1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 Social media is an ever-growing phenomenon with an increasing importance to the Trust's reputation. However, there are risks associated with social media use and the aim of this policy is to minimise those risks to our Trust and its reputation.

1.2 To minimise these risks and to ensure that the Trust's IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate purposes, the Trust expects staff to adhere to this policy.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

1.4 This policy is in place to minimise the risks to the Trust through the use of all forms of social media, including social and business networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), instant messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat), video and image sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and Flickr) as well as more traditional personal blogs and topic based forums use of social media.

1.5 It applies to the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes, whether during work hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Trust's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

1.6 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

1.7 Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether the Trust's equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

1.8 Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with any investigation that may follow, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

1.9 Staff will be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

1.10 In this policy references to personnel/bodies are to the personnel/bodies present within the Trust at which the particular member of staff reviewing the policy is engaged

2 Who is Covered by this Policy?

2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades throughout the Trust, including part time and fixed term employees, casual staff, agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

2.2 Third parties who have access to the Trust's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with policy.

(1) Who is responsible for the policy?

2.3 The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating this policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Headteacher.

2.4 The Senior Leadership team and all other managers have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below its requirements. Training will, if required, be provided to facilitate this.

2.5   All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Headteacher.

2.6   Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Headteacher.

3   Compliance with Related Policies and Agreements

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

3.1.1   breach any obligations the Trust has in relation to the duty of confidentiality to its staff, governors and pupils, both past and present;

3.1.2   breach the Trust's disciplinary policy;

3.1.3   defame or disparage the Trust, its staff, governors, pupils and third parties connected with the Trust, for example pupils', parents;

3.1.4   post commentary, content or images that are extremist, incitement to violence, sexist, racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, proprietary, harassing, libellous or that can otherwise create a hostile working environment;

3.1.5   breach the Trust's IT and communications systems policy;

3.1.6   breach the Trust's anti-harassment and bullying policy;

3.1.7   breach the Trust's equal opportunities policy;

3.1.8   breach the Trust's data protection policy;

3.1.9   breach any other laws or ethical standard.

3.2   In addition, staff should not make postings in any forums where prohibited social media postings are made by others. If such a posting is made, staff are expected to desist from engaging in such forums in the future.

3.3   Staff should not promote social media sites of individuals or groups, or join online forums and groups with individuals, that are known to have views which may be considered extremist in nature. If staff are in doubt, they should speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

3.4   Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. Such references, whether positive or negative, can be attributed to the Trust and create legal liability for the Trust accordingly and the individual providing the reference.

3.5   If staff breach any of the above policies they will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

4   General Principles

4.1   The following general principles apply throughout this policy:

4.1.1   Staff members will be assumed to be personally responsible for anything posted on any social media account associated with them. Therefore, the Trust recommends that staff do not share their log-in details with anyone else, or leave their phone or other personal devices unattended;

4.1.2   If a social media site records the time and/or date of a posting made by a member of staff, this will be deemed to be accurate unless the contrary is proven;

4.1.3 Always remember that anything posted online is never completely private. In particular, staff should not assume that they have any entitlement to privacy in respect of anything they post on a social media site which can be freely viewed by pupils, parents, members of the public, other staff members or third parties we deal with; and

4.1.4 If staff post anything on a social media site which is in breach of this policy, or of any of the Trust's other policies or procedures, they should be aware that whilst they should delete the posting promptly, doing so will not exonerate them from the breach and they may still be liable to disciplinary action.

5 Personal Use of Social Media

5.1 Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted provided it does not:

5.1.1 Exceed 30 minutes per day;

5.1.2 Breach this policy, or any of our other policies or procedures; or

5.1.3 Interfere with employment responsibilities or productivity.

5.4 Staff should at all times be aware that if they access social media for personal use, whether during working hours, on Trust premises or outside of work, they must comply with this policy at all times including the social media guidelines for responsible usage below.

