

# SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

**First Issued: December 2016**  
**Reviewed: September 2026**  
**Next Review Due: October 2027**

## **1. Trust Policy Statement**

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) recognises that social media plays an important role in modern communication and engagement. Used effectively, social media can support communication with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the wider community, promote the work of the Trust and its academies, and strengthen positive relationships with stakeholders.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that social media is used safely, responsibly and professionally by all staff, governors and trustees. We seek to promote a culture in which individuals understand both the opportunities and the risks associated with social media and conduct themselves online in a manner that reflects the Trust's values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience and excellence.

This policy aims to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of social media, support staff in maintaining professional boundaries, protect the reputation of the Trust and its academies, and ensure that all users understand their responsibilities when engaging with online platforms.

As part of our focus on diversity and inclusion, BDAT pledges that our policies will seek to promote equality, fairness, and respect for all staff and pupils. Our policies reflect the BDAT values of inclusion, compassion, aspiration, resilience, and excellence. By working closely with a range of stakeholders, such as our school, union, and HR colleagues, we have ensured that BDAT's policies do not unlawfully discriminate against anybody.

For the purpose of this policy, the term Trust refers to BDAT. The term school and the term academy are interchangeable. The term pupil and the term student are interchangeable.

## **2. Introduction and Policy Aims**

Digital technologies continue to evolve rapidly, creating new opportunities as well as new responsibilities for those working in education. As a result, it is essential that staff use social media in a safe, responsible and professional manner that reflects the values of the Trust and maintains public confidence in their role.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. This will help them to engage with online platforms safely, effectively and appropriately, whilst maintaining professional boundaries, protecting confidential information and safeguarding the wellbeing of pupils, colleagues and the wider Trust community.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Trustees and Governors of the Trust. References to 'staff' throughout this policy includes volunteers, Trustees and Governors. Third parties who have access to BDAT's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Safeguard all students, staff, third parties, volunteers, governors and trustees.
- Support compliance with statutory safeguarding guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE 2026).
- Protect the Trust from litigation or reputational damage.
- Ensure the reputation of the Trust and its staff are always protected.
- Promote responsible, professional and appropriate use of social media.
- Support staff in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries online.
- Provide clear expectations regarding both professional and personal use of social media platforms.

This policy should be read in accordance with the Trust's Acceptable Use of IT Policy. It should also be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, GDPR policy and Disciplinary policy.

### **3. Definitions & Scope**

This policy applies to social networking sites, multimedia and blogs for both professional and personal use. Examples include, but are not limited to Discord, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Messenger, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, blogs, forums, community networking sites, messaging applications and comment streams on public websites.

This policy applies to the use of social media, both for work and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise, and regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's network and device, or a member of staff's own equipment.

All staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, and other legislation. Staff should also be aware that information shared online may be copied, archived, screenshot, redistributed or viewed beyond the intended audience, even where privacy settings have been applied.

### **4. Compliance with related Policies and Agreements**

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the Trust or school's other policies. If an internet post would breach a policy in another forum, it will also breach that policy in an online forum. For example, staff are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach BDAT's ICT Acceptable Use Policy;
- breach BDAT's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- breach obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;

- breach the Disciplinary Policy;
- defame or disparage the Trust or our schools;
- harass or bully other staff in any way;
- unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties;
- breach the GDPR or Data Protection Policy (for example, by disclosing personal information about a colleague online); or
- breach any other laws or ethical standards (for example, by using social media in a false or misleading way, such as by claiming to be someone other than themselves or by making misleading statements).
- Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, whether positive or negative, could potentially be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for both the author and the Trust.
- Staff who breach any of the policies referred to above may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

## **5. Personal use of Social Media**

Limited personal use may be permitted in accordance with the Trust's Acceptable Use of IT Policy, provided it does not interfere with an employee's professional responsibilities, working time, incur significant cost, reduce system performance, compromise security, or breach any Trust policy. Employees must not use Trust social media accounts for personal purposes.

Employees are reminded that content published on personal social media accounts may, in some circumstances, be associated with their employment and should therefore be consistent with the standards of professional conduct expected by the Trust.

## **6. Contact with Pupils and/or Parents/Carers**

Staff must not initiate or engage in personal contact with pupils or parents/carers through social media platforms. If a pupil or parent/carer contacts a member of staff via social media, the member of staff should not respond and must notify the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Staff are strongly advised to exercise professional judgement when considering any social media contact with former pupils or parents/carers. Such contact should be avoided where it could reasonably be perceived as inappropriate, create a conflict of interest, compromise professional boundaries, or adversely affect the reputation of the member of staff, the school, or BDAT.

Where a member of staff's role requires communication with pupils or parents/carers on behalf of the Trust, this should take place only through approved Trust communication channels. All communications must be professional, appropriate and consistent with the standards expected of written correspondence from BDAT and its schools.

All staff share a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Where a member of staff becomes aware of any act which may breach the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on any form of social media, this must immediately be reported to the Headteacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead or BDAT Head of Safeguarding, as appropriate.

## **7. Monitoring**

The Trust provides IT resources and communication systems to help staff carry out their roles effectively. As these systems are owned and managed by BDAT, communications and information created, stored or transmitted using them may be monitored or accessed when necessary for operational, safeguarding, security, legal or regulatory purposes. Staff should therefore be mindful that information held on Trust systems cannot be considered entirely private.

