

CODE OF CONDUCT

Person(s) responsible for updating the policy:	Louise Rowe, HR Business Partner
Dates consulted on:	From: 21/11/2022 To: 09/12/2022
Date Approved:	21/12/2022
Date of next review:	September 2024

Mission, Vision and Values



Vision

Every child in a great school



Mission

Empowering children to impact positively on society



Values

Collaboration
Aspiration
Integrity
Compassion

WeST Core Values

WeST holds four core values which underpin the engagement, motivation and retention of employees, no matter what their role in the organisation.

- Collaboration**
 Creating a shared vision and working effectively across boundaries in an equitable and inclusive way to skillfully influence and engage others. Building and securing value from relationships, developing self and others to achieve positive outcomes.
- Aspiration**
 Having high expectations, modelling the delivery of high quality outcomes. Showing passion, persistence and resilience in seeking creative solutions to strive for continuous improvement and excellence.
- Integrity**
 Acting always with the interests of children and young people at our heart, and with a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Communicating with transparency and respect, creating a working environment based on trust and honesty.
- Compassion**
 Recognising need in others and acting with positive intention to promote well-being and improve outcomes.



Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

Providing Accessible Formats

If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format please contact Human Resources.

WeST Policy Suite

All Trust HR Policies are accessible via the WeST Staff Portal. Please contact your local administrative office or Human Resources for log-in details.

HR Helpline: 01752 891754 ext. 1765

HR Email: HR@westst.org.uk

CONTENTS

Mission, Vision and Values	1
1. Objective, Scope and Principles	4
2. Compliance	4
3. Setting an Example.....	4
4. Safeguarding Students	5
5. Physical contact with students	6
6. Relationships with Students	7
7. Professional Relationships with Colleagues	7
8. Honesty and Integrity	7
9. Conduct Outside of Work	8
10. Employment outside of the Trust	9
11. E-Safety and Internet Use	9
12. Confidentiality	9
13. Dress and Appearance	10
14. Health & Safety	10
15. Curriculum.....	10
16. Raising Concerns	11
APPENDIX 1 - Standards Expected of Employees	12
APPENDIX 2 - Confirmation of Compliance	13

ADDENDUM – Employee Guidance Note – Social Media

1. Objective, Scope and Principles

This Code of Conduct is designed to give clear guidance on the standards all employees are expected to observe. Employees working in Westcountry Schools Trust are role models, are in a position of influence and must demonstrate behaviour that sets a good example to all the students within the Trust. As a member of a school community, every employee has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the Trust, whether inside or outside working hours.

The Trust is committed to ensuring a consistent, fair, and equitable approach in all staffing matters, and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee's gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This document should be considered alongside the full range of policies and procedures for employment matters. Other policies referenced throughout this document are accessible via the staff pages of the WeST website.

In addition to this Code of Conduct, all employees engaged to work under the 'Conditions of Service for Schools Teachers' (known as the Burgundy book) have a statutory obligation to adhere to the most recent 'Teachers' Standards' and the subsequent, Part 2 of the Teachers' Standards - Personal and Professional Conduct. All employees engaged with professional accreditation are also required to adhere to their profession standards e.g. HR, Finance, Estates.

Employees should note that this Code of Conduct is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of conduct and employees must use common sense in adhering to the underpinning principles. If any employee is ever unsure what the expectations are in any given circumstance they should speak to their Headteacher/Principal/Director.

2. Compliance

Employees must familiarise themselves and comply with all Trust policies and procedures.

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees, including teaching and support staff. This Code of Conduct does not form part of the contract of employment and any amendments will be made in consultation with Trade Unions.

Casual and self-employed workers, agency staff and volunteers working in the Trust would also be expected to observe the principles set out in this document however any action required to address shortfalls will be in accordance with the relevant processes for the relationship (such as via the agency). It should also be noted that a separate document applies for those within governance (Governance Handbook and supporting documentation).

Employees must complete the form in Appendix 2 annually (or in the event of changes requiring re-issue) to confirm they have read and understood the Code of Conduct. This form should then be signed and dated. The signed form will be confidentially stored on the employee's personnel record. There may be local online systems such as Ms Forms declarations which should be considered as equivalent to ink signatures and maintained on personnel files.

Employees should be aware that a failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in a disciplinary investigation and action including but not limited to dismissal in accordance with the Trust's disciplinary policy and procedure.

