

Ormiston Forge Academy

# Employee Use of Social Media

May 2017



Approved by the SLT on behalf of the Governors Finance and General Purposes Committee  
under powers delegated by the Governing Body: **15<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Review period: **May 2019**

## **I. PURPOSE**

As a leader in using technology as an accelerator of learning, Ormiston Forge Academy (OFA) recognises the value of teacher inquiry, investigation, and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience. OFA also recognises its obligation to teach and ensure responsible and safe use of these technologies.

This policy addresses employees' use of publicly available social media networks including:

- personal web sites, web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds,
- and any other social media. OFA takes no position on employees' decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use on personal time. However, use of these media for personal use during OFA time or on OFA equipment is prohibited. In addition, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violates UK law or wider education policies.

## **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

OFA recognises the importance of online social media networks as a communication and e-learning tool. Toward that end, OFA provides password-protected social media tools and academy technologies for e-learning and encourages use of academy tools for collaboration by employees. However, public social media networks, outside of those provided by the academy, may not be used for classroom instruction or academy activities without the prior authorisation from a senior leader. The academy may use these tools and other communication technologies in fulfilling its responsibility for effectively communicating with the general public.

However, employees must avoid posting any information or engaging in communications that violate the law and/or education policies.

The line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within a social media context. When employees choose to join or engage with students, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside those approved by the academy, they are advised to maintain their professionalism as OFA employees and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behaviour or activity on these networks, including requirements for mandated reporting.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

A. Public social media networks are defined to include: web sites, web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers and which do not fall within the academy's electronic technologies network (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Principal's blog, LinkedIn, YouTube).

B. Academy approved password-protected social media tools are those that fall within the academy's electronic technologies network or which the academy has approved for educational use. The academy has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum.

#### **IV. REQUIREMENTS**

As set forth in the OFA vision, all employees are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for our schools and to remember they are role models to students in this community. Because readers of social media networks may view the employee as a representative of the school and the Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT), OFA requires employees to observe the following rules when referring to OAT, its schools, students, programs, activities, employees, volunteers and communities on any social media networks:

A. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's postings, displays, or communications on any social media network must comply with UK law and any applicable OFA policies.

Employees must be respectful and professional in all communications (by word, image or other means). Employees shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media network or engage in communications or conduct that is harassing, threatening, bullying, libellous, or defamatory or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, or bullying.

Employees should not use their OFA e-mail address for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the academy.

Employees must make clear that any views expressed are the employee's alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the academy. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the academy or post comments as a representative of the academy, except as authorised by the Principal.

When authorised as a spokesperson for the academy, employees must disclose their employment relationship.

Employees may not disclose information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the academy, its students, or employees or that is protected by data privacy laws.

Employees may not use or post the OFA logo (defined in the brand guidelines) on any social media network without permission from the Principal and/or Director of Marketing.

1. Employees may not post images on any social media network of colleagues without the colleagues' consent.
2. Employees may not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent.
3. Employees may not post any non-public images of the academy premises and property, including floor plans.

B. The academy recognises that student groups or members of the public may create social media representing students or groups. When employees, including coaches/advisors, choose to join or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the academy. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behaviour or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online. Employees shall annually disclose to the academy the existence of and their participation in such networks.

C. Employees who participate in social media networks may decide to include information about their work with the academy as part of their personal profile, as it would relate to a typical social conversation. This may include:

1. Work information included in a personal profile, to include academy name, job title, and job duties.
2. Status updates regarding an employee's own job promotion.
3. Personal participation in academy-sponsored events, including volunteer activities.

D. An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, information that violates the privacy rights or other rights of a third party, or the content of anything posted on any social media network.

E. Anything posted on an employee's web site or web log or other Internet content for which the employee is responsible will be subject to all academy policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines. The academy is free to view and monitor an employee's website or web log at any time without consent or previous approval. Where applicable, employees may be asked to disclose to the academy the existence of and to provide the academy with access to an employee's web site or web log or other personal social media network as part of an employment selection, promotion, or disciplinary process.

## **CONCLUSION**

Due to the constantly changing landscape of social media networks, this document will be periodically updated to reflect current trends, norms, and best practices in the use of social media.

While the use of these sites is becoming commonplace, it is important that, as an employee of Ormiston Forge Academy, you conduct yourself in an appropriate manner to avoid any unintended situations that could adversely affect your professional standing. These clear bullet points that reflect the policy above, are not intended to restrict your participation but rather to provide some protection if you choose to engage in online activities.

- Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees or school system business.
- Employees shall not list current students as "friends" on social networking sites.

- Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social networking sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol or drug use or other behaviours associated with the employees' private lives that would be inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.
- Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their personal social networking sites that are not accessible to the general public.
- Employees shall be professional in all internet postings related to or referencing the school system, students and other employees.
- Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment.
- Employees shall not use the school's logo or other copyrighted material of the system without express, written consent from the Principal.
- Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family without permission from the student, the student's parent or legal guardian and the Principal
- Employees shall not use internet postings to libel or defame students, school employees, the sponsor or anyone associated with the school.
- Employees shall not use internet postings to harass, bully or intimidate other employees or students.
- Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs.