

**Social Media and Networking Policy**

**Contents**

1. PURPOSE ..... 2

2. APPLICABILITY ..... 2

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ..... 3

4. PRINCIPLES ..... 4

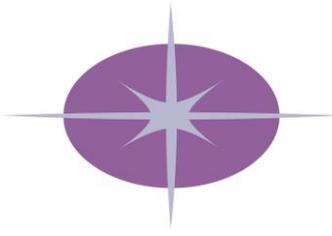
5. USE OF SITES ..... 7

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ..... 7

7. RELEVANT POLICIES / GUIDANCE ..... 8

8. LEGISLATION ..... 8

Document Owner:	HR
Version:	
Date of last review:	December 2016
Date next review due:	December 2019



## **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear guidance to employees and workers within the Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust (hereafter referred to as the MAT) on the appropriate use of Social Media.
- Minimise exposure to legal and governance risks of the BWMAT
- Enable colleagues to use social networking sites safely and securely
- Ensure that colleagues are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites and of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of social networking sites and any impacts in relation to their employment
- Safeguard all colleagues in the BWMAT in connection with the use of social networking sites and minimise the risk that they make themselves vulnerable to allegations
- Ensure the BWMAT and individual schools maintain its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of schools and those who work within them and the wider community.

1.2 This policy will aim to clearly guide the judgements of management and staff using social networking sites.

## **2. APPLICABILITY**

2.1 This policy applies to all staff and workers within the BWMAT. The term 'colleagues' means all individuals engaged by the BWMAT in a paid or voluntary capacity including parent helpers and governors, those on work experience placements and agency colleagues. Third parties acting on behalf or in partnership with the school are also expected to adhere to this guidance.

2.2 This Policy applies to social networking sites, personal web pages, personal space provided by internet providers and internet presences which make available personal information (including images) and opinions to the general public including but not limited to Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram, MSN, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, wikis, forums, bulletin boards, chatrooms, multiplayer on-line gaming, virtual worlds and instant messenger.

2.3 In this Policy 'pupil' should, where relevant, be taken to include any child/young person attending schools and educational settings within the BWMAT. If a colleague has a difficulty complying with this Policy (for example if they are related to a pupil attending the school) they should declare this relationship to either the Head Teacher or the school local designated safeguarding lead. This policy does not cover relationships which are not facilitated directly or indirectly by the school.

2.5 Instances of on-line bullying and harassment will be regarded as a serious matter and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy. Any colleague who is being bullied or harassed on-line or is the subject of inappropriate messages or false allegations should report this to the Head Teacher/their Line Manager.



- 2.6 In the event that this Policy is not followed or any instances of the inappropriate use of social networking sites are brought to the attention of the BWMAT or individual schools, these may be investigated under the Disciplinary Policy and depending on the seriousness of the matter disciplinary action may be taken which may result in dismissal. A serious breach of the Policy may be regarded as gross misconduct, leading to summary dismissal.
- 2.7 Where any allegations have children's safeguarding dimension the Allegations Against Staff Policy must be followed. (This will include, where an individual has:
- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
  - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or
  - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children)
- 2.8 Where there are concerns as to the legality of any activity or behaviour the School or BWMAT central team have a duty to inform the police.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **3.1 MAT Directors and the BWMAT Central Team shall:**

- Ensure this policy is accurate and up to date

#### **3.2 Schools Local Governing Board shall:**

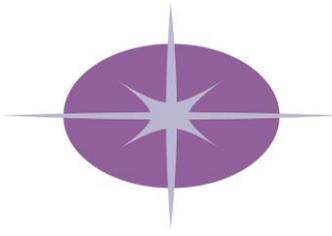
- Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that deal with the use of social networking sites;
- Ensure that all colleagues at the school have access to this policy and that colleagues including new colleagues are made aware of it.

#### **3.3 Head Teachers/Line Managers shall:**

- Ensure staff are aware of this policy and of the expectations set out in the Staff Code of Conduct. For new staff this should form part of their induction.
- Be familiar with this policy and ensure that colleagues understand the policy and their own responsibilities
- Ensure that colleagues at the school are aware of the risks of the use of social networking sites and the possible implications of the inappropriate use of them
- Make partners and any other third parties aware of this guidance where relevant
- Instigate disciplinary procedures where appropriate to do so
- Seek advice where necessary from Human Resources and /or colleagues in the safeguarding team on the approach to be adopted if they are made aware of any potential issue.

#### **3.4 Colleagues shall:**

- Comply with the BWMATs relevant policies, guidance and codes of practice, and in addition any relevant national guidance.



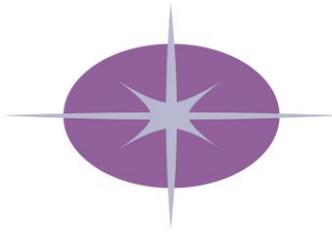
- Behave safely, responsibly and professionally at all times on-line and in connection with the use of social networking sites.
- Ensure that all communication with pupils (including on-line communication) takes place within clear and explicit professional boundaries as set out in the Safer Recruitment Consortium's *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings (included in the BWMAT Code of Conduct)* using school-based systems.
- Report any concerns that any colleague(s) is/are not acting in accordance with this Policy to their line manager/the Head Teacher/the school's designated safeguarding lead.
- Act in accordance with the BWMATs Allegations Against Staff Policy and/or Whistleblowing Policy.
- Use their professional judgment and, where no specific guidance exists, take the most prudent action possible and consult with their line manager or the Head Teacher if they are unsure.
- Co-operate in ensuring the implementation of this policy.
- Respect the privacy and feelings of others.
- Keep a professional distance from pupils and ex-pupils of school age and ensure a clear separation of the private social lives of colleagues at the school and those of pupils and ex-pupils of school age.
- Report to the Head Teacher, school designated safeguarding lead or line manager any occasions when a pupil or parent attempts to involve them in on-line or social networking activity.
- Promote the safe and responsible use of the internet / social networking sites by colleagues and pupils wherever appropriate

### 3.5 Parents and third parties are encouraged to:

- Raise any concerns that any colleague(s) at the is/are not acting in accordance with this Policy with the individual schools Head Teacher.

## 4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The BWMAT does not discourage colleagues from using social networking sites. However, all colleagues should be aware that the BWMAT will take seriously any occasions where the sites are used inappropriately.
- 4.2 In general terms, the BWMAT expects that the conduct of its employees is such that no justifiable complaint can be made by parents, pupils, colleagues, governors, other bodies or agencies, or other members of the community in relation to conduct and behaviour of staff, this includes conduct when using social media sites.
- 4.3 All colleague should follow the following guidance / procedures:  
**Please note: if a colleague believes they will have any difficulty complying with any of the requirements below for whatever reason (for example, where**

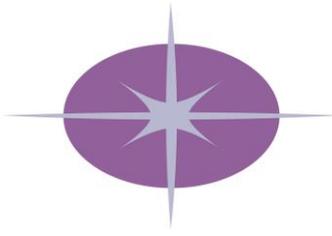


***they are related to a pupil), they must discuss the matter with their Line Manager / Head Teacher / the school designated safeguarding lead. Failure to do so will be regarded as a serious matter.***

- 4.3.1 Colleagues must not accept pupils as friends or use internet or web-based communication channels to send any personal messages to pupils directly or indirectly (for example via the parents of pupils) – personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and makes colleagues at the school vulnerable to allegations;
- 4.3.2. Colleagues are strongly advised not to be friends (on or off line) with recent pupils (the potential for colleagues to be compromised in terms of content and open to accusations makes the risk not worth taking) colleagues are also advised not to be friends with pupils at other schools (on or off line) as this is likely to make them vulnerable to allegations and may be open to investigation by the BWMAT or police. Where a colleague is considering not following this advice, they are required to discuss the matter, and the implications with their Line Manager, Head Teacher or designated safeguarding lead.
- 4.3.3. Any pupil-initiated communication, on-line friendships/friend requests must be declined and reported to their Line Manager, Head Teacher or designated safeguarding lead (If a colleague receives messages on his/her social networking profile that they think could be from a pupil they must report it to their line manager/Head Teacher and discuss whether it is appropriate for the colleague to contact the internet service or social networking provider so that the provider can investigate and take the appropriate action);
- 4.3.4 Colleagues must not share any personal information with any pupil (including personal contact details, personal website addresses/social networking site details);
- 4.3.5. Colleagues must not place/post any material (or links to any material) of a compromising nature (that is, any material a reasonable person might find obscene or offensive (such as sexually explicit or unlawfully discriminatory material) including inappropriate photographs or indecent remarks or material relating to illegal activity) on any social network space;
- 4.3.6. Colleagues are advised not to write about their work but where a colleague chooses to do so:
- he/she must make it clear that the views expressed are his/hers only and do not reflect the views of the school/BWMAT (and all other guidelines in this policy must still be adhered to when making any reference to the workplace)
  - he/she must not discuss pupils, colleagues, parents or carers and
  - he/she must not disclose any information that is confidential to the BWMAT or school, or disclose personal data or information about any individual/colleague/pupil, which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act or disclose any information about the school/BWMAT that is not yet in the public arena;
- 4.3.7. Colleagues must not post or share photographs of pupils under any circumstances and must not post or share photographs of colleagues or parents without their express permission;



- 4.3.8. Colleagues must not make what could reasonably be perceived as abusive/defamatory/undermining/derogatory/critical remarks about the BWMAT/schools/other colleagues/pupils/parents/governors or post anything that misrepresents or could potentially bring the school the BWMAT into disrepute. Breaches of Disciplinary rules could result in disciplinary action and where applicable may relate to social networking;
- 4.3.9. Colleagues must not disclose on social media confidential information relating to their employment with the BWMAT;
- 4.3.10. Colleagues must not link their own sites to the school website or use the school's or the BWMAT logo or any other identifiers on their personal web pages;
- 4.3.11. If any colleague receives media contact regarding the content of their site or is offered payment for site content which relates to the school they must consult their Head Teacher/line manager;
- 4.3.12. Colleagues must not use any internet/on-line resources to seek information on any pupil, parent or other colleagues other than for the purposes of legitimate monitoring of the usage of Social Networking sites by line managers or the Head Teacher;
- 4.3.13. Colleagues must not use social networking sites to seek to influence pupils regarding their own political or religious views or recruit them to an organisation of this kind using their status as a trusted adult to encourage this;
- 4.3.14. All colleagues must make themselves aware of and act in accordance with their duties under the DfE statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe* as these relate to:
- their own on-line activity
  - the on-line activity of pupils and other colleagues and
  - information of which they become aware on-line
- This includes their duties relating to Children Missing from Education, Child Sexual Exploitation, FGM and Preventing Radicalisation (Prevent).
- 4.4 All communication via social networking sites should be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended (social networking sites are public forums). Colleagues are strongly advised, in their own interests, to take steps to ensure as far as possible that their on-line personal data is not accessible to anybody who they do not want to have permission to access it. For example, they are strongly advised to check the security and privacy settings of any social networking site they subscribe to and set these to maximum and, where relevant, use strong passwords and change them regularly.
- 4.5 The BWMAT reserves the right to take action to obtain the removal of any content posted by colleagues which may adversely affect the reputation of the BWMAT or its individual schools (or any colleague, governor, pupil or parent at the school) or put it at risk of legal action.



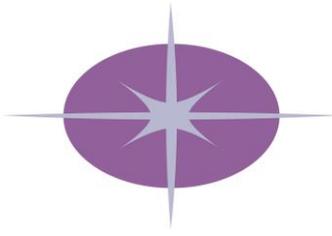
- 4.6 It is expected all former colleagues continue to be mindful of good children's safeguarding practice and of the BWMATs/school's reputation in using social networking sites.
- 4.7 For further information about the safe, secure and proper use of social media and networking sites, please see <http://www.childnet.com/resources/social-networking-a-guide-for-teachers-and-professionals>
- 4.8 Staff are advised to consider the following guidelines:
- Think twice before posting online
  - Presume all posts will remain online forever. Even those that have been 'deleted.'
  - Presume all postings can be searched and accessed quickly and easily
  - Only say online what you would be prepared to say in public.

## 5. USE OF SITES

- 5.1 All colleagues should follow the following guidance / procedures:
- BWMAT and localised School policies on ICT and E-Safety Policy must be adhered to at all times when content is posted on the BWMAT, or school sponsored sites/pages/spaces or on-line school communication systems/networks are used. Usage will be monitored under the ICT Policy / E-Safety Policy and any breach in this regard will result in the offending content being removed and may result in disciplinary action and any 'publishing' rights of the relevant colleague being suspended in accordance with the Policy.
  - Content must be appropriate for use with the relevant pupils.
  - Communications or pages undertaken/run on behalf of the BWMAT or individual schools must be password protected and run from the BWMAT or school website.
  - Colleagues must not run social network spaces for pupils use on a personal basis. If a network is to be used to support pupils as part of the educational process, professional spaces must be created by colleagues and pupils using a restricted, BWMAT/school-endorsed networking platform in line with ICT and governance policies. (Specific sites can be negotiated via a license process for relevant colleagues, with specific guidelines on use and consequences for breaches of the guidelines being set out and backed by a signed undertaking from the relevant colleagues to use the sites in accordance with the guidelines.)
  - Any inappropriate behaviour by pupils on-line must be reported to the Head Teacher or member of the senior leadership team and will be dealt with through the school's pupil disciplinary process.
  - Colleagues must not request or respond to any personal information from any pupil unless consistent with their professional role and approved by the school.

## 6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 Managers must not discriminate on the grounds of race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or other grounds and ensure that the needs of colleagues and pupils are given careful consideration when applying this Policy.



**7. RELEVANT POLICIES / GUIDANCE**

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE statutory guidance)
- The BWMAT Code of Conduct including Guidance for Safer Working Practice (formerly DfE guidance, revised by the Safer Recruitment Consortium in 2015)
- Management of Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- ICT Policy/Acceptable Use Policy
- E-Safety Policy

**8. LEGISLATION**

8.1 The following legislation must be considered when adhering to this policy:

- Obscene Publications Act 1959
- Protection of Children Act 1988
- Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006
- Defamation Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010

*Please note this list is intended to be indicative only*