

SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE ACADEMIES TRUST (SLAT)

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY - STUDENTS

Aspire - Challenge – Achieve

Owner	Approval	By Whom	Review
A Roffe	December 2024	Chief Executive Officer	December 2025

INTRODUCTION

The Governing Body of South Lincolnshire Academies Trust is committed to ensuring that all students are aware of their responsibilities in connection with the growing use of social networking sites. It recognises that the use of such sites have become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a positive way to keep in touch with friends and family, and can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests.

This policy will apply to ALL students attending South Lincolnshire Academy Trust schools.

WHAT IS A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE?

'A social network service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interesting in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web-based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as email and instant messaging services.

Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. Social networking websites are being used regularly by millions of people.' (source: Wikipedia)

Any site that allows the interaction between people and/or organisations can be considered social networking, though most people think of Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook and similar sites as typical examples of social networking

AIMS

The policy aims to:

- Enable students to use social networking sites safely and securely;
- Ensure that students are aware of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of social networking sites;
- Ensure social media site are used positively and without negativity to school or individuals;
- Ensure any abuse/harassment online is dealt with effectively and in line with the school's sanction system;
- Safeguard students in connection with the use of social networking sites and ensure they protect themselves from presenting as vulnerable;
- Ensure the Governing Body maintains its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the School and the wider community.

LEGISLATION

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

- Human Rights Act 1998;
- GDPR 2019 UK GDPR;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- Computer Misuse Act 1990, amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006;
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body shall:

- Ensure this policy is implemented and procedures are in place that deal with the use of social networking sites;
- Ensure that the policy reflects safe practice and that students are encouraged to use social networking in a positive and constructive fashion;
- Ensure that all students have access to this policy and that new students are made aware of it.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Deputy CEOs Senior Leadership Teams, Teaching and Support Staff shall:

- Be familiar with this policy and guidelines and ensure that employees understand the policy and their own responsibilities;
- Ensure that students are aware of the risks of the use of social networking sites and the possible implications of the inappropriate use of them;
- Instigate sanctions where appropriate to do so;
- Seek advice where necessary on the approach to be adopted if they are made aware of any potential issue.

Students shall:

- Behave responsibly at all times in connection with the use of social networking sites;
- Not post on social media other students photos, in uniform without their consent
- Operate safe practice when using social media;
- Ensure that any issues that occur are reported via the various support systems including the remote online support 'Worried@' on all school's website home pages;
- Co-operate with the school in ensuring the implementation of this policy.
- Not bring the school into disrepute on social media and will be asked to remove any posts which are deemed inappropriate.

USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

For students' own security 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. It is therefore, advised that students follow the following procedures:

- Students must not access social networking sites for personal use via school information systems or using school equipment;
- Students must not access social media platforms during the school day
- Students should not place inappropriate photographs or copy and distort images of school/staff or students on any social network space;
- Students should not make defamatory remarks about the Trust/staff or other students or post anything that could potentially bring the Trust into disrepute;
- Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others.

'SEXTING'

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages.

They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages.

All students have a duty of care to report anything that could be associated to 'sexting' and or online abuse.

Students are made aware that this is a legal matter and the Police will be informed in all cases.

A young person is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age
- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

Students across the trust are constantly reminded of the risks of 'Sexting' and how it can affect them and others around them.

The Trust will investigate all reports of 'Sexting' incidents and if required will pass on any information to any external authorities and seize any devices involved.

The Trust will follow the guidelines set by the UK Council For Child Internet Safety:

Wherever possible responses to incidents should be based on what Safeguarding/Pastoral leads have been told about the content of the imagery. The decision to view imagery should be based on the professional judgement of the DSL and should always comply with the child protection policy and procedures of the school. Imagery should never be viewed if the act of viewing will cause significant distress or harm to the pupil. If the image is considered as child pornography. This should not be viewed by anyone but the Police.

If a decision is made to view imagery the DSL would need to be satisfied that viewing:

- is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies (i.e. it is not possible to establish the facts from the young people involved)
- is necessary to report the image to a website, app or suitable reporting agency to have it taken down, or to support the young person or parent in making a report
- is unavoidable because a pupil has presented an image directly to a staff member or the imagery has been found on a school device or network. In line with Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice 2022

If it is necessary to view the imagery then the DSL should:

- Never copy, print or share the imagery; this is illegal.
- Discuss the decision with the Head of School (DSL) and DCEO for Safeguarding.
- Ensure viewing is undertaken by the DSL or another member of the safeguarding team with delegated authority from the Head of School.
- Ensure viewing takes place with another member of staff present in the room, ideally the Head of School or a member of the senior leadership team. This staff member does not need to view the images
- Wherever possible ensure viewing takes place on school premises, ideally in the Head of school or a member of the senior leadership team's office.
- Ensure wherever possible that images are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the young person in the imagery
- Provide a written record of the viewing of the imagery in the school's safeguarding records including who was present, why the image was viewed and any subsequent actions. Ensure this is signed and dated and meets the wider standards set out by Ofsted for recording safeguarding incidents. Further details on searching, deleting and confiscating devices can be found in the DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice 2020 (note this advice is for schools only). If youth produced sexual imagery has been unavoidably viewed by a member of staff either following a disclosure from a young person or as a result of a member of staff undertaking their daily role (such as IT staff monitoring school systems) then DSLs should ensure that the staff member is provided with appropriate support.

Viewing youth produced sexual imagery can be distressing for both young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

Deletion of images

If the Trust has decided that other agencies do not need to be involved, then consideration should be given to deleting imagery from devices and online services to limit any further sharing of the imagery. The Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice highlights that schools have the power to search pupils for devices, search data on devices and delete youth produced sexual imagery.'

BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

The Governing Body does not discourage students from using social networking sites. However, all students should be aware that the Governing Body will take seriously any occasions where the services are used inappropriately. If occasions arise of what could be deemed to be online bullying or harassment, these will be dealt with effectively and in line with the Trust sanction system (please see the Trust Behaviour Policy).

Under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), the Chief Executive Officer can exercise their right to monitor the use of the Trust's information systems and internet access where it is believed unauthorised use may be taking place; to ensure compliance with regulatory practices; to ensure standards of service are maintained; to prevent or detect crime, to protect the communication system and to pick up messages when someone is away from school.

If any instances of the inappropriate use of social networking sites are detected, depending on the seriousness of the allegations, action may be taken which could culminate in the student being excluded from the Trust.

There may be instances where the Trust will be obliged to inform the police of any activity or behaviour for which there are concerns as to its legality.