



WHINLESS DOWN
ACADEMY TRUST

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Autumn 2025

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Policy aims and scope

- This policy has been written by the Whinless Down Academy Trust, building on Kent County Council's LADO and Education Safeguarding Advisory Service social media policy template with specialist advice and input as required, taking into account the DfE statutory guidance '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)', [Early Years and Foundation Stage](#), '[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)', [Behaviour in Schools Advice for headteachers and social staff](#), and the local [Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-agency Partnership](#) (KSCMP) procedures.
- The purpose of this policy is to safeguard and promote the welfare of all members of the Whinless Down Academy Trust community when using social media.
 - The Whinless Down Academy Trust recognises that online safety is an essential part of safeguarding and acknowledges its duty to ensure that all children and staff are protected from potential harm when using social media.
 - As outlined in our child protection and safeguarding policy, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Headteacher is recognised as having overall responsibility for online safety.
- The policy applies to all use of social media; the term social media includes, but is not limited to, blogs, wikis, social networking sites, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and instant messenger apps or other online communication services.
- This policy applies to children, parents/carers and all staff, including all governance, leadership team, teachers, support staff, external contractors, visitors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of the Trust (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy).

This policy will be reviewed at least annually. It will also be revised following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedure

Links with other policies

- This policy links with several other policies, including but not limited to:
 - Anti-bullying policy
 - Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
 - Behaviour policy
 - Image use policy
 - Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Staff code of conduct
- Curriculum policies, such as: Computing and Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE).
- GDPR
- Mobile and smart technology
- Online Safety
- Low level concerns policy

General social media expectations

- The Whinless Down Academy Trust believes everyone should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. Even though online spaces may differ in many ways, the same standards of behaviour are expected online as offline and all member of the Whinless Down Academy Trust community are expected to engage in social media in a positive and responsible manner.
- All members of the WDAT community are advised not to post or share content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others on any social media service.
- The Trust will restrict learner and staff access to social media via our filtering and monitoring systems, which are applied to school/Trust provided devices and systems.
- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is not permitted, except during break and lunch times in designated staff areas.
- Inappropriate or excessive use of social media during school hours or whilst using a school device may result in disciplinary or legal action and/or removal of internet facilities.
- The use of social media or apps, for example, as a formal remote learning platform or education tool will be robustly risk assessed by the CEO and Headteacher prior to use. Any use will take place in accordance with our existing policies.
- Concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of staff on social media, will be taken seriously. Concerns should be reported to the Headteacher and will be managed in accordance with our allegations against staff, AUP, staff code of conduct and child protection policies.

School social media accounts

Social media accounts for the Trust/schools will only be created with the consent of the CEO by authorised members of staff. A school-based social media account will be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by staff members and will be linked to an official school email account.

When setting up a Trust/school social media account, consideration will be given to the following:

- The purpose of the account
- Whether the overall investment will achieve the aim of the account
- The level of interactive engagement with the site
- Whether pupils, staff, parents or members of the public will be able to contribute content to the account
- How much time and effort staff members are willing to commit to the account
- How the success of the account will be evaluated

The CEO will be responsible for authorising members of staff and any other individual to have admin access to trust/school social media accounts. Only people authorised by the CEO will be allowed to post on the trust/school's accounts.

Passwords for the trust/school's social media accounts are stored securely on the school's ICT network. The passwords are only shared with people authorised by the CEO.

All posts made to trust/school social media accounts will not breach copyright, data protection or freedom of information legislation.

The trust/school's social media accounts will comply with the platform's rules. Trust/school social media accounts will be moderated by the PA to CEO or another designated member of staff. The social media account should only be managed through school-owned devices and not personal devices.

Staff will only post content that meets the school's social media objectives, including the following:

- Reminders about upcoming events
- Good news regarding the school's performance, attainment or reputation
- Good news regarding the achievements of staff and pupils
- Information that parents should be aware of, e.g. school closure

Staff will ensure that their posts meet the following criteria:

- The post does not risk bringing the school into disrepute
- The post only expresses neutral opinions and does not include any personal views
- The post uses appropriate and school-friendly language
- The post is sensitive towards those who will read it, and uses particularly neutral and sensitive language when discussing something that may be controversial to some
- The post does not contain any wording or content that could be construed as offensive
- The post does not take a side in any political debate or express political opinions

- The post does not contain any illegal or unlawful content

Staff use of social media

- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is not permitted, except during break and lunch times in designated staff areas.
- Safe and professional online behaviour will be outlined for all members of staff (including volunteers) as part of our code of conduct and AUP.
- The safe and responsible use of social media sites will be discussed, via the AUP, with all members of staff as part of staff induction. Advice will be provided and updated via staff training and additional guidance and resources.
- Any complaint about staff misuse of social media or policy breaches will be taken seriously.

Reputation

- All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within the school and Trust. Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or institution into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.
- All members of staff are advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media sites. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Setting appropriate privacy levels of their personal accounts/sites.
 - Being aware of the implications of using location sharing services.
 - Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
 - Logging out of accounts after use.
 - Using strong passwords, in line with the Trust password policy.
 - Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as that of the school or Trust.
- Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of WDAT on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school/Trust, and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- All staff are expected to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance with our policies and the wider professional reputation and legal framework. All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post on social media.
- Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about children and their family members or colleagues will not be shared or discussed on social media sites.

