




## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy is informed by the Christian values which are the basis for all of CDAT's work and any actions taken under this policy will reflect this.

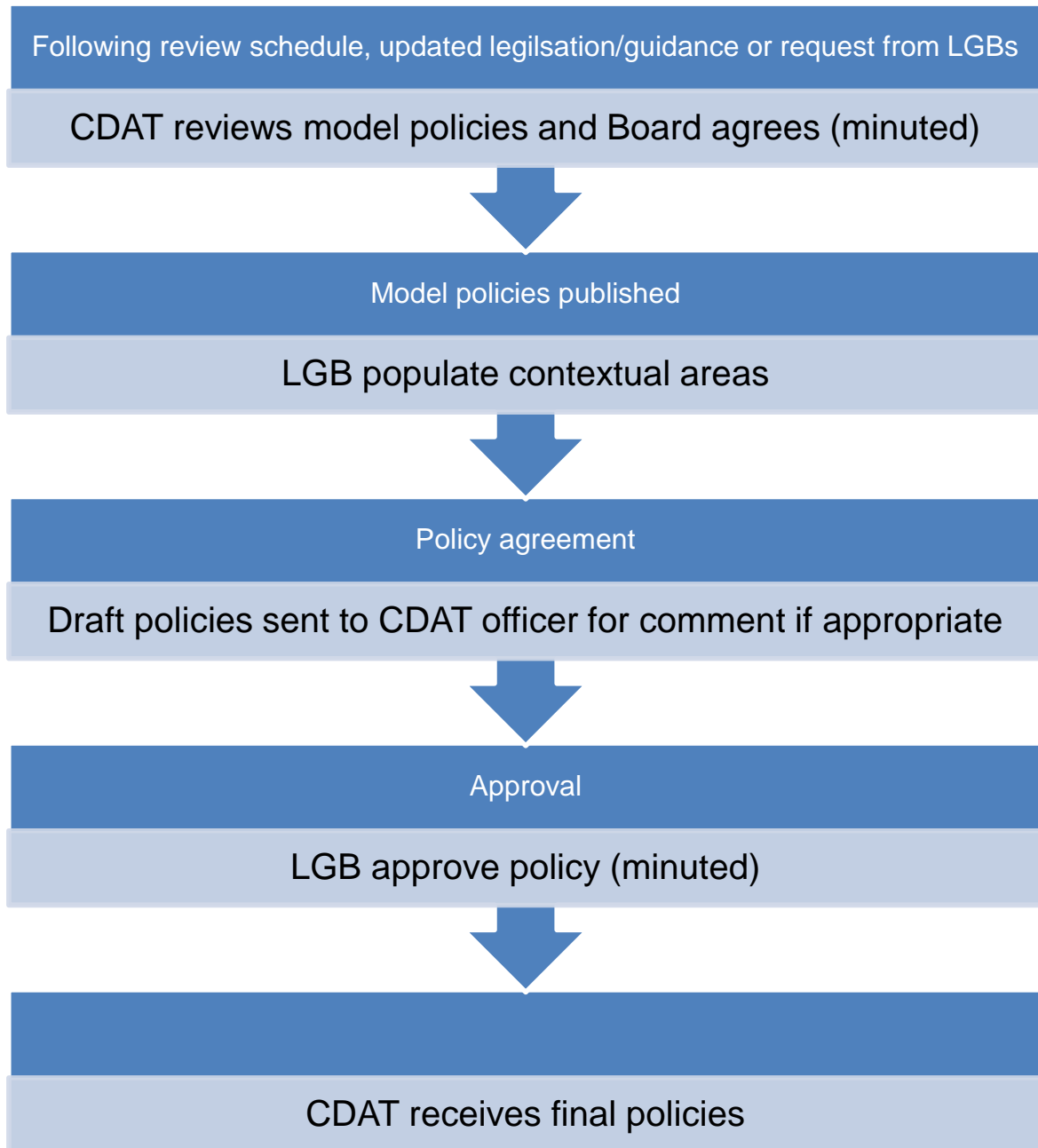
*'Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right'*

*Psalm 106:3*

**School/Academy Name: St Matthew's C of E Primary**

Date agreed by LGB	Review Date	Signed Chair of LGB
July 2018	Summer 2020	

## Policy Process



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## 1. Rationale

Social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, MSN, blogs, online discussion forums) brings opportunities for children, young people and adults to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new and exciting ways. It also helps the school to communicate with the wider community.

While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that all those connected to CDAT and St Matthew's are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure social media is used responsibly so that the confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputations of St Matthew's and CDAT are safeguarded.

Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

## 2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- balance support for innovation whilst providing a framework for best practice;
- ensure that CDAT and the school are not exposed to legal risks;
- ensure that the reputation of neither St Matthew's nor CDAT is compromised;
- ensure that users of social media are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social media is legitimately representative of the school;
- safeguard pupils across CDAT.

## 3. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to the local governing body, all teaching and other staff employed by CDAT, external contractors providing services on behalf of St Matthew's or CDAT, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school/academy. **These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.**

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes.

This policy applies to personal web space such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*, *MySpace*), blogs, microblogs such as *Twitter*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

## 4. Principles

All potential users should bear in mind that information they share through any social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, as well as the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Any proposal for using social networking applications as part of a school service or activity (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by CDAT.

In summary, social networking applications:

- must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages; this includes, but is not limited to, material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school/academy into disrepute;
- must not be used for the promotion of financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns;
- must not be used in an abusive manner;
- must not be used for actions that would put the employees, governors or children in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff;
- must not breach the school's disciplinary policy, equality policy or bullying policy;

- must not make reference to any staff member, child, parent or school activity or event unless prior permission has been obtained from the Principal.

Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer, or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation, then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.

## 5. Personal use of social media

CDAT expects the following of staff members:

- Staff may say that they work for St Matthew's, but their online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the school's name.
- If staff do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the school operates), where appropriate they should include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of St Matthew's."
- Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil, whether from this school or any other school/academy, unless the pupils are family members.
- CDAT does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them; however, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of St Matthew's and through official school sites (see below).
- Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. If they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of official school sites.
- On leaving the service of St Matthew's, staff members must not contact pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, CDAT staff and other parties and school/academy or CDAT corporate information must not be discussed on their personal web space.
- Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing St Matthew's or CDAT uniforms, or clothing with school or CDAT logos or images, must not be published on personal web space.
- The email addresses of St Matthew's and CDAT, and other official contact details, must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.
- The names, logos or brands of CDAT and St Matthew's must not be used or published on personal web space

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships.

Similarly, governors are advised not to be 'friends' with members of staff online as there is the potential for a conflict of interest, where a governor is on a selection /disciplinary panel which involves a 'friend', for example. Due to the role of

the governing body and its general responsibility for the conduct of the St Matthew's, it is sensible to maintain a certain level of separation between governors and staff.

Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.

## 6. Using social media on behalf of St Matthew's

Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another.

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons that could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements.

Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

### 6.1 Requirements for creating or joining social media sites on behalf of St Matthew's

Staff members participating in social media for work purposes are expected to demonstrate the same high standards of behaviour as when using other media or giving public presentations on behalf of the school.

- Staff should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that member of staff, and ideally should be linked to an official school email account;
- the content of any school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on the school;
- staff **must not** publish photographs of children without the written consent of parents/carers, identify by name any children featured in photographs, or allow personally identifying information to be published on school social media accounts;
- care must be taken to ensure that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe;
- any inappropriate comments on, or abuse of, school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of SLT;
- staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public;
- all social media accounts created for educational purposes should include a link in the About or Info page to the school website - this will indicate that the account is officially sanctioned by St Matthew's.

### 6.2 Children and young people

When creating social media sites for children and young people and communicating with them using such sites, staff members must at all times be conscious of their responsibilities; staff must always act in the best interests of children and young people.

Staff members must be alert to the risks to which young people can be exposed. Young people's technical knowledge may far exceed their social skills and awareness – they may post sensitive personal information about themselves, treat online 'friends' as real friends, be targets for 'grooming' or become victims of cyberbullying.

If children and young people disclose information or display behaviour or are exposed to information or behaviour on these sites that raises safeguarding or other concerns, appropriate authorities must be informed immediately. Failure to do so could expose vulnerable young people to risk of harm.

Staff members must also ensure that the web space they create on third party sites complies with the site owner's minimum age requirements (this is often set at 13 years). Staff members must also consider the ramifications and possibilities of children under the minimum age gaining access to the site.

Care must be taken to ensure that content is suitable for the target age group and contributors or 'friends' to the site are vetted.

## **7. Monitoring of this policy**

Any violation of this policy will be considered potential gross misconduct under the school's Disciplinary Policy (staff); under the Code of Conduct (governors) and under the Behaviour and Exclusion Policies (children).

All staff, children and governors are encouraged to report any suspicions of misuse to the Principal or a trusted adult. If the Principal receives a disclosure that an adult employed by St Matthew's is using social networking in an inappropriate way as detailed above, this should be recorded in line with the Child Protection Policy and/or Disciplinary Policy.

Children are strongly encouraged to report to a trusted adult any worries they have about cyberbullying or improper contact. The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with children and families where there are reports of cyberbullying/misuse of social media out of school hours.