



COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TRUST

Working Together to Secure Success

POLICY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

(on behalf of Trust Schools)

Rationale for the use of social media at Collaborative Learning Trust

As part of their communication strategy, effective schools need to use a range of different media for conveying different types of messages to a varied audience: students, staff, parents/carers, governors, members of the community, prospective families, etc.

As the way in which society “consumes” news continues to evolve, so too must the way that we, as a Trust, communicate with our stakeholders. Increasingly this means exploiting social media in order to maximise the speed and “reach” of our communication.

Principles

As with all forms of external communication, it is essential that we establish certain principles so that we:

1. ensure the safeguarding of our students;
2. protect the Trust, Trust schools and staff, from potential legal/disciplinary action;
3. maintain a positive image of the Trust and its schools;
4. maximise consistency;
5. operate in a professional manner and in accordance with all school policies;
6. do not breach confidentiality or data privacy or undermine the integrity of the Trust or its schools.

Given that the conventions which pertain to more traditional forms of written communication are sometimes not considered to apply to social media, it is even more important that organisations establish clear protocols for its use. The need for this is further underlined in view of the ease with which social media messages can be broadcast to a limitless audience.

Official Trust Social Media Accounts

The official Trust Social Media Accounts are @CollaborativeLT (X, formerly Twitter), @CollaborativeLearningTrust (Instagram) and the Collaborative Learning Trust page on LinkedIn. These are the only accounts which are represented by the trust ‘cog’ as their logo.

The official Trust social media accounts are operated by the following administrators, who can write new messages and share those written by others:

- Trust Marketing Manager
- Central HR Team
- Central Governance Assistant

The official Trust social media accounts are used to celebrate the schools, students, staff and communities of our Trust and to showcase the work of the Trust and its schools.

Where urgent messages need to be conveyed (e.g. regarding school closure), these will be communicated via the Trust Schools.

Official school social media accounts

Official school social media accounts can only be created with the permission of the Headteacher and the approval process below must be followed. These are the only accounts which can be represented solely by the school crest, badge or icon as their logo.

These accounts are used to communicate messages of interest to large numbers of “readers”, rather than specific groups. This includes news items which celebrate the success of students, staff and the wider school community, as well as reminders regarding school events, notices concerning school closure or special arrangements, etc.

Official school media accounts are operated by administrators in each school, agreed by the Headteacher (or delegated School Leader), who can write new messages and share those written by others.

Where urgent messages need to be conveyed (e.g. regarding school closure), these will be communicated via text message. In addition, appropriate social media accounts and the school websites will be updated to maximise coverage.

Approval to set up any social media accounts or pages.

Staff who wish to set up a group/faculty social media account or page must follow the following procedure:

1. Ask yourself the following questions to ensure that it is worthwhile setting up the account, and that you can meet the expectations of those who follow it:
 - What will you use it for?
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - Which is the appropriate social media platform to use?
 - Is there a more appropriate medium for this?
 - Do you have the capacity to update it regularly? *[Regularly should be twice a week at least on X, once a week on other platforms]*
 - What contingency do you have if you are unable to update it personally?
 - Do you have the necessary expertise, including the production of appropriate material?
2. If you still wish to proceed, discuss your idea with the Trust Marketing Manager and/or the appropriate Trust school leader.
3. Select an account/page name and a logo in consultation with the Trust Marketing Manager and/or the appropriate Trust school leader. The logo must not consist solely of your official school crest, badge or icon, but may be incorporated into a design which is approved by the appropriate school leader.
4. Agree appropriate account settings.
5. Agree appropriate wording for the “Profile”, or equivalent, to make it clear what type of information users can expect from the account/page.
6. Social media feeds should not ‘go live’ until the appropriate agreement has been gained from the Trust School Leader.
7. In the event of a member of staff who runs an account leaving the school or Trust, login details must be shared as part of the leaving process prior to their last day. If the account is to stay ‘live’, the new administrator should update the password on the account, otherwise the account must be deleted.

Protocols for the use of social media

The following protocols relate to the use of all forms of social media by all members of staff for all accounts which indicate a link with the Trust or any Trust school.

1. Posts, including links, must not be defamatory, intimidating, discriminatory, derogatory, hostile or offensive in any way, or contain any material which could be seen to diminish the reputation or image of the Trust or the school;
2. While accepting that the language used in social media tends to be less formal than in more traditional forms of written communication, the same professional approach to language and content should be applied, particularly as posts are often re-shared;
3. Extreme caution must be exercised when making reference to individual students or staff, in order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). No comments should be made relating to personal data, exam results, negative performance, etc. If in doubt, seek advice;
4. Permission must be sought from students and parents before photographs/videos are published;
5. The sending of 'sensitive personal data' or confidential information, whether relating to the sender or not, is forbidden;
6. The sending of any information which is not certain to be 'public knowledge' outside the school is forbidden;
7. Copyright of materials and intellectual property rights must be respected;
8. Use for personal financial gain, political purposes or advertising is forbidden;
9. Users are responsible for the messages they post and for contacts made that may result in responses being received;
10. Social media must not be used to solicit other people's views of the Trust or a Trust school, without the express permission of the CEO or the appropriate Trust school leader.
11. Any account used by a member of staff in their capacity as an employee of the Collaborative Learning Trust and our schools should be used solely for that purpose, and not for personal posts.
12. Should the values of a social media platform be considered to become contrary to the values of the Trust and its schools, Staff must close accounts which indicate a link with the Trust or any Trust school at the request of the appropriate Headteacher.
13. All use of social media must also comply with the wider provisions of the "*CLT Computing Facilities Acceptable Use Policy for Staff*".

Use of "group chat" applications

Except where explicit permission is given by a member of the appropriate Trust School Leaders, members of staff must not set up social media "chat groups" (e.g. WhatsApp groups) for communication with parents and carers.

For sports fixtures etc, the Squad In Touch or similar extra-curricular activities platform should be used to communicate with parents and carers.

For school trips and visits, the messaging function on Arbor can be used to communicate with students and/or parents and carers.

Monitoring and non-compliance

In order to protect students and staff and ensure that these protocols are adhered to, the use of social media will be monitored on an on-going basis.

Users of social media should be aware that improper use can give rise to claims of discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of confidentiality or breach of contract. Any breach of these protocols may be dealt with under the Trust's Disciplinary Policy. It is important to remember also, that improper use of social media can lead to prosecution.