POLICY	**Communications and Social Media Policy 2022/23**
STATUS/DATE OF THIS VERSION	**March 2023**
APPROVED BY	**Board of Trustees**
RATIFIED BY	**Board of Trustees**
REVIEW	**January 2024**

This policy is operated by all the schools in Unity Education Trust (as listed below).
There may be sections that are specific to one school and these will be added by the school either as an annex or in place of yellow highlighted sections below.

Any queries about the policy should be directed, in the first instance, to the Headteacher/Head of School:

- **Beeston Primary School**
- **Garvestone Primary School**
- **Grove House Infant and Nursery School**
- **King's Park Infant School**
- **Northgate High School and Dereham Sixth Form College**
- **The Pinetree School**
- **The Short Stay School for Norfolk**
- **Churchill Park Academy**
- **Greyfriars Academy**
- **Highgate Infant School**
- **King's Oak Infant School**
- **Wimbotsham and Stow Academy**
- **Magdalen Academy**
- **St German's Academy**
- **Great Dunham Primary School**

Unity Education Trust Social Media Policy

Rationale:

Unity Education Trust recognises and embraces the numerous benefits and opportunities that social media offers. While employees are encouraged to engage, collaborate and innovate through social media, they should also be aware that there are some associated risks and vulnerabilities, especially around issues of safeguarding, bullying, School/Trust and personal reputation.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all communication from the trust and its respective schools is consistent, accurate, honest, timely and relevant. Unity Education Trust places a high value on its ability to listen and react to comments and feedback both from its staff members and external stakeholders. This policy sets out the trust's communication strategy for internal (staff members, children) and external (parents, wider community, businesses, media, other schools and trusts) stakeholders.

Effective communications in all aspects of our school's business helps us to:

- Build and maintain trust
- Prevent and resolve problems and avoid misinterpretation
- Provide clarity and direction
- Create new and improved relationships
- Build confidence and reassurance
- Increase engagement
- Increase productivity and wellbeing amongst our staff and children
- Create a recognised trust brand
- Raise the trust's profile
- Maintain our high standards and expectations

Purpose of this Policy

- The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect the schools and Trust and its employees, and to promote the effective use of social media as part of the school/Trust activities.
- This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by the Trust, schools and its employees.
- The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the school's IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- Personal communications via social media accounts that are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.
- This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full-time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees, agency workers, visitors, volunteers, governors and Trustees.

Roles, Responsibilities and Procedure

Employees of Unity Education Trust should:

- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils and colleagues on social media;
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and other relevant policies, i.e. those of the Trust and school as employer;
- be aware that any excessive use of social media in school may result in disciplinary action;
- be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. They are therefore advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video that they are about to post on a social networking site is something that they want pupils, colleagues, other employees of the trust, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it. Control is lost once words are posted.

School Leaders and Managers are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media;
- operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

Internal Communication

Effective internal communication helps ensure that everyone is working collaboratively towards achieving the trust's strategic vision, values and objectives. It develops a cohesive culture and empowers staff to make the right decisions in line with those goals. This in turn leads to greater efficiency and productivity and improves outcomes for all of our children. There are many forms of internal communication and whilst our schools have their own structures of internal communications, the MAT requires consistency in the following approaches which align to the wider strategic aims and objectives.

The Academy Stakeholder Committees (ASC) 2023 –

A key component of the UET governance structure is the establishment of the Academy Stakeholder Committee (ASC) from January 2023 in each school.

These committees have been set up to support the two-way communication between key stakeholders and the trust board. If the trust is to succeed, it is imperative that the views and feedback of our children, staff and parents are taken into consideration. The ASCs will enable trustees and the central MAT team to obtain views and opinions that can help to shape key decisions made by trustees. Staff, parents and community member voice will be captured to support the school in the community.

Schools also have programmes such as School Council and Junior Leaders who are responsible for engaging with their peers before and after the meetings to discuss agenda items. Minutes of the school council are taken and these are shared with their classroom peers.

'Open Door Policy' for children, their families and staff

Unity Education Trust schools strive to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities or children, staff and families to feed in their views and comments outside of the formal channels in place. The Trust and its schools also attempt wherever possible to respond appropriately to suggestions and comments. Each school within the trust will:

- Maintain feedback boxes and cards in key school locations which will be regularly promoted for use by parents and children.
- Ensure that opportunities for informal communications are in place including an 'open door' culture whereby children, parents and families can easily speak with the Headteacher and SLT members.
- Publish on their websites a central email account for parental enquiries.
- Ensure there are ample opportunities and mechanisms for staff to raise comments, suggestions and feedback to the Headteacher
- Annually issue a survey to all parents, children and staff that has been agreed by the trust to support a review of engagement and satisfaction.

Communication Methods

Internal Emails

Emailing colleagues is an effective and quick method of communication and is promoted by the trust. However, effective and appropriate use is crucial. Particular care should be taken when writing emails to ensure that the Trust's Code of Conduct is upheld and that all communication is professional and courteous in tone and manner. Staff should not write anything in an email that they would not want to be shared more widely or that could be misinterpreted and does not use derogatory names and thus breach anti-bullying or harassment legislation. Staff should also note that any emails, even after deletion, remain on the server and may be used in a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request by a member of the public or colleagues.

Face to face and indirect non-verbal communication

Unity Education Trust promotes a culture of ethical leadership and we are committed to consistently applying this is everything we do. The Trust believes that every member of staff is in a position of leadership and can have great influence on colleagues. This includes all forms of face-to-face communications with colleagues, be that informal or formal. Staff are reminded of the power of non-verbal communication in the form of body language, facial expression and behaviour. The Trust expects every staff member to be mindful of their own non-verbal communication and consider how this can affect (and be received by) others.

Letters, emails and other written communication

Unity Education Trust aims to maintain a consistency of written and visual style and tone of voice. All written communication should be spell-checked and grammatically correct. As an education provider this is essential for our own credibility and for the reputation of the schools and trust. Staff should take steps to have their written communication proof read where necessary.

Letters

Any in-school letters written must be pre-approved by the Headteacher/Head of School, and by the CEO or Directorate Leads if it is being sent from, or on behalf of, the central UET team. All letters

should be on school letter head with the Trust and school logo clearly visible. All letters should follow a consistent visual format.

Emails

Emails are a critical method of communication both internally and externally. To ensure the smooth running of school business, all staff should review their inbox at least once daily and respond to external emails within a reasonable time period. Aspects that are particularly important with regards to effective and communication are outlined as follows:

- Staff should always ensure emails are polite, professional, grammatically correct, spell checked and that they include the appropriate greeting and closing (e.g. Dear Sir / Madam where the recipient is unknown / Kind Regards / Yours sincerely).
- Staff should adhere to the Trust Staff Code of Conduct in all email communications
- Colloquialisms should be avoided to eliminate the risk of misinterpretation or unintended offense.
- Staff should be mindful of the use of capital letters which can be interpreted as 'shouting'
- Staff should be aware that anything that is written in an email and then sent can remain with the recipient indefinitely and will remain on the trust's server even after deletion. With this in mind staff should not write anything that they wouldn't want to be seen for example via a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request.
- Staff are reminded to ensure they are adhering to the GDPR regulations and records, retention and deletion protocols which set out the steps to be taken to protect sensitive and confidential information (e.g. not using the names of children or staff, encrypting sensitive or confidential attachments with a password etc.)
- Staff should never express personal opinion on sensitive, political or potentially controversial matters via email or any other written form of communication.
- Staff should be cautious about sending any messages via email that may negatively portray and or misrepresent children, parents, staff or communities.
- Staff should take care when replying to emails to ensure their response does not result in any potentially legally binding agreement.
- All staff emails must include the following trust signature which is presented in black font, with the UET and/or School Logo:

Name
Job Title
School Address School Address Postcode
Tel: (school telephone number or works mobile if you have one)
Email: (your email address)
Please note, a reply to this email is not required during non-working hours
Unity Education Trust is an exempt charity regulated by the Secretary of State for Education. It is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 10591822), whose registered office is at Dereham Sixth Form College, Crown Road, Dereham, NR20 4AG
The information contained in this email is intended only for the person or organisation to which it is addressed. If you have received it by mistake, please disregard and notify the sender immediately. Unauthorised disclosure or use of such information may be a breach of legislation or confidentiality and may be legally privileged.

Emails sent from and received by members and employees of The Unity Education Trust may be monitored. They may also be disclosed to other people under legislation, particularly the Freedom Of Information Act 2000.
Unless this email relates to The Unity Education Trust business, it will be regarded as personal and will not be authorised by or sent on behalf of the business. The sender will have sole responsibility for any legal actions or disputes that may arise.

Websites

School and Trust websites are often the first interaction external stakeholders will have with the trust. It is therefore important that our websites are maintained with accurate, timely and comprehensive information. Branding is also important in order to support the profile of the trust as a whole. Each school will have its own website which will be broadly owned as the first point of contact for those external to the school and maintained by the Headteacher. However, the trust requires the following principles to be followed:

- All schools within the trust must display the Trust logo alongside their own to ensure branding is protected. - All schools must provide a direct visible link to the Trust website.
- All schools must display a direct and visible link to the Trust twitter page (2023-).
- All websites must comply with data protection and copyright regulations

Before an Ofsted inspection, inspectors will scrutinise school websites for the necessary information and make an assessment of the information shared with the community by the school; inspectors may use some of this information to shape lines of enquiry before the inspection takes place.
In addition, Ofsted and DfE place obligations with schools to ensure core compliance with national requirements on website content. With this in mind it is important that the latest DfE Statutory Requirements for Websites is implemented with the support of the half-termly compliance checks from the Head of Services.

Social Media

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. It allows people to share information, ideas and views. Examples of social media include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Flickr and YouTube.

Acceptable Use

Employees should be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if you restrict it to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond the intended recipients. Therefore, employees using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

School-sanctioned use of social media and/or social media accounts using the school or Trust name, a School of Trust logo, or clearly attached to the school and/or Trust

There are many legitimate uses of social media within the curriculum, and to support student learning and to share news with the wider school and Trust community. For example, the school, and

classes/subjects/phases within the school, may have official Twitter, Facebook, and post-16 courses may require the use of blogs for assessment.

There are also many possibilities for using social media to enhance and develop pupils' learning and to keep school Community and our partners in touch with the school.

When using school social media accounts and/or social media accounts using the name of your school, or Unity education Trust, a school or UET logo, or clearly attached to the school or UET in some way, the following practices must be observed:

- A distinct and dedicated social media site or account must be set up by the Central UET ICT and Data team in accordance with permission from the Headteacher/Principal/Head of School to maintain consistency across our Trust and School social media sites. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held and should be linked to an official school email account.
- All school sanctioned social media accounts created for school purposes should have the official school and Trust branding, state that it is an **'Official XXXX School Approved Site'**, and include a link in the **About or Info** page to the Online Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the School website. This will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by the School.
- The content of any School-sanctioned social media site and/or social media accounts using the name of XXX School, a XXX School or Trust logo, or clearly attached to XXX School in some way, should be entirely professional and should reflect well on the School/Trust.
- Staff **must not** publish photographs of pupils without the written consent of parents / carers, or the pupil themselves if they are deemed of the age and ability to provide their own consent.
- Standard practice is to publish only the first name, unless permission has been given by parents or pupils (if deemed of the age and ability to provide their own consent) for the full name to be used.
- School sanctioned social media sites must use images of children in suitable clothing.
- Staff must take into account the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2022) and Guidance for Safer Working Practice (February 2022) when making any posts on school social media accounts.
- Any links to external sites from the accounts must be appropriate and safe; if they are shared these must be verified as reputable sites. Only appropriate hashtags should ever be used.
- Any inappropriate comments on, or abuse of, school-sanctioned social media and/or social media accounts using the name of the School/Trust, a School/Trust logo, or clearly attached to the School or Trust in some way, should immediately be removed and reported to the Headteacher/Principal/Head of School, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and UET Operational Directorate (if appropriate). It is the responsibility of everyone using the site and social media in general to report abuse immediately.

Specific guidance on social media posts:

- A log will be kept by the school of users of the social media platform(s) with access deleted when a member of staff leaves the school.
- Any social media post created by an account that has been set up in the school's name should include as few personal details as possible.
- For every post staff should consider whether it is really necessary to include the chosen level of detail; could detail be minimised further.

● The full name (first name and surname) of a child or adult should never be used in a post that contains an image.
● If a photograph is of an individual child then that child's full name MUST not be used.
● If a child has left the school their personal details, including images, should not be used in any new social media post, unless the school has gained written consent to continue using them.
● Personal contact details such as email, postal address and telephone numbers should never be used in any post at any time.

Employees should not upload any content on to social media sites that:

- is confidential to the school/trust or its staff
- amounts to bullying
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- brings the school/trust into disrepute
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips
- undermines the reputation of the school and/or individuals
- is defamatory or knowingly false
- breaches copyright
- is in any other way unlawful.

Employees should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18, or from parents on their personal social media accounts such as Facebook.

Communication with parental comments via social media should be through the school/trust's email account (with a clear message stating 'please contact eg office@address with your query').

Employees should note that the use of social media accounts during lesson time is not permitted.

Safeguarding

The use of social networking sites introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

Potential risks can include, but are not limited to:

- online bullying;
- grooming, exploitation or stalking;
- exposure to inappropriate material or hateful language;
- encouraging violent behaviour, self-harm or risk taking.

In order to mitigate these risks, there are steps you can take to promote safety online:

- You must not use any information in an attempt to locate or meet a child/young person.
- Ensure that any messages, photos or information comply with existing policies.

Reporting safeguarding concerns

- Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the lead DSL in the school/trust.
- Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as urgent steps may need to be taken to support the child.
- With regard to personal safeguarding, you should report any harassment or abuse you receive online while using your work accounts.

Reporting, Responding and Recording Cyberbullying incidents

- Staff should never engage with cyberbullying incidents. If in the course of your employment with this school/trust, you discover a website containing inaccurate, inappropriate or inflammatory written material relating to you, or images of you which have been taken and/or which are being used without your permission, you should immediately report this to a senior leader at your school.
- Staff should keep any records of the abuse such as text, emails, voicemail, website or social media. If appropriate, screen prints of messages or web pages could be taken and the time, date and address of site should be recorded.

