

Social Media Policy

October 2025

EXISTING POLICY	
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EMMAUS CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

The Diocese of Salford provides Catholic Academy Trusts, schools, and colleges for the following reasons:

1. To assist in the mission of making Christ known to all people;
2. To assist parents and carers, who are the prime educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children;
3. To be of service to the local Church – the Diocese – the Parish and the Christian home;
4. To be of service to society.

Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust Vision:

To provide great Catholic education across Greater Manchester.

Journey with Emmaus CAT...



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1. Policy Statement

Our core purpose is to create a healthy Catholic organisation serving the pupils in our Catholic schools, communities, families, and parishes across Greater Manchester. We are aligned in our mission to work collegially to ensure that we have great schools, strong in faith, serving society. Schools where every pupil has an equal opportunity to thrive and receive the very best Catholic education and formation. Our guiding principles and this Social Media Policy exist to ensure that each Emmaus CAT school has a clear and compelling vision for all of its pupils, focused on creating an inclusive environment, tailored to the needs and abilities of each and every pupil. At Emmaus CAT we will succeed with our philosophy of aligned autonomy, the belief that talent is key and the sharing of curriculum knowledge and academic rigor.

2. Aim of Emmaus CAT Policies

The aim of this, and all Emmaus CAT policies is to support the seven major themes of Catholic Social Teaching, which include;

- The dignity of work and the rights of the worker;
- Solidarity with all people;
- A preferential option for the poor;
- Stewardship and care for creation;
- The call to community and participation;
- The sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person;
- Human rights and the responsibility to protect them;

as well as ensuring that national legislation and guidance are implemented across all our schools. Our policies should not be viewed in isolation, but along with our guiding principles, as integral to all aspects of school improvement. With our policies we aim to create an effective partnership with parents and carers, the prime educators of their children, to ensure that all children reach their potential whilst setting high expectations and aspirations, in a positive and supportive environment. All Emmaus CAT policies will clearly define and communicate the core principles which underpin our Catholic culture, mission and vision.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of school's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding
- Encourage the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Define the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to Emmaus CAT and its schools

Staff, students and parents/carers are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy.



This policy applies to the use of social media for both Emmaus CAT and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- Emmaus CAT IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and pupils
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of Emmaus CAT should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

4. Introduction

Definition of social media

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp.

Emmaus CAT recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and learners are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal and professional reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, parents, carers and children.

The policy applies to:

- All staff and all online communications which directly or indirectly, represents Emmaus CAT.
- Online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.

Emmaus CAT respects privacy and understands that staff and learners may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications which are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or Emmaus CAT or an individual school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with learners are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications. All communication with learners must take place exclusively through platforms officially recognised by the school or Trust. These platforms must be linked to school or CAT email accounts—for example, Office 365 accounts provided by the school or Trust, and social media accounts that are owned and managed by the school or CAT. Personal accounts or unapproved platforms must not be used for learner communication under any circumstances.



5. Accounts

Official school social media

Staff members who have not been authorised to manage or post to the account must not access or attempt to access these accounts.

Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)

The Emmaus CAT central team and individual schools can use these channels to post:

- Alerts about changes (e.g. changes to procedures, severe weather updates, staffing changes)
- Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- Advertisements for school events or activities
- Job vacancies or requests for volunteers
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers
- Achievements of pupils and staff
- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals
- Safeguarding, curriculum and attendance messages

The Emmaus CAT central team and individual schools will not post:

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent)
- Harmful or abusive comments
- Messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school
- Links to staff members' personal accounts

All posts must comply with the guidelines outlined in the school Child Protection Policy and adhere to the most recent version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Process of creating a school social media account

Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Leadership Team which covers the following points:-

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

All official school or Trust social media accounts must use clear, recognisable usernames that directly reflect the school's identity. Usernames must not be obscure, ambiguous, or misleading. They should follow a consistent format to ensure transparency and public trust. Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This should not be anyone that is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Moderation

Staff responsible for social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments we consider to be spam
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.

Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the CAT's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the school community.

