expect students in our schools to avoid:

- Making public or critical comments about staff, peers or the school.
- Sharing images of other students without permission.
- Using social media to post anything that may cause harm or upset.

Any concerns about a student's online activity will be addressed in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

5.2 Parents and carers

Parents and carers play a vital role in modelling appropriate and respectful use of social media to their children. We encourage families to support our schools by using social media in a way that promotes community, protects others' privacy and reflects the shared values of the Trust.

When engaging with schools via official or informal channels, we encourage parents and carers to:

- Communicate in a respectful, constructive and inclusive manner.
- Use school complaints procedures where concerns arise, rather than raising issues publicly.

- Avoid sharing personal or sensitive information about other families, students or members of staff.
- Refrain from posting images of other children without permission.

5.3 Trustees and governors

Trustees and governors are not subject to this policy in the same way as staff. However, as public representatives of the Trust, they are expected to model high standards of conduct in line with:

- The Nolan Principles of Public Life
- The relevant Mulberry Schools Trust Governance Handbook
- Any other relevant guidance or expectations set out by the Trust or Department for Education

We encourage trustees and governors to be mindful of their role and position when using social media, and to be aware of the guidance issued to staff.

6. WhatsApp groups

WhatsApp groups are widely used across the Trust and, in some schools, are part of how information is regularly shared with staff and parents. These groups can be very useful for staying connected and informed.

Whether school-led or parent-led, we encourage the responsible use of WhatsApp, with a focus on supporting communication and building community. As messages are shared using personal devices and can easily be forwarded or misinterpreted, it is important that all users are thoughtful and respectful at all times, and that they use WhatsApp groups in line with the Trust's values.

For parents and carers, we encourage the following:

- Use WhatsApp groups to support communication and connection, not as a platform for complaints.
- Communicate respectfully, recognising that tone can easily be misinterpreted in written messages.
- Avoid sharing confidential, sensitive or unverified information.
- Refrain from discussing individual children or behaviour incidents.
- Be mindful that WhatsApp messages can be shared or forwarded beyond the group.

For staff, we encourage the following:

- Use WhatsApp groups professionally and appropriately, keeping messages inclusive and respectful.
- Recognise that WhatsApp groups often involve personal phone numbers and devices – always ask permission before adding a colleague to a group and ensure they are aware they can leave at any time.
- Avoid using WhatsApp to share any student-related, sensitive or confidential information – always use official school communication channels for this.
- Be aware of the tone and purpose of the group, especially if families are involved.

7. MST social media accounts

The official social media accounts for the Mulberry Schools Trust, its programmes and schools are listed below.

Only staff authorised by a Headteacher or designated lead may manage or post to these accounts, and others should not attempt to access them.

We welcome contributions from colleagues – if you would like something to be shared on a Trust, programme or school account, please contact the relevant member of staff or team, who will be happy to consider your suggestion.

7.1 Mulberry Schools Trust

These accounts are overseen by the Trust Director of Marketing and Communications:

Name	Platform	Handle
Mulberry Schools Trust	BlueSky	**@mulberrytrust.bsky.social**
Mulberry Schools Trust	LinkedIn	**Mulberry Schools Trust**
Mulberry Schools Trust / Mulberry School for Girls	X	**@MulberryTH**

7.2 Other Trust-wide programmes

These accounts are managed by the team leading this work:

Name	Platform	Handle
East London Teaching School Hub	Instagram	**eastlondontsh**
East London Teaching School Hub	LinkedIn	**East London Teaching School Hub**
East London Teaching School Hub	X	**@EastLondonTSH**
Mulberry Arts	LinkedIn	**Mulberry Arts**
Mulberry College of Teaching	LinkedIn	**Mulberry College of Teaching**
Mulberry College of Teaching	X	**@MulberryTeach**
Mulberry STEM Academy	LinkedIn	**Mulberry STEM Academy**

7.3 Schools

These accounts are managed directly by schools:

Name	Platform	Handle
Mulberry Academy London Dock	LinkedIn	**Mulberry Academy London Dock**
Mulberry Academy London Dock	X	**@MulberryDock**
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch	Facebook	**Mulberry Academy Shoreditch**
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch	Instagram	**@mulberryacademyshoreditch**
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch	LinkedIn	**Mulberry Academy Shoreditch**
Mulberry Academy Shoreditch	X	**@MulberryAS**
Mulberry Academy Woodside	Instagram	**@mulberryaws**
Mulberry Academy Woodside	LinkedIn	**Mulberry Academy Woodside**
Mulberry Academy Woodside	X	**@MulberryAWS**
Mulberry Canon Barnett	Facebook	**Mulberry Canon Barnett**
Mulberry Canon Barnett	Instagram	**@mulberry_canon_barnett**
Mulberry Canon Barnett	X	**@MulberryCB**
Mulberry School for Girls	LinkedIn	**Mulberry School for Girls**
Mulberry School for Girls / Mulberry Schools Trust	X	**@MulberryTH**
Mulberry Stepney Green	Instagram	**@mulberrystepneygreen**
Mulberry Stepney Green	X	**@MSGreenCollege**
Mulberry UTC	Facebook	**Mulberry UTC**

Name	Platform	Handle
Mulberry UTC	Instagram	**@mulberry_utc**
Mulberry UTC	LinkedIn	**Mulberry UTC**
Mulberry UTC	X	**@MulberryUTC**
Mulberry Wood Wharf	X	**@MulberryWW**

7.4 Content shared on MST social media accounts

The Trust, its associated programmes or its schools will post on social media:

- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities.
- Alerts about changes (e.g. changes to procedures, severe weather updates, staffing changes).
- Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures).
- Advertisements for school events or activities.
- Job vacancies or requests for volunteers.
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers.
- Achievements of students and staff.
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals.
- Invitations to provide feedback.

The Trust or its schools will not post on social media:

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent).
- Harmful or abusive comments.
- Messages directed at specific individuals, unless part of a professional responsibility associated with the role (e.g. responding to enquiries, acknowledging achievements, or issuing official updates).
- Political statements.
- Advertisements for businesses, unless directly related to the school.
- Links to staff members' personal accounts.

7.5 Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible any comments on our posts which include:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory.
- Comments we consider to be spam.
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations.

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the Trust's Complaints Policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the school community.

7.6 Following other social media users

The Mulberry Schools Trust and its schools:

- Will only 'like' social media posts with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind.

- May follow other users if you follow us on social media – being followed by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind.

8. Training and awareness

At the Mulberry Schools Trust, we recognise that early intervention can protect students who may be at risk of cyber bullying or negative social media behaviour. Staff receive regular safeguarding training which includes online safety and responsible use of social media.

Staff will be made aware of this Social Media Policy as part of their induction.

Students are educated about e-safety and appropriate social media use on a regular basis through a variety of mediums, including; assemblies, PSHE lessons and cross-curricular links.

Parents and carers also have access to information about online safety and responsible use of social media through individual schools and the Trust.

Training for all students, staff and parents/carers will be refreshed in light of any significant incidents or changes.

9. Monitoring of internet use

The Mulberry Schools Trust and its schools may monitor the usage of any or all ICT facilities. This includes reports on any internet sites that have been visited. Such monitoring will be performed in compliance with this policy and individual schools' ICT and Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

10. Monitoring and review

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our ICT resources and communications systems including, but not limited to, social media postings and activities.. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The Mulberry Schools Trust will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the Trust and its schools.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

The Mulberry Schools Trust Standards Committee is responsible for reviewing and approving this policy.

11. Related policies

Trust policies
- Disciplinary Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Privacy GDPR Policy

School policies
- Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use of ICT Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality Policy