



# **Altrincham College**

## **ICT and Social Networking Policy**

<b>Policy Date:</b>	<b>February 2025</b>
<b>Approved by Governors:</b>	<b>February 2025</b>
<b>Date of next review:</b>	<b>February 2026</b>



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## **Background**

New technologies have become integral to the lives of children and young people in today's society, both within school and in their lives outside of school. The internet and other digital information and communications technologies are powerful tools, which open up new opportunities for everyone. These technologies can stimulate discussion, promote creativity and inspire awareness of context to promote effective learning. They also bring opportunities for staff to be more creative and productive in their work. All users should have an entitlement to safe internet access at all times.

### **What is Social Media?**

Facebook, X (formally Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, blogs, YouTube, Blue Sky, Wikipedia and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn are all examples of social media. The term covers anything on the internet where content is created and adapted by the people who use the site and which allows two-way conversations.

Schools are increasingly looking to social media to engage with their audiences. People expect to 'talk back' when organisations communicate with them and they expect that those agencies will in turn respond and do so in appropriate language. Social media enables that kind of interaction to happen in a more efficient manner than, for instance, arranging formal meetings.

Audiences are also becoming fragmented and diverse, the old ways of communicating (for example, by newsletter) are increasingly losing impact. Information needs to be provided in a variety of formats so each target audience can choose how to access it. Photographs can tell a thousand words and videos are very accessible for a wide audience.

## **Principles**

This policy applies to all staff employed at Altrincham College. In addition, the principles pertaining to the policy apply to employees, visitors and volunteers who also have a personal responsibility for their online behaviour and ensuring their use of social networking media takes place within appropriate boundaries and does not bring the individual, or Altrincham College, into disrepute.

A person's social media activities take place completely outside of work, as their personal activities should. However, what they say can have an influence on their ability to conduct their job responsibilities, their work colleagues' abilities to do their jobs, and school's interests and reputation.

This policy sets out the principles which employees of Altrincham College are expected to follow when using the Internet and gives interpretations for current forms of interactivity. The Internet is a fast-moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances, however the principles set out in this document should always be followed.

## **Benefits of using Social Media**

Used carefully social media can bring people together over common interests, and can be useful for consulting people, obtaining feedback and publishing information that other media may ignore. However, it is important to treat social media with respect.

## **Aims**

- Employees are expected to behave appropriately when on the Internet, and in ways that are consistent with Altrincham College's values and policies.
- This policy applies to blogs, to micro blogs like Twitter and to other personal web spaces.
- Altrincham College's HR Service aims to regularly review all of its recommended policies and procedures to ensure there are no negative equality impacts on staff based on their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Consultation with our customers is an important part of how we achieve this. If you feel, upon reading this policy, that there may be a negative equality impact within Altrincham College, or if you need to access this policy in a different format, please contact the Headteacher.

Always remember any information or comments published on any site (internal or external):

- may stay public for a long time
- can be republished on other websites
- can be copied, used and amended by others
- could be changed to misrepresent what was said
- can attract comments and interest from other people/the media

Always be aware of the standards, conditions of use and guidelines for posting laid down by the owner of any site or network and ensure compliance with them.

## **Practice**

### **Use of Altrincham College IT equipment**

1. All employees of Altrincham College who use the school's computers and laptops should have read, understood and signed Altrincham College's Acceptable Use Agreement (see Appendix 4).
2. Employees must protect the security of Altrincham College's IT network and information at all times, as well as be mindful of GDPR regulations.
3. Employees must not install any application without prior permission.
4. Employees should not open any emails from people they do not know and trust, particularly if they have attachments. Such emails should not be forwarded within Altrincham College unless the employee knows that they are virus free.
5. Employees should use the "Report Phishing" button to submit any and all suspicious emails for analysis.
6. Remember online activity can be traced back to Altrincham College and the user. Do not engage in any online activity that breaches Altrincham College's IT Policies and Procedures.

