

# Plymouth CAST

Multi Academy Trust, Diocese of Plymouth

## Social Media Policy

Guidance on the application of this policy can be obtained from Plymouth  
CAST HR

Email: [Personnel@plymouthcast.org.uk](mailto:Personnel@plymouthcast.org.uk)

Tel: 01364 645450

Policy adopted by Plymouth CAST Board of Directors at the meeting dated:

14<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Signed



(Chair)

Review Cycle: Annual

Next Review Date: September 2018

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Scope and Eligibility
4. Equal Opportunities
5. Responsibilities
6. What is Social Media?
7. Guiding Principles
8. Using Social Media at Work
9. Terms of Use
10. Your Responsibilities when using Social Media
11. Policy Enforcement
12. Social Media and Recruitment
13. Review

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The widespread availability of social media means it is important to understand how to use it effectively and sensibly, both in the workplace and during personal use.
- 1.2. This policy explains your responsibilities when you use social media, relating to any school or Plymouth CAST during working time and in your own time.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1. To achieve high quality and efficient education and good employee relations this policy aims to:
  - 2.1.1. set out the framework for a clear and consistent application of social media across Plymouth CAST.
- 2.2. This policy aims to ensure that Plymouth CAST is not exposed to legal and governance risks through the use of social media and that its reputation is not adversely affected
- 2.3. This policy aims to ensure that employees of Plymouth CAST are protected whilst using social media and feel empowered to contribute to collaborative online activity when it supports their role within Plymouth CAST.

## **3. Scope and Eligibility**

- 3.1. This policy applies to all employees directly employed by Plymouth CAST.

## **4. Equal Opportunities**

- 4.1. The application of the social media policy must always be applied fairly and in accordance with employment law and Plymouth CAST Equal Opportunities Policy including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

## **5. Responsibilities**

- 5.1. At individual Academy level, the day to day operation of each Plymouth CAST school is the responsibility of each Local Governing Body and this is discharged through each school's Senior Management Team. It is important that pupils, staff, parents and local stakeholders recognise and support this. However, ultimate accountability for Plymouth CAST as a whole multi-Academy Trust rests with the Plymouth CAST Board. Therefore any decisions that have an impact on resources, such as staffing, structures, or compliance must be referred to the Plymouth CAST Board if they exceed delegated authority. This is essential to ensure that the legal obligations of Plymouth CAST are met and that the Trust maintains robust systems and processes that deliver effective governance.

- 5.2. It is the School Improvement Officer's responsibility to work closely with the Local Governing Body and management team to ensure everyone concerned has a full and accurate picture of each school's strengths and any areas for improvement. School Improvement Officers will work with schools to identify strategies for improvement, with support, where appropriate, from within the Plymouth CAST network.
- 5.3. It is the role of Plymouth CAST HR to provide clear HR policies and procedures and where appropriate guidance, to support schools in the delivery of consistent and high standards of performance within a dignified working environment, in which all employees can take pride and enjoyment in their work.
- 5.4. Management and employee representatives who may be involved in responding to social media queries or breaches should be competent for the task and be familiar with the provisions of the Social Media Policy.
- 5.6. Advice must be sought from Plymouth CAST HR if there is any doubt about how to respond to a matter involving the use and application of social media.

## 6. What is Social Media?

- 6.1. We define **social media** as websites and applications that allow users to create and share content and/or take part in online networking. Social media is unique because it supports collaboration and the sharing of ideas and opinions across a global scale and the content is usually managed by the users rather than the provider of the applications.
- 6.2. The most popular social media sites include the following:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - LinkedIn
  - YouTube
  - Google+
  - Instagram
  - Pinterest
  - Flickr
  - Tumblr
  - Reddit.
- 6.3. Social media activities can include, but are not limited to:
  - 6.3.1. maintaining a profile page on social/business networking site such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn
  - 6.3.2. writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person
  - 6.3.3. taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards

- 6.3.4. leaving product or service reviews on business websites or customer review websites
  - 6.3.5. taking part in online polls.
- 6.4. This policy therefore covers personal blogs, any posts you might make on other people's blogs and to all online forums and noticeboards.

## **7. Guiding Principles**

- 7.1. Plymouth CAST believes that when taking part in social media you should be honest, straightforward and respectful. The lines between public and private can become blurred so assume that everything you write is permanent and can be viewed by anyone at any time. Always assume that everything can be traced back to you personally, despite any measures that you may have put in to protect yourself, as well as to your colleagues, the school and its pupil, parents, partner agencies, suppliers and to Plymouth CAST itself.

## **8. Using Social Media at Work**

### **8.1. For Work Purposes**

- 8.1.1. You must not use any Plymouth CAST or School IT resources to access social media unless you need to do so as part of your job. You should seek specific guidance and instruction from your line manager in relation to the access and use of social media as part of your work role, where required. Proposals to use any social media applications as part of your role within Plymouth CAST or any of its schools must be approved by a senior manager in your work setting. This can include the teaching of a social media lesson to pupils to demonstrate the dangers of using social media.

- 8.1.2. You must not post any personal content on any Plymouth CAST or School social media account you are authorised to use. These accounts belong to us, and your access will be stopped if you abuse this policy in any way. If you leave Plymouth CAST your access will also be stopped and we will ask for your user names and passwords. We may also ask for them at any other time and in either case you must supply them on request.

### **8.2 For Personal Reasons**

- 8.2.1 Use of social media for personal reasons does not need to be approved by Plymouth CAST or its schools. Plymouth CAST is supportive of employees wishing to use their own tablets or devices to access or use social media for personal reasons during a break whilst at work.

