



**Doncaster**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

# Guidance on Social Media Use for Education Establishments

<b>Person Responsible For Policy:</b>	<b>K. Formby</b>
<b>Approved:</b>	<b>March 2021</b>
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Head teacher:</b> <b>Chair of Management</b> <b>Committee:</b>
<b>To be reviewed:</b>	<b>March 2023</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.
- 1.2 While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Maple Medical PRU staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.
- 1.3 It is crucial that pupils, their family members and the public at large have confidence in the education establishment's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the education establishment and the Local Authority are safeguarded.
- 1.4 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

# 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all teaching and other staff, whether employed by the Council or employed directly by the education establishment, external contractors providing services on behalf of the education establishment or the Council, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the education establishment. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.
- 2.2 This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official education establishment purposes; including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the education establishment (see sections 5, 6, 7 and Appendices A and B).
- 2.3 This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *Twitter*), blogs, microblogs, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. 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.

# 3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Maple Medical PRU is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the education establishment are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998

- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- GDPR.

3.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records and details protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- Education establishment or Council business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, or personal details for staff, pupils or their family members and
- Politically sensitive information.

3.3 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and any updated laws.

3.4 Maple Medical PRU could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render Maple Medical PRU liable to the injured party.

## **4 RELATED POLICIES**

4.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school and LA policies:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Governors Code of Conduct

## **5 PRINCIPLES – *BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL***

5.1 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the education establishment or Council and your personal interests.

5.2 You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Maple Medical PRU or the LA into disrepute.

5.3 You must not represent your personal views as those of Maple Medical PRU or the LA on any social medium.

5.4 You must not discuss personal information about pupils, their family members; Maple Medical PRU or LA staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.

- 5.5 You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, Maple Medical PRU or the Council. You should ensure that at all times that you are not offensive, obscene, and discriminatory or harass others.
- 5.6 You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of Maple Medical PRU or the LA.
- 5.7 You should ensure that you do not misuse confidential, sensitive or copyrighted information.

## **6 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

- 6.1 Staff should be aware that social network sites are not private and anything published on them is considered in the public domain. Your personal use of social media is not considered to be totally outside of the work domain and depending on your actions you may face disciplinary action at work for your personal use of social media.
- 6.2 Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Maple Medical PRU or service providers for the education establishment or LA in their personal webpage. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the education establishment and the Council and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.
- 6.3 Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from Maple Medical PRU or any other education establishment, unless the pupils are family members. Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. If Staff Members receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official education establishment site.
- 6.4 Maple Medical PRU does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the education establishment starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- 6.5 Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- 6.6 If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the education establishment and through official education establishment sites created according to the requirements specified in section 7 and Appendix A.
- 6.7 On leaving Maple Medical PRU's service; staff members must not contact Maple Medical PRU's pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former education establishments by means of personal social media.

- 6.8 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues Council staff and other parties and education establishment or Council corporate information must not be discussed on their personal webspace.
- 6.9 Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing education establishment or Council uniforms or clothing with education establishment or Council logos or images identifying sensitive education establishment or Council premises (eg care homes, secure units) must not be published on personal webspace.
- 6.10 Education establishment or Council email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- 6.11 Staff members must not edit open access online material including but not limited to 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.
- 6.12 Maple Medical PRU or LA corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal webspace
- 6.13 Any use of social media must be in a professional manner.
- 6.14 Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.
- 6.15 Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites 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. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

## **7 MONITORING OF INTERNET USE**

- 7.1 Maple Medical PRU monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.
- 7.2 Users of Maple Medical PRU email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the education establishment's ICT system.

## **8 BREACHES OF THE POLICY**

- 8.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Maple Medical PRU or LA Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 8.2 A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Maple Medical PRU or the LA or any illegal acts or acts that render

Maple Medical PRU or the LA liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

- 8.3 Contracted providers of Maple Medical PRU or LA services must inform the relevant education establishment or Council officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the education establishment and the LA. Any action against breaches should be according to the education establishment's internal disciplinary procedures.

## Appendix 1

### MAPLE MEDICAL PRU

#### Staff, Management Committee and Visitor ICT Acceptable Use Agreement

ICT and the related technologies such as email, the internet and mobile devices are an expected part of our daily working life in school. This agreement, along with Maple Medical PRU's staff policy on Social Media is designed to ensure that all staff are aware of their professional responsibilities when using any form of ICT. All staff are expected to sign this policy and adhere at all times to its contents. Any concerns or clarification should be discussed with K. Formby, school e-Safety coordinator.

- I will only use the school's email / Internet / Intranet / Learning Platform and any related technologies for professional purposes or for uses deemed 'reasonable' by the Head or Governing Body.
- I will comply with the ICT system security and not disclose any passwords provided to me by the school or other related authorities.
- I will ensure that all electronic communications with pupils and staff are compatible with my professional role.
- I will only use the approved, secure email system(s) for any school business.
- I will ensure that personal data (such as data held on SIMS) is kept secure and is used appropriately, whether in school, taken off the school premises or accessed remotely. Personal data can only be taken out of school or accessed remotely when authorised by the Head or Governing Body.
- I will not install any hardware or software without permission of the Network Manager.
- I will not browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, illegal or discriminatory.
- Images of pupils and/ or staff will only be taken, stored and used for professional purposes inline with school policy and with written consent of the parent, carer or staff member. Images will not be distributed outside the school network without the permission of the parent/ carer, member of staff or Headteacher.
- I understand that all my use of the Internet and other related technologies can be monitored and logged and can be made available, on request, to the Headteacher.
- I will respect copyright and intellectual property rights.
- I will ensure that my online activity, both in school and outside school, will not bring my professional role into disrepute.
- I will support and promote the school's e-Safety policy and help pupils to be safe and responsible in their use of ICT and related technologies.

#### School Equipment

I accept that when school lap-tops, digital cameras etc. are taken home I must sign the appropriate form and adhere to the conditions specified.

#### **User Signature**

I agree to follow this code of conduct and to support the safe use of ICT throughout the school:

Signature ..... Date .....

Full Name ..... (printed)

Job title .....

## **Appendix 2**

### **Letters to Parents**

#### **General letter to all parents on social media**

The education establishment is aware that social media is a useful tool that parents use to communicate. However, the education establishment is concerned that negative comments may be made in such postings against the education establishment. You must be aware that such postings are considered in law to be accessible to the general public and you are therefore subject to the laws of defamation, malicious communication and improper use of the communications network. Any offensive or false allegations against the education establishment or its employees will be notified to the Police. If you have concerns with any aspect of your child's education and learning, you should contact the Headteacher.

#### **Example letter to parent on social media post.**

Dear

It has been brought to our attention that you have made inappropriate comments on your (Facebook) site against teachers/pupils/staff at this education establishment.

The education establishment will not tolerate personal verbal attacks on any of its teaching staff/pupils particularly were they are abusive and offensive. We request that you remove the comments immediately.

You should be aware that any comments made on social media websites are considered to be in the public domain and they are subject to various laws including the Malicious Communications Act 1998, libel laws and protection from harassment legislation.

Should there be any repeat of these unfounded and degrading comments we will seek legal advice.

If you do have concerns with your child's education and learning you should contact the education establishment to arrange to see the class teacher or Headteacher.

## Appendix 3

### Governing Body Document

#### **DONCASTER GOVERNORS' SUPPORT SERVICE**

#### **SOCIAL NETWORKING AGREEMENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Social Networking allows users to interact with one another in a virtual world. It is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations with people.

A social network service consists of a group of people showing his/her social links. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the internet, such as email and instant messaging. The main social networking site used is Facebook.

#### **IT IS NOT ADVISABLE:-**

- To refer to the education establishment that you are a Governor at/or refer to any individual associated with that particular education establishment in any way on a social networking site.
- To upload pictures of any individual without the consent of the individual/parent or guardian in the course of education establishment business. However to follow best practice this should be avoided in a professional and personal capacity.
- To become an on-line 'friend' with any pupils/student at the education establishment.
- To upload any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social networking sites that may bring you and the education establishment in disrepute. You should not publish anything that you do not want to be publicly associated with.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ a Management Committee member at

Maple Medical PRU, agree to adhere to the above statements in my role as MC member and understand that if I were to undertake any of the unadvisable actions this may lead to disciplinary action from my education establishment in addition to damaging the image of myself and that of the education establishment.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 4**

### **Contact Details**

Further information can be obtained from:

#### **Governors' Support - Wendy Heath**

01302 737279 / [wendy.heath@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.heath@doncaster.gov.uk)

#### **Legal – Gemma Ashton**

01302 736067 [gemma.ashton@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.ashton@doncaster.gov.uk)

#### **Education Safeguarding Manager - Sarah Stokoe**

01302 736743 / [sarah.stokoe@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.stokoe@doncaster.gov.uk)

#### **LADO (Local Designated Officer for Safeguarding) – Jim Foy**

01302 737748 / [lado@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:lado@doncaster.gov.uk)