The Island Learning Trust

Social Media Policy

Date written/updated: September 2026

Date of next review: September 2028

Policy aims and scope

This policy supports the Trust's safeguarding duties as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education, with particular reference to online safety, filtering and monitoring, and staff conduct.

This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of school's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

Staff, students and parents/carers are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and pupils
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of the school should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

The policy applies to all use of social media; the term social media includes, but is not limited to, blogs, wikis, social networking sites, forums, bulletin boards, online gaming, apps, video/photo sharing sites, chatrooms and instant messenger apps or other online communication services.

This policy applies to children, parents/carers and all staff, including the trust board, leadership team, teachers, support staff, external contractors, visitors, volunteers and other individuals who work for, or provide services on behalf of the setting (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy).

Links with other policies

- This policy links with several other policies, practices and action plans, including but not limited to:
  - Anti-bullying policy
  - AI policy
  - Acceptable Use Policies (AUP)
  - Nurturing Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy
  - Safeguarding & child protection policy
  - Code of conduct/staff behaviour policy
  - Curriculum policies, such as: Computing, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
  - Mobile and smart technology
  - Searching, screening and confiscation policy (DFE guidance)

General social media expectations:

- The Island Learning Trust believes everyone should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity. Even though online spaces may differ in many ways, the same standards of behaviour are expected online as offline, and all members of The Island Learning Trust community are expected to engage in social media in a positive and responsible manner.
- All members of The Island Learning Trust community are advised not to post or share content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others on any social media service.
- We will control learner and staff access to social media whilst using Trust provided devices and systems on site.
- Inappropriate or excessive use of social media during school hours or whilst using Trust devices may result in removal of internet access and/or disciplinary action.

- The use of social media or apps, for example as a formal remote learning platform will be robustly risk assessed by the DSL and/or head of school prior to use.
- Concerns regarding the online conduct of any member of The Island Learning Trust community on social media will be taken seriously. Concerns will be managed in accordance with the appropriate policies, including anti-bullying, allegations against staff, behaviour, staff behaviour/code of conduct, Acceptable Use Policies, and safeguarding and child protection.

Staff use of social media

The Trust expects all staff (including trustees and volunteers) to consider the safety of pupils and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts. Staff members should report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is permitted for staff, however this must be outside of teaching time, take place when staff are responsible for pupils, must not impact safeguarding vigilance or conflict with the Trust's mobile phone and behaviour expectation
- Safe and professional online behaviour is outlined for all members of staff, including volunteers, as part of the Trust's code of conduct and acceptable use of technology policies.
- The safe and responsible use of social media sites will be discussed with all members of staff as part of staff induction. Advice will be provided and updated via staff training and additional guidance and resources will be shared with staff as required on a regular basis.
- Any complaint about staff misuse of social media or policy breaches will be taken seriously in line with each school's child protection and allegations against staff policy.

Any concerns about staff online behaviour, including low-level concerns, will be managed in line with the Trust's safeguarding and staff behaviour policies.

Reputation

Staff should be aware of the impact of their online presence, recognising that their behaviour, language, and shared content on social media platforms - whether public or private, can influence how they are perceived professionally.

- All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within The Island Learning Trust. Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or institution into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.
- All members of staff are advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media. This may include, but is not limited to:
    - Setting appropriate privacy levels on their personal accounts/sites.
    - Being aware of the implications of using location sharing services.
    - Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
    - Logging out of accounts after use.
    - Using strong passwords.
    - Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as being that of The Island Learning Trust or any Trust school.
- Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of The Island Learning Trust or any Trust school on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information being linked with the setting and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.
- All staff are expected to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance the Trust's policies and the wider professional reputation and legal framework. All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post on social media.
- Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about children and their family members or colleagues, will not be shared or discussed on social media sites.
- Complain about the school, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Staff must not link their social media profile to their work email account

- Members of staff will notify the leadership team immediately if they consider that any content shared on social media sites conflicts with their role.

Communicating with children and their families

- Staff will not use any personal social media accounts to contact children or their family members.
- All members of staff are advised not to communicate with or add any current or past children or their family members, as 'friends' on any personal social media accounts.
- Any communication from children and parents/carers received on personal social media accounts will be reported to the relevant school's DSL (or deputy) and/or the Head of School.
- Any pre-existing relationships or situations, which mean staff cannot comply with this requirement, will be discussed with the relevant school's DSL and the Head of School. Decisions made and advice provided in these situations will be formally recorded to safeguard children, members of staff and the setting.
- If ongoing contact with children is required once they have left the setting, members of staff will be expected to use existing alumni networks, or use official setting provided communication tools.