7. Do not reveal any details of Altrincham College's IT systems and services, including what software is used for email, internet access and virus protection, to minimise the risk of malicious attack.
8. If employees use secure systems, such as GovConnect email or to process financial transactions, they should never log onto social networking sites while connected to those systems. If they have used a social networking site, they should restart their computer before logging onto the secure system to clear any information in the computer's memory cache.

### **Using Social Media**

This policy applies to all employees of Altrincham College participating in any online social media (whether listed here or not), whether privately or as part of their role with Altrincham College and sets out the standards of behaviour the school expects of all of its employees.

The intention of this policy is not to stop employees of Altrincham College from conducting legitimate activities on the Internet, but serves to identify those areas in which issues/conflicts can arise.

To this end, employees:

- should not engage in activities on the Internet which might bring Altrincham College into disrepute;
- should not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to Altrincham College's reputation;
- should not use the Internet in any way to send or post abusive, offensive, hateful or defamatory messages;
- should act in a transparent manner when altering online sources of information;
- should not post information that could constitute a breach of copyright or GDPR legislation;
- should only use their work email addresses for official Altrincham College business;
- should obtain approval from their line manager in advance for any online activities associated with work for Altrincham College;
- should not use Altrincham College's IT systems for party political purposes or for the promotion of personal interests; and
- should take care not to facilitate interaction on these websites that could cause damage to working relationships between employees of Altrincham College, the Achieve and Learn Trust, and the wider community.

### **Personal use of the internet at work**

Altrincham College has developed IT systems to assist employees with their work. We do, however, recognise that there are times when employees may want to use the IT systems for non-work related purposes, and in recognising this need Altrincham College permits employees to use the IT systems for responsible personal use.

If, within the above parameters, employees choose to use the school's IT systems to access social networking sites and/or other online forums, blogs etc they must do so in a responsible and appropriate manner. There is no unconditional right for an employee to access such sites and Altrincham College reserves the right to restrict access to the internet (or certain websites) for particular employees if there is cause for concern over their use.

Employees should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee is part of a "network". Employees should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private.

### **Online contact with children and young people**

From a safeguarding perspective, there is a widely held concern that social networking may increase the potential for sexual exploitation of children and young people, or provide opportunities for "grooming" to take place. It is also possible that those who work with children and young people may be at risk from false allegations being made against them. It is therefore vital that employees use social media responsibly and, with these concerns in mind, take appropriate steps to protect themselves from allegations, maintain appropriate boundaries, exercise appropriate judgement and avoid any contact that may lead to their intent and motivations for any such dialogue to be questioned.

Employees in a school have a duty to safeguard children and young people, and it is therefore inappropriate for employees to communicate via social networking sites with pupils.

Personal devices belonging to employees, such as mobile phones or laptops, should never be used by any students or children within the care and trust of Altrincham College.

Specifically, in respect of social media, employees of Altrincham College should not share personal information with children/young people and must not become 'connected' with any child or young person to whom they have acted in a position of trust. It would be recommended that the same approach is taken with parents. Extreme care must be exercised when using social media sites to establish the identity of "followers" and when using online chat rooms, as it may be difficult to ascertain to whom you may be chatting. Should a young person attempt to contact an employee of Altrincham College via social networking, this should be reported to their line manager immediately.

Any inappropriate conduct in relation to online communication with children and young people will be taken extremely seriously and investigated in line with safeguarding and/ or Altrincham College's Disciplinary Procedures.

### **Security and online identity theft**

Employees are reminded to be IT security conscious and take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites and online forums allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which may form the basis of security questions and passwords.

Employees must take care when posting such information, in order that it does not allow a breach of IT security within Altrincham College, or raise the possibility of the employee's online identity being stolen.

Employees are advised to think carefully about who they give out personal details to, like home addresses, phone numbers, financial information or full date of birth, to prevent online identity theft.

In addition, employees should:

- ensure no information is made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to Altrincham College and/or any confidential information belonging to the school, its employees, students and/or members of the public; and
- refrain from recording any confidential information regarding Altrincham College, employees, students and/or members of the public on any social networking website.

