



# HORNCHURCH ACADEMY TRUST

Hornchurch Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee

**Registered in England:** Company Number 10760863

**Registered Office:** Whybridge Junior School, Rainham, Essex, RM13 7AH

[www.hornchurchacademy.org](http://www.hornchurchacademy.org)

		Hornchurch Academy Trust
	<b>AUP review Date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2021
	<b>Date of next Review</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2023
	<b>Who reviewed this AUP?</b>	C W Hobson
	<b>Date approved by Board of Trustees?</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

## **Social Media Policy: All Staff, Volunteers, Trustees and Parent/carers**

### **Social media**

Hornchurch Academy Trust works on the principle that if we don't manage our social media presence, someone else will. The Trust follows the advice given by LGfL and the UK Safer Internet Centre on [Online Reputation Management](#): understanding and managing our digital footprint (everything that can be seen or read about the Trust online). Few parents will apply for a school place without first 'googling' the academy, and the Ofsted pre-inspection check includes monitoring what is being said online (Mumsnet is a favourite).

Negative coverage almost always causes some level of disruption. Up to half of all cases dealt with by the Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH: [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)) involve schools' (and staff members') online reputation.

Accordingly, we manage and monitor our social media footprint carefully to know what is being said about the each academy and to respond to criticism and praise in a fair, responsible manner.

Each Head of School is responsible for managing social media accounts associated to the individual academy that they lead.

### **Staff, pupils' and parents' SM presence**

Social media (including here all apps, sites and games that allow sharing and interaction between users) is a fact of modern life, and as a Trust, we accept that many parents, staff and pupils will use it. However, as stated in the acceptable use policies which all members of the individual academies community sign, we expect everybody to behave in a positive manner, engaging respectfully with the academy and each other on social media, in the same way as they would face to face.



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This positive behaviour can be summarised as not making any posts which are or could be construed as bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting, illegal or otherwise inappropriate, or which might bring the academy or (particularly for staff) teaching profession into disrepute. This applies both to public pages and to private posts, e.g. parent chats, pages or groups. If parents have a concern about the academy, we would urge them to contact us directly and in private to resolve the matter. If an issue cannot be resolved in this way, the Trust complaints procedure should be followed. Sharing complaints on social media is unlikely to help resolve the matter, but can cause upset to staff, pupils and parents, also undermining staff morale and the reputation of the academy (which is important for the pupils we serve).

Many social media platforms have a minimum age of 13, but academy regularly deals with issues arising on social media with pupils/students under the age of 13. We ask parents to respect age ratings on social media platforms wherever possible and not encourage or condone underage use. It is worth noting that following on from the government's Safer Internet Strategy, enforcement and age checking is likely to become more stringent over the coming years.

However, each academy has to strike a difficult balance of not encouraging underage use at the same time as needing to acknowledge reality in order to best help our pupils/students to avoid or cope with issues if they arise. Online safety lessons will look at social media and other online behaviour, how to be a good friend online and how to report bullying, misuse, intimidation or abuse. However, children will often learn most from the models of behaviour they see and experience, which will often be from adults.

Parents can best support this by talking to their children about the apps, sites and games they use (you don't need to know them – ask your child to explain it to you), with whom, for how long, and when (late at night / in bedrooms is not helpful for a good night's sleep and productive teaching and learning at academy the next day). It is encouraging that 73% of pupils (from the 40,000 who answered that LGfL DigiSafe pupil online safety survey) trust their parents on online safety (although only half talk about it with them more than once a year at the moment).

Although the each academies official social media accounts managed by respective Heads of School will respond to general enquiries about the academy, we ask parents/carers not to use these channels to communicate about their children.

Email is the official electronic communication channel between parents and the academy, and between staff and pupils (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** for full details).

Pupils/students are not allowed\* to be 'friends' with or make a friend request\*\* to any staff, governors, volunteers and contractors or otherwise communicate via social media.

Pupils/students are discouraged from 'following' staff, governor, volunteer or contractor public accounts (e.g. following a staff member with a public Instagram account). However,



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we accept that this can be hard to control (but this highlights the need for staff to remain professional in their private lives). In the reverse situation, however, staff must not follow such public student accounts.

**\*** *Exceptions may be made, e.g. for pre-existing family links, but these must be approved by the Head of School, and should be declared upon entry of the pupil or staff member to the academy).*

**\*\*** *Any attempt to do so may be a safeguarding concern or disciplinary matter and should be notified to the DSL (if by a child) or to the Head of School (if by a staff member).* Staff are reminded that they are obliged not to bring the academy or profession into disrepute and the easiest way to avoid this is to have the strictest privacy settings and avoid inappropriate sharing and oversharing online. They should never discuss the academy or its stakeholders on social media and be careful that their personal opinions might not be attributed to the academy, trust or local authority, bringing the academy into disrepute.

The serious consequences of inappropriate behaviour on social media are underlined by the fact that of the 131 Prohibition Orders issued to staff in 2017, 73 involved social media/technology (and 27 of the 66 orders by August 2018).

All members of the Trust community are reminded that particularly in the context of social media, it is important to comply with the Trust policy on Digital Images and Video and use of academy and/or personal devices (see our full Online Safety Policy) and permission is sought before uploading photographs, videos or any other information about other people. Where this takes place without clear consent, it can be dangerous and in breach of data protection legislation, leading to large fines.

The statements of the Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) which all members of the Trust community have signed are also relevant to social media activity, as is the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

## **Social media incidents**

Breaches of this policy and of Trust AUPs (Acceptable Use Policies) will be dealt with in line with the academy behaviour policy (for pupils) or code of conduct/handbook (for staff).

Further to this, where an incident relates to an inappropriate, upsetting, violent or abusive social media post by a member of the academy community, the respective academy will request that the post be deleted and will expect this to be actioned promptly.

Where an offending post has been made by a third party, the academy may report it to the platform where it is hosted, and may contact the Professionals' Online Safety Helpline (run by the UK Safer Internet Centre) for support or help to accelerate this process. The police or other authorities may be involved where a post is potentially illegal or dangerous.



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## Extremism

The Trust has obligations relating to radicalisation and all forms of extremism under the Prevent Duty. Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, give them a voice or opportunity to visit the academy, nor browse, download or send material that is considered offensive or of an extremist nature by the individual academy. We ask for parents' support in this also, especially relating to social media, where extremism and hate speech can be widespread on certain platforms.

## Further questions

If parents have further questions, they can contact the Head of School at the academy their child attends; the NSPCC has a parent online safety helpline which can help with general issues that are not academy specific.

Staff should speak to the Head of School in the first instance, who may then call on the expertise of advisers and advice of the CEO and Trust central team, LGfL DigiSafe or Professionals' Online-Safety Helpline (from UK SIC).