Action by Employer – Inappropriate Use of Social Media

- Following a report of inappropriate use of social media, the senior leader will conduct a prompt investigation.
- If in the course of the investigation, it is found that a pupil submitted the material to the social media platform, that pupil will be disciplined in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- The senior leader, where appropriate, will approach the social media host to ensure the material is either amended or removed as a matter of urgency, ie within 24 hours. If the social media platform requires the individual who is complaining to do so personally, the school will give their full support and assistance.
- Checks will be carried out to ensure that the requested amendments or removals are made. If the social media platform does not co-operate, the senior leader will contact the internet service provider (ISP) as the ISP has the ability to block access to certain sites and, in exceptional circumstances, can remove or close down.
- If the material is threatening and/or intimidating, senior leaders will, with the member of staff's consent, report the matter to the police.
- The member of staff will be offered full support and appropriate counselling.

Breaches of this Policy

Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy (or if complaints are received about unacceptable use of social networking that has potentially breached this policy) will be investigated in accordance with the school/trust's bullying or disciplinary procedure. The member of staff will be expected to co-operate with the school's investigation which may involve:

- handing over relevant passwords and login details;
- printing a copy or obtaining a screenshot of the alleged unacceptable content;
- determining that the responsibility or source of the content was in fact the member of staff.

The seriousness of the breach will be considered including the nature of the content, how long the content remained visible on the social media site, the potential for recirculation by others and the impact on the school/trust or the individuals concerned. Staff should be aware that actions online can

be in breach of the harassment/IT/equality policies and any online breaches of these policies may also be treated as conduct issues in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. If the outcome of an investigation leads to disciplinary action, the consequences will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate UET procedures. Serious breaches, for example those in statute such as Equality Laws could result in the dismissal of the employee. Where conduct is considered to be unlawful, the school will report the matter to the police and other external agencies.

Monitoring and Review

If the Headteacher/Principal/Head of School reasonably believes that an employee has breached this policy, from time to time the school will monitor or record communications that are sent or received from within the school/trust's network.

This policy will be reviewed regularly, usually annually and, in accordance with the following, on an as-and-when-required basis:

- legislative changes;
- good practice guidance;
- case law;
- significant incidents reported.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may also, after consultation with the trade unions, be amended from time to time by the school/trust.

Legislation

Acceptable use of social networking must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the Trust will adhere to its rights, responsibilities and duties in accordance with the following:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

The internet is a fast-moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media – the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium. When using social media, staff should be aware of the potential impact on themselves and the employer, whether for work-related or personal use; whether during working hours or otherwise; or whether social media is accessed using the employer's equipment or using the employee's equipment. Staff should use discretion and common sense when engaging in online communication.

Media relations

The trust promotes efforts to gain positive media coverage of the work of our schools in order to raise awareness of the schools amongst parents and the local community but also to raise the profile of the trust as a whole entity. Each term, Headteachers will discuss, at ELG, any events in the coming term which they believe may be of interest to the local media. It is the trust's policy to develop a positive working relationship with the local press.

Whilst our preference is always to take a proactive approach to positive media stories, from time to time there may be the need to react quickly to unexpected media interest. All media enquiries should initially be logged by the person who is approached with details of the nature of the enquiry, the urgency and the source. No response must be given at the time of the approach. All enquiries will then be passed to the Headteacher who will consult with the CEO and/or Directorate Leads.

Complaints, Feedback and Compliments

The Trust encourages views about our schools whether positive, negative or neutral. Families or communities may wish to comment on their experience of our provision without making a formal complaint. We use the term 'feedback' to refer to these comments. We use the term 'complaint' in its everyday sense, to mean any statement about our provision or member of staff that has not met the standard that people could reasonably expect; this includes members of the public. Complaints, feedback and compliments are all of equal importance. They can help us to understand what we are doing well as a trust and identify areas for improvement.

Feedback: We generally receive regular feedback through the established channels e.g. ASC, parent forums, open door policy, website, etc., however it is important that our schools promote a culture where feedback is welcomed by all in everything we do.

Complaints: All complaints should be handled in line with the trust and school's Complaints Policy available on the website. It is imperative that any complaint is investigated thoroughly and fairly and in line with the procedure.

Compliments: Our schools often receive compliments informally in discussion with families and in dialogue between teachers and parents. However, these are less frequently issued in writing. It is important that our trust is able to capture what we are doing well in addition to the feedback and complaints received to help us improve. Where compliments are given informally, staff are encouraged to request that the compliment be put in writing. Where this is not possible, a verbal account should be reported to the Headteacher. This is shared with the Trust in ELG and is shared with Trustees as appropriate.