Employees should note that if they are found to have posted confidential material regarding Altrincham College in any format online, they are required to assist in any way to ensure such material is removed without delay. Failure to assist in removing such material in a timely fashion could lead to disciplinary action being taken against that employee.

### **Compliance with the law**

Employees are required to stay within the law at all times when communicating online. They need to be aware that fair use, financial disclosure, libel, defamation, copyright and GDPR apply on-line, just as they do in any other form of the media.

Libel: If a person publishes an untrue statement about another person which is damaging to their reputation, the latter may take a libel action against them. This will also apply if that person allows someone else to publish something libellous on their website if they know about it and don't take prompt action to remove it. A successful libel claim against a person will result in an award of damages against them.

Copyright: Placing images or text from a copyrighted source (e.g. extracts from publications, photos etc.) which without permission is likely to breach copyright laws. Employees should avoid publishing anything they are unsure about, or seek permission in advance. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages against that person.

GDPR: All employees should have an up-to-date certificate of GDPR compliance training.

Obscene material: It goes without saying that employees should avoid publishing anything that people would consider obscene. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence.

In addition, a person who posts grossly offensive or indecent material may be found to be guilty of an offence under the Communications Act 2003.

### **Privacy and decency when online**

Employees must at all times remember their responsibilities to Altrincham College, its parents/carers, students and colleagues, and never give out details of or divulge dealings with colleagues, parents or students without their explicit consent. Employees should check with their manager if they are not sure what is and is not confidential.

Employees must not use slurs, personal insults, obscenity or behave in ways that would not be acceptable in the workplace which could bring Altrincham College into disrepute, break the law and/or leave the employee open to prosecution and/or disciplinary action.

Employees are encouraged to be themselves, but to be considerate about other people's views, especially around contentious topics.

Employees are encouraged to be credible, accurate, fair and thorough and ensure they are doing the right thing.

Employees are encouraged to share useful information that they gain from using social media with others, where appropriate.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Online bullying and harassment**

Social media does have potential dangers and drawbacks. In society in general, adults, as well as children, have found themselves the target of online abuse, bullying and harassment (cyber-bullying), including name calling/ malicious comments, exclusion, intimidation, spreading of rumours, or bombarding with unwanted messages.

Bullying or harassment of any kind, including using online channels is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Cyber-bullying can have a significant impact upon the health, wellbeing and confidence of those targeted, and because technology is accessible 24/7, it can impact upon an individual's private life.

Support is available for any employees who feel they have been bullied or harassed via social networking sites through their Trade Union representative and HR, as well as in school. In the first instance, staff should refer any cyber bullying concerns to the Headteacher, who will be able to provide information and guidance.

All complaints regarding bullying or harassment will be treated extremely seriously.

### **Inappropriate Posting**

If an employee is found to have posted inappropriate material in any format on the internet, they will be required to assist in any way to ensure such material is removed without delay.

Staff should remember that colleagues and parents/carers may see their online information.

Whether they identify themselves as an employee of Altrincham College or not, staff are encouraged to think carefully about how much personal information they want to make public and make sure their profile and the information they post reflects how they want themselves to be seen, both personally and professionally.

### **Communicating online on behalf of Altrincham College**

Employees should not comment on behalf of Altrincham College (disclose information, publish information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of Altrincham College), unless they are specifically authorised to do so by the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors. If not specifically authorised to do so, they should speak to the Headteacher before taking any action. Remember employees are personally liable for what they publish online.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Monitoring of online access at work**

Employees should be aware that, in order to protect its legitimate business interests and its IT systems, Altrincham College reserves the right to monitor internet use in accordance with the provisions set down in the school's IT Policies and Procedures.

**Disciplinary Implications**

If Altrincham College finds that an employees' internet use is not in accordance with this policy, access to the internet through school's IT systems may be withdrawn.

Employees must be aware that if they do not adhere to this policy, disciplinary action may be taken in line with Altrincham College's Disciplinary Procedure. If deemed sufficiently serious, this could result in dismissal.

## **Appendix 1**

### **GUIDELINES FOR BLOGGING/BLOGGERS**

1. If an employee already has or plans to have a personal blog or website which shows in any way in that they work at Altrincham College, they must tell their Headteacher. They should include a simple and visible disclaimer such as “The views expressed here are my own and don’t necessarily represent the views of Altrincham College (part of the Achieve and Learn Trust)”.
2. If an employee thinks that something on their blog or website may cause a conflict of interest, or they have concerns about impartiality or confidentiality, they should speak to their Headteacher. If in any doubt, employees should not talk about what they do at work.
3. If someone offers to pay an employee for blogging, this could cause a conflict of interest and the Headteacher must be consulted.

## **Appendix 2**

### **GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL NETWORKS, DISCUSSION FORUMS, WIKIS ETC**

1. Employees should use their best judgment, remembering that there are always consequences to what is published.
2. Employees should not use their Altrincham College email account or work number in on-line discussions unless they have been authorised to speak for the school/Trust.
3. It is not a good idea to invite parents/carers to become friends on social networking sites. There may be a conflict of interest, the blurring of boundaries, security and privacy issues.
4. Make sure any wiki entries, articles or comments are neutral in tone, factual and truthful.
5. Never post rude or offensive comments on any online encyclopaedias.
6. Before editing an online encyclopaedia entry about Altrincham College, or any entry which might cause a conflict of interest, or adding links, check the house rules of the site. Permission may be required from the relevant wiki editor and the Headteacher.
7. It is important to respond to legitimate criticism with facts, but speak to the Headteacher for advice before responding; a poor response could make matters worse. Never remove criticism of Altrincham College or derogatory or offensive comments. Report them to the Headteacher for them to take action.

## **Appendix 3**

### **GUIDELINES FOR 'MEDIA' SHARING (VIDEO, PHOTOS, PRESENTATIONS)**

1. Make sure all video and media are safe to share, do not contain any confidential or derogatory information, and are not protected by any copyright, or intellectual property rights.
2. If the content is official Altrincham College content then it must be labelled and tagged as such.
3. Individual work must be labelled and tagged as such. Use a disclaimer where appropriate: "This is my personal work and does not necessarily reflect the views of Altrincham College (part of the Achieve and Learn Trust)".

## **Appendix 4**

### **Acceptable Use Agreement: Staff, Governors and Visitors**

This Acceptable Use Policy is intended to ensure:

- That staff, governors and visitors will be responsible users and stay safe while using the internet and other communications technologies for educational, personal and recreational use.
- That Altrincham College ICT systems and users are protected from accidental or deliberate misuse that could put the security of the systems and users at risk.
- That staff are protected from potential risk in their use of ICT in their everyday work.

Altrincham College will try to ensure that staff, governors and visitors will have good access to ICT to enhance their work, to enhance learning opportunities for students' learning and will, in return, expect staff and volunteers to agree to be responsible users.

### **Acceptable Use Policy Agreement**

I understand that I must use Altrincham College ICT systems in a responsible way, to ensure that there is no risk to my safety or to the safety and security of the ICT systems and other users. I recognise the value of the use of ICT for enhancing learning and will ensure that students/pupils receive opportunities to gain from the use of ICT. I will, where possible, educate the young people in my care in the safe use of ICT and embed e-safety in my work with young people.

For my professional and personal safety:

- I understand and consent that Altrincham College may monitor and record my use of Altrincham College ICT systems for the purpose of ensuring that rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. The Altrincham College email system will only be monitored for a particular user by direct request to the ICT Network Manager from the Headteacher or Senior Leadership Team member.
- I understand that the Altrincham College ICT systems are primarily intended for educational use and I will only use the Altrincham College's email / Internet / Intranet / Remote Access etc. and any related technologies for professional purposes.
- I will not install any hardware or software onto the Altrincham College system (including school laptops) without permission of the ICT Network Manager.
- I understand that the rules set out in this agreement also apply to use of Altrincham College ICT systems (e.g. laptops, email, remote access etc.) outside of Altrincham College.
- I will not disclose my username or password to anyone else, nor will I try to use any other person's username and password.
- I will immediately report any illegal, inappropriate or harmful material or incident I become aware of, to the Headteacher/designated SLT member.
- I will not access, copy, remove or otherwise alter any other user's files, without their express permission.

- I will communicate with others in a professional manner. I will not use aggressive or inappropriate language and I appreciate that others may have different opinions.
- I will ensure that if I take and/or publish images of others I will do so with their permission and in accordance with GDPR. I will not use my personal equipment to record these images, unless I have permission to do so. (Staff may obtain permission from the Headteacher/Designated member of SLT to use specific equipment on each occasion where the equipment will be used). Where these images are published (e.g. on the Altrincham College website / social media) it will not be possible to identify by name, or other personal information, those who are featured. There may be occasions where this rule cannot be applied, e.g. in newspaper articles, Altrincham College newsletters and bulletins. In the event of this, prior approval should be obtained from the Headteacher.
- I will only communicate with students and parents/carers using official Altrincham College systems. Any such communication will be professional in tone and manner. I will not communicate confidential information by e-mail.
- I will not engage in any on-line activity that may compromise my professional responsibilities.
- I will abide by the latest GDPR regulations at all times.

All staff and Governors of Altrincham College have the responsibility to provide safe and secure access to technologies and ensure the smooth running of the school:

- If I use my personal hand held / external devices (iPad / laptop / USB devices /Smartphone etc) that connect to the Altrincham College network, I will follow the rules set out in this agreement, in the same way as if I was using Altrincham College equipment. I will also follow any additional rules set by Altrincham College about such use. I will ensure that any such devices are protected by up to date anti-virus software and are free from viruses.
- Altrincham College will provide staff with an email account. This account is to be used for Altrincham College business only.
- Staff must not use their Altrincham College email account for personal banking, online shopping etc. Access to personal email accounts (i.e. hotmail, gmail etc) using the Altrincham College system is authorised, but staff are strongly advised that they must not use their personal email account to contact parents, carers, students etc.
- I will not open any attachments to emails unless the source is known and trusted, due to the risk of the attachment containing viruses or other harmful programmes.
- Data held on any external device e.g. USB memory pen should be kept to a minimum and NEVER contain any personal data of any member of the academy community.
- I will not try to upload, download or access any materials which are illegal (child sexual abuse images, criminally racist material, adult pornography covered by the Obscene Publications Act) or inappropriate or may cause harm or distress to others. I will not try to use any programmes or software that might allow me to bypass the filtering/security systems in place to prevent access to such materials.
- I will not install or attempt to install programmes of any type on a machine, or store programmes on a computer, nor will I try to alter computer settings, unless this is allowed in Altrincham College's policies.
- I will not disable or cause any damage to Altrincham College equipment, or the equipment belonging to others.

- I will only transport, hold, disclose or share personal information about myself or others, when it abides by GDPR regulations and/or I am required to by law.
- I will immediately report any damage or faults involving equipment or software, however this may have happened.

When using the internet in my professional capacity or for Altrincham College sanctioned personal use:

- I will ensure that I have permission to use the original work of others in my own work
- Where work is protected by copyright, I will not download or distribute copies (including music and videos).
- I understand that I am responsible for my actions in and out of Altrincham College relating to this policy.
- I understand that this Acceptable Use Policy applies not only to my work and use of Altrincham College ICT equipment in school, but also applies to my use of Altrincham College ICT systems and equipment out of school.
- I understand that this Acceptable Use Policy applies to my use of personal equipment in Altrincham College or in situations related to my employment by school.
- I understand that if I fail to comply with this Acceptable Use Policy Agreement, I could be subject to disciplinary action. This could include a warning, a suspension, referral to Governors and/or the Local Authority and in the event of illegal activities the involvement of the police.

I have read and understand the information contained above and understand that this information has been formulated as an overview and should be read in conjunction with the full ICT and social media policy contained on the following pages and that I agree to use the Altrincham College ICT systems (both in and out of Altrincham College) and my own devices (in Altrincham College and when carrying out communications related to the Altrincham College) within these guidelines

Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_