SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

Original document	Pay and Personnel Committee	Jan 2015	Version 1 (Draft)
Amended			

I   STATEMENT OF INTENT

This document is intended to provide advice and guidance to employees of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST), local governing body members in ODST schools and directors of the Trust on the appropriate use of social media.

II   INTRODUCTION

The use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and on-line discussion and comment blogs has rapidly grown to become one of the main, if not the main, form of communication between friends and individuals.

Where used appropriately, membership of such sites should have no impact on an employee's role with ODST. This guidance therefore seeks to provide advice and information to ODST employees so as to:

- ensure the pupils within their care remain safeguarded,
- avoid any compromise to their professional integrity or that of the school where they work or the Trust,
- minimise the risk of any form of legal challenge as a consequence of misuse of information, such as breach of data protection or perceived harassment.

III   SCOPE

- **Governing Body**   ✓
- Teaching Staff   ☐
- Headteacher   ☐
- Support staff   ☐
- **All School Staff**   ✓
- **Central Office Staff**   ✓

IV   RELEVANT LEGISLATION

V   RELATED POLICIES

- Equality and Diversity Procedure
- School Complaints Procedure

VI   RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2013

VII DATE OF REVIEW

This guidance will be reviewed as required by the Board of Directors of ODST to take account of any legislative changes and / or national policy development.

VIII GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "school" include both schools and academies
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "teacher" include the headteacher
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to 'staff' include both teaching and support staff

IX RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors of ODST
As the relevant body the Board of Directors are responsible for ensuring that this guidance is reviewed and updated on a regular basis as appropriate.

Responsibilities of Headteachers and Line Managers
A copy of this guidance should be made available to all school based and centrally employed staff. For new employees this will typically take part during their induction process.

Responsibilities of employees and governors
Staff and governors are advised to take into consideration the guidance in this document and to ensure that the appropriate precautions are followed when using social media

Further advice on this guidance is available from the ODST HR team on 01865 208278 and Philip Hind, New Media Manager for the Diocese of Oxford on 01865 208262.

Principles and Guidelines Relating to the use of Social Media

1/ In general terms ODST would expect that the conduct and behaviour of its staff and those representing its member schools is such that no justifiable complaint can be made by parents, pupils, colleagues or other stakeholders. This includes conduct and behaviour when using social networking sites.

2/ Staff and those representing ODST schools are reminded that the manner in which they conduct themselves on social media can have an impact not only on the way that they are perceived, but also on the public perception of the school and Trust. They are therefore advised not to conduct themselves in such a manner as to:
- Bring the school or Trust into disrepute,
- Lead to valid complaints,
- Be seen as acting in a derogatory manner to the school, the Trust or any of its stakeholders,
- Bring into doubt their appropriateness to work with children and young people.

3/ There can be occasions when despite the use of caution, personal details and information are exposed to a wider audience than originally intended. Staff and those representing ODST schools are encouraged to take adequate precautions when using social media sites, in terms of not only applying suitable security settings but also vetting their personal profile or any information added in their name. If inappropriate references are posted about an employee or representative by a 'friend', the site and the friend should be contacted to remove the material. Individuals should also be aware that where content is shared with others who have lower security settings, it may become public even though not originally intended to do so.

4/ There are a number of reasons why it is advised that school staff and representatives do not form on-line 'friendships' or enter into communication with pupils. These include the vulnerability caused by sharing, or having access to, personal information about their pupils and vice-versa. In a similar way this guidance also applies to communication with former pupils, especially where they are under the age of 18. In the event that contact with a child is needed, this should be done for professional reasons only and in line with the school's policy and using school equipment.

5/ It is recommended that staff and representatives consider carefully whether it is appropriate to be 'friends' on-line with parents or carers of children attending the school in which they work or act as a governor. Where such relationships may already exist, appropriate security settings should be applied and individuals are reminded of the guidance under point 2 above.

6/ There are mechanisms in place for discussing and managing work-related issues and employees and representatives of ODST schools should always refrain from doing so in an on-line environment. Similarly caution should also be applied when personal or confidential e-mails such as governor reports and minutes are sent to 'family'/ open e-mail addresses and appropriate steps should be taken to maintain data security such as password protecting documents.

7/ Where a school uses an on-line platform to communicate with pupils (e.g. in respect of homework), the headteacher should provide local guidance as to the protocols to apply. Schools are discouraged from setting up their own public Facebook pages although there may be rare occasions (e.g. school trips) where private membership groups may be appropriate.

8/ If any concerns are raised regarding the potential safeguarding of pupils in an ODST school through the use of social media these should be raised in the first instance with the designated person in the given school or in the event of concerns involving the designated person or the Headteacher, the Chairman of the local governing body so that an investigation can take place, and any necessary actions be implemented.

9/ Any action that brings the school or Trust into disrepute, or otherwise breaches the guidance given in point 2 above, is unacceptable and will be investigated accordingly. In certain situations, misuse of social media may be deemed as misconduct or gross misconduct and would be managed through the disciplinary procedure as necessary.

10/ ODST recognises that staff may wish to access the internet or social media for personal reasons in rest periods. If any member of staff has concerns about the appropriateness of using a particular forum, or accessing a particular site, they should speak to their line manager in the first instance.

Some suggested general guidelines relating to the use of social media:

- Only say online what you would be prepared to say in public
- Presume that all postings can be searched and accessed quickly
- Remember that social media is no different to print media in respect of the potential for libel. Don't assume that posts will become inaccessible; even those that appear to have been deleted

Useful links with advice about social networking for those in a school setting:

- Childnet: www.childnet.com/resources/social-networking-a-guide-for-teachers-and-professionals
- UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
- www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/teachers-and-professionals/professional-reputation
- Teacher Support Network: www.teachersupport.info
- Get Safe Online: www.getsafeonline.org