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**Social Media Policy**

**September 2023**

This policy will be reviewed September 2025

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**This policy:**

* Applies to all stakeholders/all online communications which directly/indirectly, represent NST. NST defines its stakeholders as;

1. NST CEO
2. NST Project Manager
3. NST Directors
4. School Improvement Advisers
5. NST member schools
6. NST member school staff and Governing Bodies
7. NCC Officers
8. Organisations working alongside NST (short and long term)

• Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.

• Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education.

• Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to NST.

**Definitions**

* NST defines “social media” as any online platform that offers real-time interaction between the user and other individuals or groups including but not limited to:
  + Online discussion forums.
  + Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook.
  + Media sharing services, such as YouTube.
  + ‘Micro-blogging’ applications, such as X.

**Personal communications**

* NST respects privacy and understands that its stakeholders may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the Trust’s reputation are within the scope of this policy.
* Personal communications not referring to or impacting on NST are outside the scope of this policy.
* Digital communications across stakeholders are also considered. Stakeholders may use social media to communicate via one of our NST social media accounts for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.
* Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on NST, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of NST with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
* Where excessive personal use of social media is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken

**Key Roles and Responsibilities / Organisational control**

**The Board of Directors have;**

* overall responsibility for the implementation of the Social Media Policy and procedures at NST.
* responsibility for ensuring that the Social Media Policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including but not limited to: ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
* responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy.

**The CEO (and Directors where there is a conflict of interest)**

* Will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Social Media Policy and procedures of NST.
* Creates social media accounts following Board approval.
* Stores account details, including passwords securely
* Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account .
* Controls the process for managing, closing or transferring an account.
* Facilitate training and guidance on Social Media use where required.
* Develop and implement the Social Media policy
* Take a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
* Make an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
* Approve account creation

**All stakeholders**

* Will be responsible for following the Social Media Policy. They will be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently across all environments.
* Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.
* Attend appropriate training.
* Will regularly monitor, update and manage content posted via NST accounts.
* Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming NST.

**The Trust’s E-safety Team and Network Manager**

* The school’s network manager is SchoolsIT

**Process for creating new social media accounts**

NST will always consider if a social media account will help them in their work. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Board of Directors which covers the following points:-

• The aim of the account.

• The intended audience.

• How the account will be promoted.

• Who will run the account.

• Will the account be open or private/closed?

Following consideration by the Board an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the Board of Directors must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of NST has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training.

**Monitoring**

NST accounts will be monitored regularly. Any comments, queries or complaints made through NST accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or next working day if received at a weekend) even if only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention are essential particularly where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on NST social media accounts.

**Behaviour**

• NSTrequires all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.

• Digital communication must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Stakeholders will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about other stakeholders. NST social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Stakeholders must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they disengage from work with NST.

• Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to Trust activity.

• If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media stakeholders must follow the NST media policy before responding.

• Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by NST and will be reported as soon as possible to the CEO and escalated where appropriate.

• The use of social media by stakeholders whilst at work may be monitored, in line with NST policies.

* NST permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken

• NST will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, NST will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, NST will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may act according to the disciplinary policy.

**Blocked Content**

* Attempts to circumvent the network’s firewalls will result in a ban from using NST Office based computing equipment, other than with close supervision.
* Inappropriate content which is accessed on NST office-based computers should be reported to the CEO so that the site can be blocked.

**Legal considerations**

• Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.

• Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

**Handling abuse**

• NST will handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.

• If a conversation becomes offensive or unacceptable, NST users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and inform the audience exactly why the action was taken

• If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed NST protocols.

**Cyber bullying**

* NST defines “cyber bullying” as any use of social media or communication technology to bully an individual or group.
* Incidents of cyber bullying will be dealt with and reported.
* Stakeholders should never respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Incidents should instead be reported as inappropriate, and support sought from the CEO/Board.
* Evidence from the incident should be saved, including screen prints of messages or web pages, and the time and date of the incident.
* Where a perpetrator has been identified, in nearly all cases, the CEO/Board 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 perpetrator refuses to comply, it is up to the Board to decide what to do next. This could include contacting the internet service provider in question through their reporting mechanisms, if the offensive content breaches their terms and conditions.
* If the material is threatening, abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitutes a hate crime, the CEO/Board should consider contacting the police.
* As part of our on-going commitment to the prevention of cyber bullying, regular education and discussion about e-safety will take place at NST Full Board of Director meetings.

**Tone**

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

• Engaging • Conversational • Informative • Friendly

**Use of images**

NST use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to;

**•** Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with NST’s digital and video images policy/data consent policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.

• Under no circumstances should stakeholder share or upload pictures online other than via NST owned social media accounts.

• Stakeholders should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on NST social media accounts. In the case of school level photographs - pupils should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any NST school’s lists of children whose images must not be published.

• If a stakeholder inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they will be asked to delete it immediately.

**Training of Staff**

* At NST we recognise that early intervention can protect those who may be at risk of cyber bullying or negative social media behaviour.
* Directors will receive training on the Social Media Policy as part of their new starter induction.
* Directors will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

**Social Media Use**

**The CEO/Project Manager/Directors**

* should avoid identifying themselves on social media.
* must not post content online which is damaging to the Trust or any of its staff.
* Where NST CEO/Project Manager/Directors use social media in a personal capacity, they should make it clear that their views are personal.
* should not post anonymously or under an alias to evade the guidance given in this policy.
* Breaches of this policy by CEO/Project Manager/Directors will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content, could lead to prosecution, disciplinary action or dismissal.
* should be aware that if their out-of-work activity brings NST into disrepute, disciplinary action will be taken.
* should regularly check their online presence for negative content.
* If inappropriate content is accessed online, an inappropriate website content report form should be completed and passed on to the CEO/Directors.
* Attempts to bully, coerce or manipulate via social media, by CEO/Project Manager/Directors will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
* should not leave a computer or other device logged in when away from their desk, or save passwords.

**Social Media Use –** NST member schools are responsible for following these guidelines;

* Breaches of this policy by NST member schools will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content could lead to formal processes being triggered.
* NST member schools should not post anonymously/under an alias to evade guidance in this policy.
* NST member schools must not post content online which is damaging to the Trust.
* Any offensive or inappropriate comments NST member schools post about NST will be challenged appropriately and in line with NCC codes of conduct.
* If NST member schools have access to a Trust learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, NST member schools will be informed about acceptable use.
* NST member schools are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about NST. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, NST will ask the NST member schools to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person.

**Top Tips.**

We encourage stakeholders 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.
* **Accepting** – We advise that stakeholders only open emails and other forms of communication from people they already know are they are expecting.
* **Reliable** – Discuss the dangers of believing everything seen online.
* **Tell**– We encourage stakeholders to report anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable

**Managing your personal use of Social Media:**

* “Nothing” on social media is truly private- personal accounts are not private unless you make them private. Keep personal information private. Check your settings regularly and test your privacy.
* Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Do not use the NST logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
* Keep an eye on your digital footprint.
* Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to.
* When posting online consider; Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post.
* Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image?
* Know how to report a problem

**Do**

• Check with the CEO/Directors before publishing content that is controversial.

• Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views.

• Make it clear who is posting content.

• Use an appropriate and professional tone.

• Be respectful to all parties.

• Ensure you have permission to ‘share’ other peoples’ materials and acknowledge the author.

• Express opinions in a balanced and measured manner and, when in doubt, get a second opinion.

• Seek advice and report any mistakes.

• Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible.

* Take care with spelling and grammar.
* Take care who you retweet.
* Avoid entering into debate/ argument
* Remain nonpartisan.
* Take care who you accept as a follower

**Do not**

• make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring NST into disrepute.

• publish confidential or commercially sensitive material.

• breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation.

• Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of NST accounts, and do not link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content.

• post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content .

• use social media to air internal grievances.