3. Setting an Example

Employees must set good examples of behaviour and demonstrate high standards of conduct in order to encourage students to do the same. Examples of standards expected of employees can be found in Appendix 1.

Employees must comply with any lawful or reasonable instructions issued by their line manager or Senior Leadership Team.

Employees uphold public trust in Westcountry Schools Trust and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

- Treating students with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position.
- Having regard for the need to safeguard students' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions.
- Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.
- Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.
- Treating all colleagues with respect, dignity, fairness and courtesy at all times.

Employees must not discriminate, harass or victimise someone because they have or are perceived to have a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. Further details are available in the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Employees must avoid using inappropriate or offensive language and must avoid behaving in a way that humiliates students, discriminates against or favours students. Employees should consider their conduct so that misinterpretations by students are minimised.

In accordance with the WeST Low-Level Concerns Policy, employees are encouraged to consider self-reporting to a Headteacher/Principal/Director if they believe their behaviour may be interpreted to fall short of these standards. This will enable the relevant support and exploration of the circumstances at the earliest opportunity. Concerns will be recorded in accordance with the Low-Level Concerns Policy and actioned with the aim of improving practice.

Employees designated to lead student events (e.g. proms, residential visits) must refrain from the consumption of alcohol and other substances (including prescription medication affecting their ability to care for students) both within the school premises and off-site.

Employees attending student events off-site, but not part of the official supervision rota/risk assessment, may consume alcohol in moderation. However, they should apply professional judgement and consider how their actions may be interpreted by students, parents and members of the public. Further details are available in the WeST Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Misuse Policy.

Employees are required to demonstrate responsible behaviour at work-related functions and work-related social events that take place outside normal work hours and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect on the Trust's reputation.

4. Safeguarding Students

The Trust strives to create a culture of safeguarding in which everyone has a responsibility to keep students safe, and to ensure that concerns are recorded and reported accordingly.

Employees have a duty to safeguard students from abuse including: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and neglect. Employees must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare. To fulfil this responsibility employees should ensure they are aware of the signs of abuse/neglect and take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity.

The duty to safeguard students includes the duty to report concerns about a student or colleague to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Employees are provided with access to the following documents and must become familiar with these:

- Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Trust's Whistleblowing Procedure
- The DfE Statutory Guidance Document 'Keeping children safe in education' (regularly updated thus staff must ensure they are familiar with the most recent version in operation)
- The 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings'

All employees must cooperate with colleagues and with external agencies where necessary. All employees are required to undertake annual Child Protection Training and complete any revised updates that may arise during the year. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

There will be times where an employee is working one to one with a student and this is acceptable. Employees need to understand that this means that they may be more vulnerable to allegations being made against them. Therefore, it is important that employees:

- Avoid meeting on a one-to-one basis in secluded areas of the site;
- Ensure that the door to the room is open or that there is visual access into the room;
- Inform a colleague or line manager of the meeting, preferably beforehand;
- Report to their line manager if the student becomes distressed or angry.

There may be times where an employee is working with students outside of the school/college site, such as a home visit. The relevant risk assessment and arrangements as per the WeST Guidance on Home Visits should be considered.

The Trust has provided a range of policies and guidance documentation for the support of staff in delivering high quality education services. However, it is recognised that there may be rare occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of a student when no guidance exists. Employees are expected to take judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the students in their charge and, in doing so, will be seen to be acting reasonably. These judgements should always be recorded and shared with a senior leader. Employees should always consider where their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe and applied equitably.

5. Physical contact with students

There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper for employees to have physical contact with students. Employees must ensure that they only do so in ways that are appropriate to their professional role and in response to the student's needs at the time. This should be of limited duration and appropriate to the age, stage of development and background of the student. Employees should always be able to explain why they have made physical contact with a student. Employees should liaise with the Headteacher/Principal/Director on any additional local policy arrangements.

There may also be occasions where a student is in distress and needs comfort and reassurance which may include age-appropriate physical contact. If an employee is in this position then they should consider the way in which they offer comfort, ensuring that it is not open to misinterpretation and is always appropriately recorded (such as CPOMS).

Employees may legally physically intervene with students to prevent them from committing a crime, injuring themselves or others, causing damage to property, engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and to maintain good order and discipline. In doing so, employees should act in accordance with any training, development or guidance made available to them. Physical force should never be used as a form of punishment (please refer to the DfE Use of Reasonable Force advice).

Sexual contact, including grooming patterns of behaviour, with students is unlawful and unacceptable in all circumstances.

In certain curriculum areas, such as PE, drama or music, employees may need to initiate some physical contact with children as part of their normal duties, for example, to demonstrate technique in the use of a piece of equipment, adjust posture, or support a student so they can perform an activity safely or prevent injury. Physical contact should take place only when it is necessary in relation to a particular activity, Student discomfort should be considered, the extent of the contact should be made clear and only undertaken with the expressed permission of the student.

Employees whose roles involve providing intimate and personal care should ensure they are familiar with any relevant and applicable WeST or local policy arrangements.

6. Relationships with Students

It is paramount for employees to treat students with dignity, to build relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times to observe proper boundaries appropriate for their professional position. Employees are in a position of trust in relation to all students and thus must act accordingly.

Employees should make every effort to ensure their own behaviour cannot be brought into question, does not appear to encourage inappropriate boundaries and be aware that infatuations may carry the risk of their words or actions being misinterpreted.

Employees should refer to senior leaders and carefully consider appropriate transport arrangements. All alternatives will be explored in the first instance however if transporting of students within their own vehicles is needed there would need to be a careful risk assessment of the circumstances, including that the staff member would never be in the vehicle alone with pupils.

Employees who have personal connections with students outside school (e.g. relatives, neighbours, members of local community/sports/religious/political groups etc.), will need to be particularly mindful to maintain relationships/boundaries which do not compromise professional standards and responsibilities.

Private tuition of students within the same school that the employee is based might cause a conflict of interest. If in doubt any proposed arrangements must be discussed with the Headteacher. Employees are discouraged from tutoring students from within the school they teach and must not tutor students they teach directly. As a non-Trust arrangement, section 10, 'Employment outside of the Trust' is applicable. It must also be made clear that any tutoring is a strictly private and external arrangement and unconnected to the school.

Employees have a responsibility to challenge inappropriate behaviour between peers. Employees should ensure they are familiar with the local behaviour management policy arrangements or liaise with the senior leadership team accordingly.

7. Professional Relationships with Colleagues

Employees must help create a positive working environment and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour. For further information please refer to the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure.

Employees must not ignore any form of discrimination. This includes inappropriate jokes and banter within the workplace. Employees must positively promote equality, diversity and inclusion at all times for students and colleagues.

Employees must strive toward and promote harmonious and professional relationships with all colleagues. It is understood that, at times, differences of opinions can occur and at such times it is expected that employees will attempt to resolve matters informally in the first instance unless they feel unable to do so in which case, they should refer the matter to their line manager. For further detail please refer in the first instance to the Dignity at Work Policy and, if it is not possible to resolve matters informally, the Grievance Policy.

Where a close personal relationship already exists or develops with another member of staff with the potential to create a conflict of interest, both parties should immediately declare this relationship to their line manager(s) who will, together with them, appraise the risks and identify possible options to avoid any conflict of interest.

Employees should also refer to the considerations of their responsibilities for related parties transactions as detailed in the financial policy arrangements. The WeST Conflict of Interest and Related Party Transactions Policy is available from the Trust website.

8. Honesty and Integrity

Employees must maintain high standards of honesty and integrity in their work. This includes the handling and claiming of money and the use of Trust property, resources, and facilities. Westcountry Schools Trust

takes fraud, theft, bribery, and corruption very seriously and there is a 'zero tolerance' culture to fraud in the Trust.

Employees should ensure they are aware of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. The Trust has a duty to protect public assets; to ensure that management and other practices accord with the standards of probity expected of public sector bodies; and to ensure that the resources available to it are used only in furtherance of the Trust's objectives as an educational body.

Employees must comply with the Bribery Act 2010. A person may be guilty of an offence of bribery under this act if they offer, promise or give financial advantage or other advantage to someone; or if they request, agree or accept, or receive a bribe from another person. If an employee believes that a person has failed to comply with the Bribery Act, they should refer the concerns to the attention of the Headteacher/Principal/Director.

Furthermore, employees should also ensure they are aware of the Gifts and Hospitality Policy. Employees must not accept gifts or hospitality from suppliers or associates of the Trust. A record should be kept of all gifts from children/students/parents/suppliers with a value of over £25.

