



# Social Media Policy

Policy Type:	Safeguarding
Updated:	September 2024
Next Review:	September 2025

# Social Media Policy

## 1. Statement of intent

James Montgomery Academy Trust understands that social media is a growing part of life outside of school. The widespread use of social media applications brings opportunities to engage and communicate in new ways. We have a responsibility to safeguard our school community against potential dangers when accessing the internet at school, and to educate our pupils about how to protect themselves online when outside of school.

## 2. We are committed to:

Encouraging the responsible use of social media in support of the Trust's mission, values and objectives. Protecting our school community from the dangers of social media and online abuse. Preventing and avoiding damage to the reputation of the school through irresponsible use of social media.

It is important that all staff adhere to the procedures outlined in the school's Mobile Phone Policy and Staff Code of Conduct at all times, and all staff have read and signed the Acceptable Use Policy and Agreement to safeguard themselves and others.

Staff are required to employ the highest security settings on any personal profiles they may have. The school understands that some staff members are also parents/carers of children at the school and, therefore, may wish to make contact with other parents/carers. When doing so, staff will exercise their professional judgement and will not contact family members on social media if this would lead to a conflict of interest.

## 3. What is social media?

Social media is a general term that describes a wide variety of interpersonal applications enabled by the internet and mobile devices. Services are usually free and the providers make money by advertising and collecting personal data. Services usually offer some form of direct messaging between users and the ability to post text, images and video to friends and the wider internet community. Social media providers often conduct very little moderation of content or regulation of user registrations. This policy applies to all forms of social media, including those that may emerge in the future.

Currently, this includes:

- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com.
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook/Meta, Instagram, etc.
- Media sharing services, such as YouTube.
- 'Micro-blogging' applications, such as X/Twitter.

## 4. Social media use – staff

- The Headteacher is responsible for the school's social media accounts.
- Teachers may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.
- The use of smartphone/smartwatch/Android technology is outlined in the JMAT Mobile Phone Policy.
- Teachers may use personal social media during their break times, not in front of children.
- Members of staff must not "friend" or otherwise contact children through social media.
- If children attempt to "friend" or otherwise contact members of staff through social media, they should be reported to the headteacher.
- Members of staff should avoid identifying themselves as an employee of the JMAT and its schools on social media.
- Members of staff must not post content online which is damaging to the Trust or any of its staff or pupils.

- Members of staff must not post any information which could identify a child, class or the school.
- Members of staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity brings JMAT and its schools into disrepute, disciplinary action will be taken.
- Staff members should use their school email address for school business and personal email address for their private correspondence; the two should not be mixed.
- Staff should not refer to the school or Trust in name on their private social media accounts.
- School staff who have private social media accounts are expected to use them responsibly and be mindful of their professional status. In particular, staff members must be aware that safeguarding and maintaining confidentiality are paramount. Should members of staff fall below these standards then the JMAT's Disciplinary Procedure will be implemented and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content, this could lead to prosecution, disciplinary action or dismissal.

## **5. Social media use – pupils and parents/carers**

- Children are taught how to keep themselves safe online and to understand the pros and cons of using online services. Children may not access social media during lesson time, unless it is part of a curriculum activity.
- Many social media services explicitly exclude primary school age children and the school will remind children of these restrictions on a regular basis. Social media providers, in general, are not good at preventing children from using their services. Therefore, the school will work with children to promote and encourage sensible behaviour.
- Many of our children's proudest moments happen at school and it's natural that parents/carers want to share these moments by posting photos and videos on social media. Parents should be aware that the internet is not always a safe or private place, and 'oversharing' could potentially put their own children and those of others at risk. For example, sharing photos, videos or other information can make children identifiable to others and provide confidential information that could be used maliciously.
- It's also important for parents to be aware that not all parents/carers consent to photos of their children and the reasons for this may affect the safety of the child.

## **6. Disputes and grievances**

Some parents may use social media to make reference to grievances they have with the school. The school will not become involved, or respond, other than to refer parents to the school's official Complaints Policy and Procedure which should be used in such cases.

If malicious and defamatory comments or threats and abuse are made, they will be treated as follows:

- The school will not respond to messages of this nature but will flag them to the social media provider in whichever way is available on that service.
- The school will keep copies of such messages, which will be passed to the police

## **7. Online abuse**

Within JMAT and its schools, online abuse is taken seriously. Incidents of online abuse will be dealt with and reported along the same chain as the Anti-Bullying Policy and/or Child on Child Abuse Policy.

Staff members should never respond or retaliate to online abuse incidents. Incidents should instead be reported as inappropriate, and support sought from their line manager or senior staff member. Evidence from the incident should be saved, including screen prints of messages or web pages, and the time and date of the incident.

Where the perpetrator is a current child or colleague, most cases can be dealt with through the JMAT's own disciplinary procedures.

Where the perpetrator is an adult, in nearly all cases, the headteacher should invite the victim to a meeting to address their concerns. Where appropriate, the perpetrator will be asked to remove the offensive content. If the material is threatening, abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitutes a hate crime, the headteacher should consider contacting the police.

As part of our on-going commitment to the prevention of online abuse, regular education and discussion about online safety will take place as part of the curriculum.

## **8. Blocked content**

The following social media websites are blocked by the JMAT network's firewalls:

- Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat and other similar sites

Attempts to circumvent the network's firewalls will result in a ban from using school computing equipment, other than with close supervision.

Inappropriate content which is accessed on the school computers should be reported to the headteacher and the site will be blocked.

The final decision on whether access should be granted to a site will be made by the headteacher.

## **9. Be SMART online**

We encourage pupils to take a SMART approach to social media behaviour:

- **Safe** – Do not give out personal information, or post photos of yourself to people you talk to online. Follow age restriction rules.
- **Meeting** – Do not meet somebody you have only met online. We encourage parents/carers to speak regularly to their children about who they are talking to online.
- **Accepting** – We advise that children only open emails and other forms of communication from people they already know.
- **Reliable** – We teach children about the dangers of believing everything they see online.
- **Tell** – We encourage children to tell a teacher, parent or carer if they see anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable.

## **10. Monitoring, evaluation and policy review**

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the JMAT schools.

This policy will be assessed for its implementation and effectiveness annually by the Trust IT Lead/Trust Safeguarding Lead.