- Members of staff will notify the Headteacher immediately if they consider that any content shared on social media sites conflict with their role.

Communicating with children and their families

- Staff will not use any personal social media accounts to contact children or their family members.
- All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add any current or past children or their family members, under the age of 18, as 'friends' on any personal social media accounts.
- Any communication from children and parents received on personal social media accounts will be reported to their line manager or Headteacher.
- Any pre-existing relationships or exceptions, which mean staff cannot comply with the requirement, will be disclosed on the Disclosure of Social Media Friends document and/or discussed with Headteacher. Should friends subsequently become linked to school, documents will need to be updated. Decisions made and advice provided in these situations will be formally recorded to safeguard children, members of staff and the Trust.
- If ongoing contact with children is required once they have left the setting, members of staff will be expected to use official setting provided communication tools.

Official use of social media

WDAT official social media channels are:

- Priory Fields School: closed group
 - St Martin's School, Dover: closed group
 - Friends of Vale View: closed group
 - Whinless Down Trust: Facebook and Instagram
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- The official use of social media sites only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives, with specific intended outcomes and once it has been formally risk assessed and approved by the CEO.
 - Official social media channels are suitably protected and, where possible, run and/or linked to the website.
 - Official social media channels have been set up as distinct and dedicated accounts for official educational or engagement purposes only.
 - Leadership staff have access to account information and log in details for the social media channels, in case of an emergency.
 - Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including but not limited to: anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality and child protection.
 - All communication on official social media platforms, by staff, will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny. Public communications on behalf of the school will where appropriate and possible, be read and agreed by the Administration Team.
 - Parents/carers and children will be informed of any official social media use, along with expectations for safe use and action taken to safeguard the community.

- Parents and carers will be informed of any official social media use with children; any official social media activity involving children will be moderated if possible and written parental consent will be obtained, as required.
- We will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.
- If members of staff are managing or participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the school, they will:
 - Read and understand the acceptable use policy.
 - Be aware they are an ambassador for the school.
 - Always be professional, responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
 - Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including: libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.
 - Follow our image use policy at all times, for example, ensuring that appropriate consent has been given before sharing images.
 - Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school, unless they are authorised to do so.
 - Not engage with any direct or private messaging with current children, parents and carers or past children until they reach the age of 18.
 - Inform their line manager and/or the Headteacher of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from learners and/or parents. This needs to be recorded, so that patterns or repeated incidents can be tracked.

Children's use of social media

- The use of social media by children during the school day for personal use is not permitted.
- Many online behaviour incidents amongst children and young people occur on social media outside the school day and off the school premises. Parents/carers are responsible for this behaviour; however, some online incidents may affect our culture and/or pose a risk to children and young people's health and well-being. Where online behaviour poses a threat or causes harm to another child, could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school when the child is identifiable as a member of the school or if the behaviour could adversely affect the reputation of the school, action will be taken in line with our behaviour and child protection/online safety policies.

- Whinless Down Academy Trust will empower our children to acquire the knowledge needed to use social media in a safe, considered and respectful way, and develop their resilience so they can manage and respond to online risks. Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to children as part of an embedded and progressive safeguarding education approach using age- appropriate sites and resources.
- We are aware that many popular social media sites are not permitted for use by children under the age of 13, or in some cases higher. As such, we will not create accounts for children under the required age as outlined in the services terms and conditions.
- Children will be advised:
 - to consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details or information on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
 - to only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others, for example by making profiles private.
 - not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other appropriate adults' permission, and to only do so when a trusted adult is present.
 - to use safe passwords, following Trust children's password policy.
 - to use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
 - how to block and report unwanted communications.
 - how to report concerns on social media, both within the setting and externally.
- Any concerns regarding children's use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with appropriate existing policies, including anti-bullying, child protection and behaviour.
- The DSL (or deputy) will respond to social media concerns involving safeguarding or child protection risks in line with our child protection and safeguarding policy.
- Sanctions and/or pastoral/welfare support will be implemented and offered to children as appropriate, in line with our child protection and behaviour policies. Civil or legal action may be taken if necessary.
- Concerns regarding children's use of social media will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly when concerning underage use of social media services and games.

Policy monitoring and review

- Technology evolves and changes rapidly. The Whinless Down Academy Trust will review this policy at least annually. The policy will be revised following any national or local policy updates, any local concerns and/or any changes to our technical infrastructure.
- We will regularly monitor internet use taking place via our provided devices and systems and evaluate online safety mechanisms to ensure that this policy is consistently applied. Any issues identified will be incorporated into our action planning.
- All members of the Trust are made aware of how the Trust will monitor policy compliance, through the online safety policy.

Responding to policy breaches

- All members of the community are informed of the need to report policy breaches or concerns in line with existing Trust policies and procedures, for example, child protection and safeguarding policies.
- After any investigations are completed, leadership staff will debrief, identify lessons learnt and implement any policy or curriculum changes, as required.
- We require staff, parents/carers and children to work in partnership with us to resolve issues.
- All members of the community will respect confidentiality and the need to follow the official procedures for reporting concerns.
- Children, parents and staff will be informed of our complaints procedure and staff will be made aware of the whistleblowing procedure.
- If we are unsure how to proceed with an incident or concern, the DSL (or a deputy) or Headteacher will seek advice from Kent County Council or other agency in accordance with our child protection and safeguarding policy.