School accounts must be monitored regularly. Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention are essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to monitor the Internet for public postings about an individual school and the CAT.

Those who moderate school social media accounts must have the correct safeguarding training relating to the risks associated with social media.

Following other social media users

The school:

- Will only 'like' Facebook pages with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind
- May follow other users if you follow us on X (formerly Twitter) – being followed by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected. The Child Protection Policy and school image policy should be followed before posting any images of children.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload learner pictures online other than via official school channels.
- Under no circumstances should staff be using personal devices to take, share or store media images that are of students.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Photos of pupils should reflect the vision and values of the school and trust and must comply with the school's uniform and behaviour policies.



Images of children should be taken on a school owned device such as an iPad or school phone.

Behaviour

Emmaus CAT requires all users of social media to uphold the standards of behaviour outlined in this policy and other relevant documents, including the Staff Behaviour Policy, Code of Conduct, and the Teachers' Standards.

Staff must ensure that all digital communications are professional, respectful, and consistent with the school's values. Social media must not be used to infringe upon the rights or privacy of others, make inappropriate or ill-considered comments, or pursue personal gain through school-affiliated accounts. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times, including after employment ends, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Users are expected to identify themselves clearly in any posts or accounts related to school activity. Anonymous contributions are discouraged and will be removed. If contacted by journalists regarding social media content, staff must follow the school's Media Policy and seek guidance from the Headteacher.

Unacceptable conduct—including defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, or harassing content, or breaches of data protection, confidentiality, or copyright—will be treated with the utmost seriousness. Such incidents must be reported promptly to a senior member of staff and may be escalated in line with the school's safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

The school will take appropriate action in response to breaches of this policy. Where conduct is deemed inappropriate, internal disciplinary procedures will apply. Where behaviour is considered unlawful, the matter will be referred to the police or other relevant external agencies, and action may be taken under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, or other applicable legislation.

Content shared on social media should be tailored to the intended audience while maintaining high professional standards. When composing posts, staff should aim to be:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Professional

All staff are expected to uphold their safeguarding responsibilities when using social media, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school's Child Protection Policy. Failure to meet the standards set out in this policy and related documents may result in disciplinary measures, including referral to law enforcement where appropriate.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of Social Media

School Leaders

- Facilitating training and guidance on the use of social media.
- Implementing the Social Media policy
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents



- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required
- Reviewing completed applications for Social Media accounts
- Approving social media accounts
- Emmaus leaders will ensure that the trust values are upheld within this policy
- Supporting the application of this policy with other relevant policies
- Managing the social media account

Administrator/Moderator

- Leading, alongside the Headteacher and DSL, the monitoring and contribution of content posted on the social media account.
- Creating the account following SLT approval
- Storing account details, including passwords securely
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Upholding the Social Media policy
- Attending specific social media training, in line with their role, alongside the school SLT, HT and DSL.

Staff

- Upholding the Social Media policy
- Ensuring that any intended posts are aligned with the guidance contained within this policy
- Should seek guidance from the DSL, Behaviour Lead and Headteacher, if unsure on the suitability of an intended post
- Knowing the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via school accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school

More information about managing accounts can be found at **Appendix A**.

7. Personal Use

Staff

- Personal communications are those made via a personal online account. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- Where excessive or inappropriate personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken
- Must follow the guidance set out in the school safeguarding policy.
- Must not bring the school or profession into disrepute
- Refer to the disciplinary policy and staff code of conduct if unsure



- Follow guidance to safely set up a new social media account.
- Utilise the audit tool for trainee teachers and ECTs

Learners

- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior learners of the school on any personal social media account. *(The school may wish to define a time period re prior learners)*
- The school's education programme should enable the learners to be safe and responsible users of social media.
- Learners are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy.
- Learners are not permitted to contact staff through social media accounts. If a pupil attempts to contact staff via social media platforms, this must be reported immediately to the DSL.

The school's Personal Development Curriculum must educate pupils about online safety in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements.

Parents/Carers

- If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
- The school has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.
- Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures.
- Parents/carers must read and sign to say that they will use social media platforms associated with the school appropriately. It must be clear that harassment and derogatory comments will not be tolerated. Parents will be encouraged to have open and honest dialogue with the school. Training should be made available to parents which teaches them about the safe use of social media.

8. Legal Considerations

Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing. Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Appendix A – Managing accounts

Managing your personal use of Social Media:

- “Nothing” on social media is truly private
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don’t use the school/CAT logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint
- Keep your personal information private
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online consider; Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post
- If you want to criticise, do it politely.
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem

Managing school social media accounts:

The Do’s

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views
- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to ‘share’ other peoples’ materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school’s reporting process
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible
- Ensure the account is set up securely and the account can be transferred to another approved staff member in the event of the account holder leaving the school.

The Don’ts

- Don’t make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute
- Don’t publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don’t breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Don’t link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content. Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts.
- Don’t post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Don’t use social media to air internal grievances

Appendix B - WhatsApp & equivalent communication platforms

The CAT's preferred communication tool is MS Office 365; however, we understand that colleagues may choose to use WhatsApp groups.

Staff Groups The vast majority of organisations will have at least one, often several WhatsApp groups with various colleagues. Although seemingly harmless, well-meaning activity can create privacy issues.

Messages sent within a WhatsApp group are encrypted and not monitored by typical filtering and monitoring systems. They are only private until someone in the group shares the information with people outside of the group. A WhatsApp group should therefore not be considered private.

Two distinct types of WhatsApp groups exist: professional and personal. It's crucial to distinguish between these categories to maintain confidentiality and separate work-related discussions from personal conversations.

Employees are expected to follow these guidelines when utilising WhatsApp groups for professional purposes:

- Staff should never knowingly exclude others from being part of a WhatsApp group and all team members should feel included.
- The group should never be used as a platform to air views/grievances regarding other staff, children or parents.
- The group should be used keeping in mind mutual respect and cultural sensitivity between all its members.
- Bullying is not to be tolerated and should be reported.
- An invitation link should be sent to those who you may wish to invite, rather than adding them to the group without their permission.
- Groups should not be used to share personal or confidential school-related information. Personal, identifiable information such as pupil or staff names and photographs should also never be shared. Using WhatsApp for this form of communication is a breach of the GDPR and the CAT's Data Protection Policy.
- Employees are advised to leave a WhatsApp group created for work-related matters upon departure from the organisation. Subsequently, both the group itself and all its messages should be erased.

Please note, that the CAT considers the following activity inappropriate:

- Abusive or personal comments about staff, pupils or parents.
- Bringing the school/CAT into disrepute.
- Making defamatory or libellous comments.
- Sending messages with abusive or personal comments about staff, pupils or parents.
- Using WhatsApp to discuss issues about individual children.
- Threatening behaviour, such as verbally intimidating others, or using bad language.
- Sharing confidential or personal information within WhatsApp messages.

Appendix C - Understanding Deepfakes and School Response

What Are Deepfakes?

Deepfakes are digitally manipulated media—usually videos, images, or audio recordings—created using artificial intelligence to make it appear that someone is saying or doing something they never actually did. These tools use machine learning techniques, especially deep neural networks, to swap faces, mimic voices, or alter expressions with startling realism.

While deepfake technology can be used creatively in entertainment or education, it also poses serious risks when used maliciously, including:

- Spreading misinformation or fake news
- Impersonating staff or students
- Creating inappropriate or harmful content
- Undermining trust and safety in the school community

How Schools Can Tackle Deepfake Content

To protect staff and learners, the Trust and its schools should take the following steps:

- Provide CPD sessions to help staff recognise deepfake content and understand its implications.
- Integrate deepfake awareness into the Personal Development (PD) curriculum, covering digital literacy, online safety, and ethical technology use.

Safeguarding & Reporting

- Ensure staff and pupils know how to report suspected deepfake content, whether it appears online or within school platforms.
- Treat deepfake incidents as potential safeguarding concerns. The DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) must be informed immediately.

External Support

In serious cases, liaise with law enforcement or online platforms to remove harmful content and protect affected individuals.