Official use of social media

- The Island Learning Trust and its school's official social media channels are: Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter) and You Tube.
- The official use of social media sites by The Island Learning Trust and its schools only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives and with specific intended outcomes and the use has been formally risk assessed and approved by the head of school prior to use.
- Official social media sites are suitably protected and, where possible, run and/or linked to/from each school's and the Trust websites.
    - Official social media channels have been set up as distinct and dedicated accounts for official educational or engagement purposes only.
    - Staff use setting provided email addresses to register for and manage official social media channels.
    - Leadership staff have access to account information and login details for their school's social media channels, in case of emergency, such as staff absence.
- Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including but not limited to anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality and child protection.
- All communication on official social media platforms by staff on behalf of the setting will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny. Public communications on behalf of the setting will, where appropriate and possible, be read and agreed by at least one other colleague.
- Parents/carers and children will be informed of any official social media use, along with expectations for safe use and action taken to safeguard the community.
- Parents and carers will be informed of any official social media use with children; any official social media activity involving children will be moderated if possible and written parental consent will be obtained as required.
- We will ensure that any official social media use does not exclude members of the community who are unable or unwilling to use social media channels.
- Members of staff who follow and/or like each school's official social media channels will be advised to use dedicated professionals accounts where possible, to avoid blurring professional boundaries.
- If members of staff are managing and/or participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the setting, they will:
    Read and understand the Trust's Acceptable Use Policy.
    - Be aware they are an ambassador for The Island Learning Trust and our schools.
    - Be professional, responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.
    - Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.
    - Follow the Trust's guidance on the use of images at all times, for example ensuring that appropriate consent has been given before sharing images.
    - Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the setting, unless they are authorised to do so.

- Not engage with any private or direct messaging with current or past children or their family members.
- Inform their line manager, the school's DSL (or deputy) and/or the head of school of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from children.

Children's use of social media

- The use of social media during school hours for personal use is not permitted for children.
- The Trust's expectation that schools are mobile phone-free environments during the school day applies to all use of social media on mobile devices.
- Many online behaviour incidents amongst children and young people occur on social media outside the school day and off the school premises. Parents/carers are responsible for this behaviour; however, some online incidents may affect our culture and/or pose a risk to children and young people's health and well-being. Where online behaviour online poses a threat or causes harm to another child, could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school when the child is identifiable as a member of the school, or if the behaviour could adversely affect the reputation of the school, action will be taken in line with each school's child protection policy and the Trust's AUP.
- The Island Learning Trust will empower our children to acquire the knowledge needed to use social media in a safe, considered and respectful way, and develop their resilience so they can manage and respond to online risks. Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to children as part of an embedded and progressive safeguarding education approach using age-appropriate sites and resources. Further information is contained within each school's child protection policies.
- We are aware that many popular social media sites are not permitted for use by children under the age of 13, or in some cases higher. As such, we will not create accounts for children under the required age as outlined in the services terms and conditions.
- Children will be advised:
  - to consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details or information on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
  - to only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others, for example by making profiles private.
  - not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other appropriate adults' permission, and to only do so when a trusted adult is present.
  - to use safe passwords.
  - to use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
  - how to block and report unwanted communications.
  - how to report concerns on social media, both within the setting and externally.
- Any concerns regarding children use of social media will be dealt with in accordance with appropriate existing policies, including anti-bullying, child protection and behaviour.
- The school's DSL (or deputy) will respond to social media concerns involving safeguarding or child protection risks in line with each school's child protection policy.
- Sanctions and/or pastoral/welfare support will be implemented and offered to children as appropriate, in line with each school's child protection and behaviour policy. Civil or legal action may be taken if necessary.
- Concerns regarding children's use of social media will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly when concerning underage use of social media services and games.

Personal use of social media by parents/carers

The school expects and encourages parents/carers to model positive, safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.
When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times.
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils and children.
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure.

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the Trust or Trust School (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the Trust or Trust school, where the

child's class teacher should always be the first port of call or using the relevant School's formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

Parents/carers should not use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils.
- Complain about the school.
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils.
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents.
- Post images of children other than their own.
- Parents must not create social media accounts which appear to be associated with the school i.e. class group pages on Facebook.

The Trust will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the Trust/Trust School will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the Trust/Trust School considers inappropriate, the Trust/Trust school will consider taking the following action:

- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this.
- Set out the Trust's or School's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed.
- Contact the Police where the Trust/Trust School feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence.
- If the inappropriate comments have been made on a Trust/school website or online forum, the Trust/Trust School may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum.
- Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information.
- Take other legal action against the individual.

Use of AI and emerging technologies

Staff and pupils must exercise caution when using AI tools such as ChatGPT, image generators, and deep-fake technologies. These tools must not be used to generate or share inappropriate content. Any use of AI in educational settings must be approved by the Head of School and comply with safeguarding and data protection policies and AI policy.

Policy monitoring and review

- Technology evolves and changes rapidly. The policy will be revised following any national or local policy updates, any local concerns and/or any changes to the Trust's technical infrastructure.
- We 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, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).
- All members of the community will be made aware of how The Island Learning Trust will monitor policy compliance e.g. AUPs and staff training.
- Monitoring of social media use forms part of the Trust's wider filtering and monitoring systems in line with safeguarding requirements.

Responding to policy breaches

- All members of the community are informed of the need to report policy breaches or concerns in line with existing policies and procedures. This includes: each school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, AUP.

- After any investigations are completed, leadership staff will debrief, identify lessons learnt and implement any policy or curriculum changes, as required.
- We require staff, parents/carers and children to work in partnership with us to resolve issues.
- All members of the community will respect confidentiality and the need to follow the official procedures for reporting concerns.
- Children, parents and staff will be informed of each school's complaints procedure and staff will be made aware of the whistleblowing procedure.
- If we are unsure how to proceed with an incident or concern, the school's DSL (or a deputy) or head of school will seek advice from the LESAS (Education People Online Safety) or other agency in accordance with each school's child protection policy.