Employees should carefully consider any gifts received from or rewards given to children/students in the light of school policies and KCSiE. Employees are advised to use the school rewards system as their primary means of rewarding; however, small, informal rewards such as sweets, are acceptable. If employees are unsure about the status of gifts or rewards, they should consult their line manager.

Employees must make known to the Principal/Headteacher and Trust Board all financial and non-financial interests that could bring them into conflict with the Trust's interests.

All personal relationships with contractors, or potential contractors should be made known by the employee to the Principal/Headteacher, Trust Board and Senior Manager with responsibility for the contract.

Employees must not be involved in any recruitment process if they have a personal relationship with the applicant inside or outside of work. Further information on unconscious bias is available in the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Without fear of recrimination, employees can report any impropriety or breach of procedures using the process laid out within the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy.

9. Conduct Outside of Work

The Trusts recognises an employee's right to a private life. Employees should be mindful however of engaging in conduct that might bring into question their ability to effectively carry out their role. Working in education means that employees are recognisable figures in the local community. Where there is a question over the appropriateness of behaviour of an employee outside of work and its relevancy of the conduct to the workplace and/or the risk to the Trust's reputation an investigation will be carried out under the disciplinary policy.

Being investigated by the police, receiving a caution or being charged will not automatically mean that an employee's employment is at risk, through the disciplinary process there will be careful consideration to the relevance of the circumstance to the role requirements.

Criminal activities which could damage public confidence in the profession or Trust, or which may render an employee unsuitable for the post they undertake, may include:

- criminal offences that involve violence
- criminal offences that involve possession or use of illegal drugs (subject to the employer's duty of care to employees who may have substance or dependency issues).
- submitting false or fraudulent claims to public bodies (for example, income support, housing or other benefit claims)
- breaching copyright on computer software or published documents
- sexual offences which will render them unfit to work with children or vulnerable adults
- crimes of dishonesty which render them unfit to hold a position of trust.

Employees should write and tell the Headteacher/Principal/Director immediately if they are questioned by the police, charged with, or convicted of, any crime whilst they are employed at the Trust (this includes outside of their working hours). They will then need to consider whether this in light of the post duties and disciplinary policy process. HR advice is available in these circumstances.

10. Employment outside of the Trust

Employees may undertake work outside of the Trust, either paid or voluntary, provided that it does not conflict with the interests of the Trust nor be to a level which may contravene the working time regulations or affect an individual's work performance in the Trust. In line with the Statement of Particulars, employees must declare and discuss secondary employment with their line manager.

11. E-Safety and Internet Use

Employees should exercise caution when using information technology and be aware of the risks to themselves and others. Regard should be given to the Trust's policies and guidance on both ICT use and social media.

The Trusts recognises an employee's right to a private life. Employees should be mindful however of engaging in social media use that might bring into question their ability to effectively carry out their role. Where there is a question over the appropriateness of social media content and its relevancy of the conduct to the workplace and/or the risk to the Trust's reputation an investigation will be carried out under the disciplinary policy.

Employees should ensure that they adopt suitably high security settings on any personal profiles they may have. Additional information is available in the addendum guidance note for all employees.

Employees should be mindful of their use of workplace equipment and software to ensure this does not disrupt their workflow.

Employees must not use equipment belonging to the Trust to access pornography; neither should personal equipment containing pornographic images or links to them be brought into the workplace. Doing so will raise serious concerns and an investigation about the suitability of the employee to continue to work in schools.

Employees must not respond to negative comments posted online relating to the organisation or its stakeholders but bring this to the attention of the Principal/Headteacher/Director.

Employees must only contact students via Trust authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal telephone numbers, email addresses or communication routes via personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students.

Employees must report to the Principal/Headteacher/Director any contact by a student by an inappropriate route.

Photographs/still images or video footage of students should only be taken using Trust equipment, for purposes authorised by the school/Trust. Any such use should always be transparent and only occur where parental, or where appropriate/relevant, student, consent has been given. The resultant files from such recording or taking of photographs must be stored in accordance with the Trust's procedures on Trust equipment.

12. Confidentiality

Employees may have access to confidential information about students, colleagues or other matters relating to the Trust operations. This could include personal and sensitive data, for example information about a student's home life. Employees should never use this information to their own personal advantage, or to humiliate, intimidate or embarrass others. Employees should never disclose this information unless this is in the proper circumstances and with the proper authority. Information should be treated on a need-to-know basis.

If an employee is ever in doubt about what information can or cannot be disclosed they should speak to their line manager.

The Trust will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation. Employees are expected to comply with the Trust's systems as set out in the Data Protection Policy. If any employee becomes aware that data is at risk of compromise or loss, or has been compromised or lost, they must report it immediately to the Data Protection Officer, in order (where applicable) for relevant breaches to be reported to the Information Commissioners Office within 72 hours.

Employees must read and understand the Data Protection Policy and other relevant policies concerning sensitive information processing (e.g. Recruitment and Selection, DBS Policy).

13. Dress and Appearance

Employees may dress comfortably but must also dress in a manner that is appropriate to a professional role and promotes a professional image. Transgender employees may dress in a way which they feel matches their gender identity. Reasonable adjustments will be made for employees with disabilities or health conditions.

Employees must not dress in a manner that could be regarded by others as offensive or revealing. Employees must not wear clothes with political or other contentious slogans.

If your post requires you to wear protective clothing or use to equipment, then you must adhere to the instructions provided by your line manager.

14. Health & Safety

The Trust has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment for students and safe working environment for employees. Full details are available within the Trust Health and Safety Policy document.

All employees must ensure that they:

- Familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety statements / policies produced by the Trust.
- Comply with Health and Safety Regulations or instructions and use any safety equipment and protective clothing which is supplied to you by the Trust.
- Comply with any hygiene requirements.
- Comply with any accident reporting requirements.
- Never act in a way which contravenes basic Health and Safety requirements, training or relevant risk assessments and in doing so might cause risk or damage to any other members of the Trust community or visitors.
- Individuals have a duty to take care of themselves and anyone else who may be affected by their actions or failings.

15. Curriculum

WeST is committed to providing a broad, balanced and knowledge-rich curriculum.

Many areas of the curriculum can include or raise subject matter which is sexually explicit or of a political or sensitive nature. Care should be taken to ensure that resource materials cannot be misinterpreted and clearly relate to the learning outcomes identified by lesson plans or other relevant curriculum-related materials. This can be supported by developing ground rules with students to ensure sensitive topics can be discussed in a safe learning environment. Care should especially be taken in those areas of the curriculum which deal with sensitive issues on a regular basis.

The curriculum can sometimes include or lead to unplanned discussion about subject matter of a sexually explicit, political or otherwise sensitive nature. Responding to children's questions requires careful judgement and employees should take guidance in these circumstances from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

16. Raising Concerns

There is a duty to report (including self-reporting) any incident in which an adult has or may have behaved in a way that is inconsistent with the organisation's staff code of conduct including inappropriate behaviours inside, outside of work or online.

Employees should recognise their individual responsibility to raise any concerns regarding behaviour or conduct (including low level concerns) that falls short of the principles outlined in this document. It is crucial that any such concerns, including those which do not meet the harm threshold (see KCSiE), are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Please see specifically the WeST Low-Level Concerns Policy.

Failure to report or respond to such concerns would constitute a failure in professional responsibilities to safeguard children and promote welfare.

Whistleblowing is a mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussions.

APPENDIX 1 - Standards Expected of Employees

The standards expected of all employees include but are not limited to:

- maintaining standards of behaviour in keeping with the interests and standing of the school and Trust. This includes behaviour outside of working hours and in any form that is visible to the public, including social networking or any other electronic medium.
- devoting full attention while at work to the duties of their position and in doing so acting with responsibility, good judgement and in good faith
- carrying out any reasonable instructions given by those with authority to do so.
- not divulging to any unauthorised person or making personal use of confidential information connected with the Trust, either intentionally or through negligent behaviour.
- observing the rules, regulations and instructions adopted by the Trust.
- following appropriate safeguarding procedures.
- participating fully in any investigation into alleged incidents and/or allegations, including attending meetings as directed.
- using electronic communications appropriately.
- carrying out their role consistently with any standards set by their appropriate professional body.
- In addition to the above, the expectations of those employed in management roles are to:
 - ensure the standards expected from all employees are role-modelled, monitored and managed effectively
 - effectively manage all applicable statutory and non-statutory obligations
 - appropriately manage all alleged incidents and/or allegations.

This list is not exhaustive.



Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

APPENDIX 2 - Confirmation of Compliance

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the Trust's code of conduct.

Name

Position/Post Held.....

Signed

Date

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to the Principal / Headteacher / Director. The completed form will be stored on the personnel file of the employee.

ADDENDUM – Employee Guidance Note – Social Media

Topic: Social Media (Employees) – Addendum to Code of Conduct

For additional information and support please contact the HR Team on the above details.

WeST holds a deep seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the children and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Introduction

Social media is a part of everyday life for many. Social media is the term used for internet-based tools used on computer, tablets, and smart phones to help people keep in touch and enable them to interact. This can include a blog, social network, photo-sharing sites, chat room, question and answer-based networks, review systems, and discussion forums among other platforms. Social media is a place where people exchange information, opinions, ideas and experiences to learn, develop and have fun. This guide is for employee considerations and operates alongside the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy, and other relevant processes for professional responsibilities.

Company Representation Online

The Trust recognises that social media offers a platform for the organisation and its schools to perform marketing, stay connected with learners/parents and build its profile online. However any such accounts representing the Trust will be maintained by an allocated representative; operating on the most-appropriate social media platforms and with consideration to the type and frequency of appropriate posts. New social media accounts in the company's name must not be created unless approved by the CEO.

The Trust also recognises that its employees may be involved in industry conversations on social networks. Social media is an excellent way for employees to make useful connections, share ideas and shape discussions on the future of education and best practice.

Employees should not respond to any negative comments they identify online relating to the Trust or its stakeholders, however they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the Principal / Headteacher / Director.

Personal Representation Online

While the Trust recognises its employees may choose to operate personal accounts on social media platforms, and the implications of The Human Rights Act regarding a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence', the Trust also provides the following guidance for best practice:

- Employees should exercise reasonable professional caution in their use of all social media, including written content, videos or photographs, and views expressed.
- Employees should consider the security settings of their account and personal profiles.
- Employees must only contact students via Trust authorised mechanisms. At no time should personal accounts on social media platforms be used to communicate with students.
- Employees must report to the Principal/Headteacher/Director TLI any contact by a student by an inappropriate route.
- Employees should consider including a disclaimer on their personal social media profile to clearly identify that the account does not represent the Trust's views or opinions. For example: *'The views expressed are my own and do not reflect the views of my employer.'*

The intention of this guidance is to provide clarity on the considerations for reasonable professional caution in posting on social media however it is recognised much of this is down to perception and

common sense approaches. In particular, any *content that is inappropriate* should not be included in messages, status updates or links to other materials.

Inappropriate content includes: pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs. This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs in support of proscribed terrorist groups or organisations, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

This guidance on inappropriate content extends to avoiding the sharing of intellectual property such as trademarks on a personal account without approval of the copyright owner and is intended to protect WeST's intellectual property and to protect the Trust from risk of claim for the use of images/quotes etc. without approval of copyright.

Furthermore, employees are reminded of their responsibility and boundaries – for example they may have privileged information not in the public domain and should not promote or share this online as it could be considered confidential or commercially sensitive.

Use During the Working Day

Systems across the Trust and its devices may provide access to the internet and social media platforms for employees to reasonably use during their break times. In addition individuals may have access to their own devices while at work, such as mobile phones or tablets.

However it is expected that employees act responsibly and ensure their productivity isn't affected by such use. Using social media excessively while at work can reduce efficiency and concentration. Any excessive or inappropriate use may be considered a disciplinary matter.

Monitoring

The Trust ICT and internet resources (including computers, smart phones and internet connections) are provided for legitimate business use and any personal use should be limited to the employee break period. The Trust therefore reserves the right to monitor how social networks are used and accessed through these resources.

Any such examinations or monitoring will only be carried out by authorised staff and reported to the senior manager of the individual employee for consideration on appropriate action which may include performance management or disciplinary matters in accordance with the relevant policies.

It should be noted that the Trust can be legally compelled to show that information to law enforcement agencies or other parties as applicable.



Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

Further Information

Please contact the WeST HR team for further information and advice on specific circumstances. This guidance is intended to provide best practice considerations and potential implications on employment.

POLICY HISTORY

Policy Date	Summary of Change	Contact	Version / Implementation Date	Review Date
04/12/2019	New policy	WeST HR	12/12/2019	December 2021
January 2023	Revised policy	WeST HR	04/01/2023	September 2024