To help protect staff, pupils, and the wider Trust community, and to ensure the appropriate use of Trust systems, BDAT may monitor and review activity carried out using its IT resources and communication systems where there is a legitimate business reason for doing so. This may include social media activity undertaken through Trust systems or devices. Such monitoring may be carried out for purposes including safeguarding, security, regulatory compliance, investigating potential misuse, and maintaining the effective operation of Trust services.

Monitoring is undertaken in accordance with UK GDPR and relevant data protection legislation, relying on the Trust's legitimate interests rather than staff consent, in line with Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance on workplace monitoring.

Where appropriate and proportionate, monitoring may involve reviewing system activity, access records, communications, messages, posts, log-in information, and other information created, stored, sent or received using Trust systems.

As Trust IT resources and communication systems may be monitored or accessed in accordance with Trust policies and legal requirements, staff are encouraged not to use them for communications or information they would expect to remain private from the Trust.

## **8. Trust use of Social Media**

Only authorised members of staff may create, publish or share content on behalf of BDAT or its schools through social media channels. Where a member of staff's role requires them to communicate on behalf of the Trust or a school via social media, they must obtain the appropriate approval from the Headteacher, Principal, CEO, or other designated leader. The Trust may require relevant training to be completed and may set conditions or restrictions regarding the use of social media for official purposes.

Any request for comment, statement or information relating to BDAT or one of its schools, including enquiries received through social media platforms, should be referred to the Headteacher, Principal, CEO, or other authorised representative. Staff should not provide a response or make public statements on behalf of the Trust unless they have received appropriate authorisation to do so.

Staff using social media in an official capacity must ensure that all content reflects the values and standards of BDAT, is accurate and respectful, and complies with Trust policies, including those relating to safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection and professional conduct.

All official use of social media on behalf of BDAT and its schools is subject to the requirements set out in this policy and any related Trust procedures or guidance.

## **9. Responsible use of Social Media**

The following sections provide staff with recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

Staff should be aware that comments made via social media are subject to the same legal rules as any other written comments. The individual, school and/or Trust may be at risk of legal proceedings if comments breach those rules, in relation to confidentiality, or disparaging or defamatory statements.

### **Protection**

- Staff should never represent themselves, school or Trust in a false or misleading way. All statements must be true and not misleading, and all claims must be substantiated.
- Social networking sites may be referred to when investigating possible misconduct or gross misconduct.
- Staff should take reasonable steps to protect their personal and professional online accounts and remain alert to cyber security threats, including phishing emails, social engineering attempts and other online scams.
- Any use of social media that breaches Trust policies, undermines professional standards, creates legal or safeguarding risks, or could reasonably bring the school or Trust into disrepute may be investigated and, where appropriate, dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy.
- Staff must not publish or share content on social media that is defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise inappropriate towards BDAT, its schools, pupils, parents/carers, employees, volunteers, governors, trustees or other stakeholders. Staff should exercise professional judgement in their online activity and avoid content that could reasonably be perceived as having a negative impact on the reputation of the Trust, its schools or their own professional standing.
- Staff should make it clear in personal social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf, write in the first person, and use a personal e-mail address when communicating via social media.

- Staff are personally responsible for the content they share on social media. As online content can be difficult to remove and may be viewed by a wide audience, staff should consider how their posts may be perceived and ensure they uphold appropriate professional standards at all times.
- Staff must not post or share content relating to confidential or sensitive Trust matters. Staff should be aware that, regardless of any disclaimer stating that views are personal, online comments may still be connected to their professional role and could affect the reputation of BDAT or its schools.
- Where a member of staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of a statement or posting, they should refrain from making it until they have discussed it with the Headteacher or CEO.
- Where a member of staff sees content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust, its schools or its stakeholders, they should contact the Headteacher or CEO. All staff are responsible for protecting BDAT's reputation.

#### **Respecting Confidential Information**

- Staff must take care to protect confidential, sensitive and proprietary information relating to BDAT, its schools, pupils, parents/carers, employees and stakeholders. Confidential information must not be shared through social media or other online platforms. The Trust's name, logos, branding or other official materials must not be used in a personal capacity without prior authorisation.
- To maintain appropriate professional boundaries, staff must not use personal social media accounts to connect with current pupils or to establish online relationships with parents/carers where the contact arises solely from their role within the Trust. Any communication required as part of a staff member's duties should take place through approved Trust channels.

#### **Respecting Colleagues, Pupils, Parents/Carers, Governors and Partners**

- Staff are expected to use social media responsibly and with consideration for others. Posts or comments that may cause offence, including discriminatory, abusive or inappropriate content, should be avoided. Staff should not publish information, images or other content relating to colleagues, pupils, parents/carers, governors, partners or other stakeholders without their permission and in accordance with data protection requirements.

### **10. Copyright**

Staff need to consider and follow the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 when using social media, where content shared or published on behalf of the Trust or its schools, is not their own.

### **11. Monitoring and Policy Review**

BDAT's Head of Corporate Projects, in conjunction with Trust and School leaders, is responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved.