Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

Social media is a powerful tool to connect with the wider world. For trainees it offers opportunities to grow depth of learning and engage in unique opportunities, as well as develop employability opportunities. This policy is designed to support trainees to use social media effectively, safely, and responsibly whilst avoiding compromising their own personal safety, or the security and reputation of Mid Essex Teacher Training and our Partnership Schools.

Published guidance for the safe use of social networking sites most commonly relates to young people. Whilst most of this also holds true for adults, there are some additional points that should be considered by adults working with young people.

This policy aims to:

i. encourage the responsible use of social media
ii. encourage use for positive purposes
iii. outline the responsibilities for individuals using social media
iv. highlight the potential risks of using social media for personal use
v. provide clear guidelines on how to report and protect the reputation of Mid Essex ITT, its trainees, staff, and partner schools.

2. Scope

Social media describes online communities and networks that provide a base for interactions and the exchange of user-generated content. They allow people to share information, opinions, knowledge, and interests.

Examples of popular social media sites include but are not limited to:

i. LinkedIn
ii. X
iii. Facebook
iv. Instagram
v. TikTok
vi. Snapchat
vii. YouTube
viii. Whatsapp

This policy covers all social media channels and is not limited to those set out above. It also covers new/emerging channels that might develop and applies to all trainees working within the Mid Essex ITT. All trainees must meet part 2 of the Teachers' Standards (Personal and Professional Conduct) in order to be recommended for QTS. A breach of the guidelines, below, may mean this standard is not achieved and the trainee maybe unable to achieve QTS.

3. Guidelines

Trainees should adhere to the following points of good practice when using social media:

a. Be aware that third parties, including the media, employers and the police can access profiles and view personal information including pictures, videos, comments, and posts. Inappropriate material found by third parties affects the perception of you as an individual, plus the perception of Mid Essex ITT and partnership schools, and can have a negative impact on your future career prospects.
b. Consider the impact of what you post: things you post on social media have a long-life span and they may be shared on channels that you do not have control of.
c. Separate the personal from professional and decide from the start how you will use your social media accounts and the sort of information they will contain. Equally, trainees should use their school email

addresses for school and Mid Essex ITT business, and their personal email address for their private correspondence.

d. As a teacher, you are entitled to a social life just like anyone else, but it should be noted that, within your school community, you will always be a teacher linked to the school.
e. Respect your privacy and that of other by not including personal information about yourself, or others, including students, Mid Essex ITT staff and those within Partner Schools.
f. Make sure you understand the privacy settings and can restrict access to information you consider personal.
g. Consider private profiles and ensure you review your security settings regularly.
h. Trainees may wish to have two factor authentication on their social media accounts to provide an extra level of security.
i. Think about your profile picture and remember that sites like Facebook will display your profile picture even when your information is set to private. Even if your account is set to private, some platforms may still publish photos for public viewing, so it is important that you ensure that any posted photos are set to 'friends only.'
j. Be familiar with professional practice and confidentiality rules. Do not discuss your school, colleagues, parents, or students.
k. Before publishing anything that does not belong to you (such as photos, graphics, video, graphics, text), ensure that you have sought the permission of the owner. Infringement could lead to legal action.
l. If you're going to host regular live videos i.e. Instagram Live, please ensure you screen any guests beforehand.
m. Many sites now encourage you to name (tag) people that appear in uploaded photographs. These tags can be indexed, and the original photographs displayed in search results. Even though you don't post pictures you may find that your friends do.
n. Talk to your friends and contacts and keep your information private. Never post inappropriate or potentially embarrassing comments, pictures, or video on an open site and be careful of what pages you follow.
o. Trainees should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from any current student (regardless of age) or ex-students under the age of 18, or parents/carers on their social media accounts such as Facebook. This excludes friendship groups already in place.
p. Platforms such as WhatsApp are also social media, so please behave safely, professionally and responsibly when messaging.
q. Do not use the Mid Essex ITT logo or associated School or University logos on any social media unless expressly permitted to do so. You should request permission from the relevant source.
r. Please note that an offensive/negative comment on social media not only affects the image and reputation of the individuals involved, including Mid Essex ITT and Partner schools, but also can have a negative impact on other trainees. Trainees should carefully consider the impact of what is posted and its potential impact on individuals, groups and schools.
s. Trainees should always remember that information published to their social networking sites may be read by the Headteacher, other staff, parents, or students.
t. If you are looking to engage with the school community online, then consider setting up a school account that can be open and managed by several members of staff.

1. How to report any concerns

If you see or experience behaviour on Mid Essex ITT related social media channels that:

i. uses violent, indecent, aggressive, threatening, or offensive behaviour or language
ii. incites hatred
iii. contains obscene or offensive language and/or imagery
iv. bullying or intimidating and/or harassing behaviour towards others or that you think might be in breach of these guidelines,

v. and the policies set out above,

you should contact the Mid Essex ITT Director in the first instance, and as soon as is practicably possible.