8.2.2 You should restrict access and use to times outside of working hours, for example during your lunch break, official rest break, and prior to commencing or after ending work. It is essential that you ensure you are not within work time or overtime.

### 8.3 Whilst Absent from Work

8.3.1 When absent from work, especially during periods of sickness, you should be mindful that when posting status updates on social media they may be seen by other work colleagues.

## 9. Terms of Use

9.1. The following terms should be adhered to at all times, including during periods of leave or absence.

9.2. You must ensure that your content, or links to other content, does not:

- interfere with your work commitments
- contain libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing content
- contain breaches of copyright and data protection
- contain material of an illegal, sexual, offensive or inappropriate nature
- contain material or links to material which could be seen as a breach of Teachers' Standards
- include information confidential to Plymouth CAST.
- bring Plymouth CAST into disrepute or compromise Plymouth CAST's image and reputation
- use Plymouth CAST to endorse or promote any product, opinion or political cause.

9.3. All employee responsibilities covered in other policies and codes of conduct remain in force.

9.4. If content published by you or others implicates you in the breach of these terms, it may lead to an investigation and disciplinary action in accordance with Plymouth CAST's disciplinary policy.

## 10. Your Responsibilities When Using Social Media

10.1. Always identify yourself and make it clear your opinions are your own and you are not speaking on the behalf of Plymouth CAST or any of its schools. You might consider doing this in a disclaimer. Use a personal email address, not your work

email address, and do not create a social media account that could be mistaken for a corporate account we have set up, or could set up.

- 10.2. It is your duty to protect the interests of Plymouth CAST or any of its schools and you must not publish anything that could directly or indirectly damage these or compromise our reputation. You must never speak on the behalf of Plymouth CAST or any of its schools on social media unless authorised to do so and you must always make sure anything you do post is accurate and lawful. Always get your colleagues' permission before posting images of them or any of their personal details.
- 10.3. You must take personal responsibility for your social media content. If you can be identified as working for Plymouth CAST or any of its schools, you must make sure your profiles, and anything you post, are congruent with how we expect you to present yourself to professional associates and colleagues. Be mindful that even if you do not name us as your employer, people who know you and where you work may still make an unwelcome association with Plymouth CAST. If you are in any doubt about what is and is not acceptable, please talk to your manager.
- 10.4. You must always show respect to others when using social media. You must never criticise Plymouth CAST or any of its schools, our pupils, parents, partner agencies, suppliers, business associates, your colleagues or anybody else you come into contact with professionally. Our other policies — in particular those covering harassment and bullying and equal opportunities — give guidance on the type of behaviour we consider unacceptable in the workplace, and we expect you to maintain the same high standards when using social media. Specifically, we will not tolerate any of the following:
  - abusive or threatening language
  - sexually explicit language
  - unlawful or disrespectful comments
  - false or misleading statements
  - impersonating your colleagues or third parties
  - inciting somebody to commit a crime.

If another employee is bullying, harassing or victimising you using social media, you must follow the process laid out in our harassment and bullying policy.
- 10.5. You must not become friends with pupils on social media platforms.
- 10.6. You must uphold the Teachers' Standards at all times when using social media.
- 10.7. You are obliged to respect the confidentiality of Plymouth CAST or any of its schools at all times and not to use social media to comment on sensitive Plymouth CAST / school matters including any information intended for internal use only.

- 10.8. We also insist that you never use our logo, trademark, or other corporate artwork in anything you post or as part of any of your social media profiles.
- 10.9. You must remain aware at all times of the public nature of social media. Even content posted on a restricted forum can quickly be shared across other social media and you must assume that anything you publish anywhere will sooner or later reach the public domain. When you share content posted by others, remember that you may be seen as giving tacit approval to opinions that could bring Plymouth CAST into disrepute.
- 10.10. You must never air grievances about Plymouth CAST or any of its activities on social media. You should use our internal process if you want to make a complaint, raising it first with your manager. If the issue remains unresolved, you must then follow the formal grievance procedure.

## **11. Policy Enforcement**

- 11.1. Your use of social media may, along with your wider use of Plymouth CAST or any of its schools' IT resources, be monitored to make sure you are complying with this policy. Whenever you use our IT resources and systems, you give us your consent to monitor your activities.
- 11.2. If you breach this policy, you may face action under our disciplinary procedure. We may require you to remove any social media content that in itself breaches this policy and may invoke the disciplinary procedure if you fail to do so. This could lead to a finding of misconduct or gross misconduct. In addition, you could face legal proceedings if comments you post about Plymouth CAST, any of its schools or named individuals are found to have harmed their reputation.
- 11.3. You should contact your line manager or another senior manager if you find anything posted to a social media site that breaches this policy or otherwise brings Plymouth CAST or any of its schools into disrepute.
- 11.4. If you are responsible for managing a Plymouth CAST or school social media account and breach the terms set out within this policy, this could result in the offending content being removed and you being suspended from using social media as a representative of Plymouth CAST or the school.

## **12. Social Media and Recruitment**

- 12.1. The popularity of social media has seen it become used by many businesses for recruitment purposes. Searching social media for candidate profiles can be a convenient and cost effective way of validating CVs or gaining insight into a candidate's personality.

12.2. Plymouth CAST does not support the use of social media during the recruitment process and the profile page of candidates must not be knowingly accessed.

**13. Review**

13.1. The content of this policy may be subject to revision from time to time following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

13.2. History of Policy Changes

Date	Page	Details of the change	Agreed by
14.09.2017	All	Board Approval for adoption	CAST Board

13.3. Policy to be reviewed by the Plymouth CAST Board in consultation with the JCC in September 2018 or when legislation changes or operational reasons arise.