6 Educational and/or Business Use of Social Media

6.1 Some staff members may be [permitted/encouraged/required] to post content or comments in a social media environment in order to build the social media profile of the Trust. Likewise, some staff members may find it useful to use business-networking sites such as LinkedIn to maintain communication with existing business contacts and make new business connections. If a member of staff is using social media for educational and/or business purposes, the following additional rules will apply:

6.1.1 Staff members must have prior approval from their manager before engaging in the business use of social media during working hours;

6.1.2 Staff remain at all times subject to the remainder of this policy, in particular the general principles set out above, and must follow the social media guidelines for responsible use set out below;

6.1.3 If required to do so, staff must use any social media accounts, profiles and pages set up and paid for by the Trust for educational and/or business purposes. Where such accounts exist, staff are forbidden from using personal accounts for educational and/or business purposes;

6.1.4 Staff must not share the log-in details of any social media account used for educational and/or business purposes with anyone else without prior written approval from their manager;

6.1.5 Staff must use the Trust's computer network or communication system to access and use social media for educational and/or business purposes. Staff must not use a personal device (e.g. an iPad, tablet or mobile telephone) unless expressly permitted to do so by their manager;

6.1.6 Staff may be required to undergo training on the educational and/or business use of social media;

6.1.7 The Trust may impose certain requirements and restrictions regarding staff activities (including the nature of the material posted, the sites staff are permitted to access during working hours and the amount of working time staff are allowed to spend on social media activities); and

6.1.8   If staff are contacted for comments about the organisation for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, they must not respond without written approval. Please direct the enquiry to the Headteacher.

7   Guidelines for Responsible Use of Social Media

7.1   The following sections of the policy provide staff with common-sense rules, guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

7.2   Staff must not have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with pupils on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family (if a member of staff is found to be in breach of this requirement it will be considered an act of potential gross misconduct and dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy).

7.3   Staff are strongly advised not to not have any direct contact (or be 'friends') with parents on any social media platform unless they are a member of their immediate family.

7.4   Protecting the Trust's reputation:

7.4.1   Staff must not post disparaging or defamatory statement about:

7.4.1.1   the Trust as an organisation;

7.4.1.2   members of staff, governors, trainees or pupils;

7.4.1.3   third parties connected with the Trust, e.g. parents

7.5   Staff should also avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Trust's reputation, even indirectly.

7.6   Staff should make it clear in social media postings that they are speaking on their own behalf, and not on behalf of the Trust, its officers or employees. A way to achieve this would be writing in the "first person".

7.7   If a member of staff discloses their affiliation with the Trust they should state that their views do not represent those of their employer. For example, they could state, "the views in this posting do not represent the views of my employer".

7.8   Staff are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media.

7.9   Staff should ensure that the content of their postings are consistent with professional image as a member of staff of the Trust.

7.10   If staff are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they should refrain from making the communication until they discuss it with the Headteacher.

7.11   If a member of staff sees content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the Trust or any member of staff, they should contact the Headteacher.

7.12   Staff should not do anything to jeopardise confidential information of the Trust, its staff or pupils (past or present) through use of social media.

7.13   Staff should avoid misappropriating or infringing the intellectual property of other companies and individuals as this may create liability for both themselves and the Trust.

7.14   Staff should be respectful to others when making a statement on social media and should not post anything that colleagues or third parties would find offensive, including discriminatory comments, insults or obscenity.

7.15   Staff must not make or posts or comments which may be deemed to incite racial or religious hatred or which may be in breach of any other law;

7.16 Staff should not post anything related to their colleagues or pupils without their or their parents written permission and consent (including consent for use of photographs/videos).

7.17 Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.

8 Monitoring

8.1 The Trust reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, Staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and staff consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems.

9 Recruitment

9.1 The Trust may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where the Trust does this, it will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations.

Approved by:

        Chair of Trust   **CEO**

Date: