Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust

Policy Title:	**School Social Media Policy (incl. all Digital Media)**
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Approved by:	**Trust Board**
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Applies to:	**All school & Trust settings**

Change log:

Version	Author	Date	Approved by	Change
1	R Dawson	May 2025	Trust Board	Original

BBCET School Social Media Policy (incl. all Digital Media)

This policy applies to all schools within the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust (BBCET) who use social media and online communication tools (this includes use of school websites and blogposts).

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1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that school-level social media and online communication content remains faithful to our Catholic values and ethos of our Trust and schools. Schools are encouraged to use social media as a means to positively raise their profile, celebrate their uniqueness, highlight activities & successes, foster positive parental engagement, and connect with their local communities.

2. Content Guidelines and Best Practices

Social media and other online communication content should celebrate the school community and support engagement with parents, students, staff, and the wider public. Schools are encouraged to showcase academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and faith-based events that reflect their Catholic identity. When using social media sites on behalf of the school, staff members must always act in the best interests of the children, parents, carers, and the school. We require those who are authorised to manage a school's social media channels to observe and adhere to the following minimum standards:

- Content should adhere to high standards of accuracy and must not be misleading. Errors must therefore be corrected as soon as possible.
- Content must be professional.
- Content must comply with all relevant laws and regulations (including GDPR) and the rules of the relevant social media platform.
- Consent should align with the Diocesan Protocols on Public Affairs and The Media.
- Content should not refer to controversial topics, including political issues or divisive religious commentary.
- Content should not include the personal opinions of the person posting the content on behalf of the school, nor any material that could be perceived as offensive or disrespectful.
- Posts must be respectful, relevant, and in line with BBCET's values.
- Content must not be harmful to the school's or to BBCET's reputation or work.
- Content must not contain any confidential or internal matters not intended for public consumption.
- Content including reference to commercial organisations should be considered carefully before tagging accounts/posting.
- Content must not directly promote fundraising for charities or requests financial donations to them.

Schools should typically not "like" or "reshare" content from third parties unless doing so directly furthers the objectives for which schools can use social media as set out earlier in this policy.

Schools must not engage with children or vulnerable people online.

Each school is responsible for actively engaging with BBCET's Social Media Lead and Barking Dog Media to showcase school activities on BBCET's social media accounts and coordinate the sharing of relevant content, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations. Schools must ensure that permissions for photographs shared with the central BBCET team are obtained, recorded, and in place before submission.

3. Staff Interaction with a School's Social Media Posts

Any staff or volunteer who engages with a school's social media channel or promotes a school on social media is expected to observe and adhere to the following minimum standards:

- Engagement must be professional and respectful.
- Content must be accurate and not misleading. Errors must therefore be corrected as soon as possible.
- Content must not be harmful to a school's or to BBCET's reputation or work.
- Content must be clear that it is published by the relevant member of staff or volunteer *in their personal capacity* and that the relevant member of staff or volunteer does not speak on behalf of the school.
- Where the relevant staff member or volunteer holds a leadership role at the school, they must:
    - remain mindful of the potential for the lines to be blurred between their content in their personal and professional capacities and their role at the school;
    - keep the best interests of the school and BBCET in mind;
    - be aware that their views may be perceived as the views of the school; and
    - avoid posting content which might be construed as conflicting with the policy position of the school.
- Content must comply with all relevant laws and regulations and the rules of any relevant social media platform.
- All staff should always refer to the Code of Conduct in their professional conduct, including when engaging with a school's social media.

4. Privacy and Consent

Schools must prioritise the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals featured in social media and online content. Each school is responsible for obtaining and recording explicit, written, and signed consent from individuals before their personal data, images, or videos are used on BBCET social media accounts (example consent forms can be found in the annex section of this policy).

Consent must be obtained from individuals before posting images, videos, or other personal information (please see annexes for consent form templates). For pupils under the age of 13, written parental consent is required, while students aged 13 or older can provide their own consent, following BBCET's guidelines. Schools should keep records of consent forms and establish a process for reviewing consent regularly to ensure compliance. Where consent is retrospectively withdrawn, schools should take all reasonable measures to remove historical posts (e.g. photos on Facebook).

5. Oversight and Controls

Whilst we want schools to use social media for the positive objectives set out earlier in this policy, we recognise that there are risks in being online. To ensure the reputation of our schools is protected and to uphold our high standards and values, the only individuals permitted to publish and manage a school's social media accounts are those authorised by the Headteacher. Staff should only use social media sites approved by the Headteacher and used as defined by the Headteacher.

Passwords for access to a school's social media accounts must be secured and not shared with any third party at any time. Where a person resigns from an authorised role, the passwords must be immediately changed and held by the newly authorised person. No other person is

authorised to access a school's social media accounts without the permission of the Headteacher.

If anyone gains unauthorised access to a school's social media accounts, immediate action must be taken by the Headteacher to restrict such access and to address any unauthorised actions taken as soon as they become aware of the issue.

A school's social media accounts may only be used for the purposes set out in the "purpose and objectives" section earlier.

If any post is planned and there is doubt as to whether it might be controversial, high profile or high risk, it must be referred to the Headteacher to seek guidance from the CEO as required for prior approval before it is published.

6. Crisis Management and Sensitive Situations

If published content becomes viral or inadvertently creates a controversy or a crisis, it shall be immediately referred to the BBCET Executive Team who will determine the appropriate course of action which may include referring the matter to BBCET's designated press office to deal with, further engagement, additional content, issuing a corrective statement, the deletion or removal of content, the cancellation of scheduled content or the reporting of a user to the relevant social media platform. The BBCET Executive Team shall balance the risks arising from reacting or not reacting to the issue before deciding the best course of action.

Should schools, or their staff or volunteers (in that capacity) become subjected to abuse online in their social media role, the matter shall be referred to the Headteacher and appropriate support shall be provided to the individual to ensure their safety, health and wellbeing.

The Headteacher will also consider if the matter needs to be referred to any government agency including the ICO, the police or other relevant body.

7. Complaints

Any such complaint shall in any event be handled in accordance with the BBCET Complaints Policy, and not conduct this online.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Headteacher of each school is responsible for embedding effective social media management across all platforms used.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for ensuring their own compliance with the requirements of this policy.

Schools should regularly monitor their social media and other online activity, including comments on posts, to maintain a positive online presence. Monitoring comments is essential to ensure they remain respectful, appropriate, and free from harmful or offensive language, and comply with the terms of this policy. In all cases, inappropriate comments should be removed and reported to the Headteacher, in line with each platform's guidelines, to protect the school community and uphold BBCET's values.

Periodic evaluation of content engagement and effectiveness can help schools refine their

strategies and ensure that their online presence remains relevant and impactful. Schools should maintain open communication with the BBCET Marketing & Communications Lead, who is available to provide support and guidance in aligning school-level social media efforts with Trust-wide objectives.

9. Breach of Policy

A breach of this policy, including inappropriate behaviour online that a school or BBCET becomes aware of that may impact on the school or BBCET, by:

- A member of staff, should be dealt with by the school under its disciplinary policy in force from time to time, and may therefore result in disciplinary action being taken against that member of staff.
- A volunteer, should be dealt with by the school under any volunteer policy in force from time to time and may result in that volunteer no longer volunteering for the relevant school.

Annexes

Annex A: Consent form for under 13s:

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
c/o Sacred Heart Catholic High School, Fenham Hall Drive
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 9YH

GDPR / Data Protection
Consent Form for Pupils

Please place a tick in your desired option (Yes or No)	Yes	No
A) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) within the school and BBCET events/offices (such as on displays, notice boards, electronic screens).		
B) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use within school and BBCET publications (such as newsletters & prospectus).		
C) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use on the school and BBCET's website.		
D) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use on school and BBCET's social media.		
E) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use by a third party connected to the school and BBCET.		

Pupil Name	
Class	
Parent or Carer Signature:	
Date:	

You can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the school and requesting a new consent form. If you would like any further information regarding the above, please contact the school.

Annex B: Consent form for over 13s:

Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust
c/o Sacred Heart Catholic High School, Fenham Hall Drive
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 9YH

GDPR / Data Protection
Consent Form for Students

Please place a tick in your desired option (Yes or No)	**Yes**	**No**
A) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) within the school and BBCET events/offices (such as on displays, notice boards, electronic screens).		
B) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use within school and BBCET publications (such as newsletters & prospectus).		
C) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use on the school and BBCET's website.		
D) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use on school and BBCET's social media.		
E) Allow use of photographs/videos/other personal data (e.g. name) for use by a third party connected to the school and BBCET.		

Student Name	
Form Class	
Date:	

You can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the school and requesting a new consent form. If you would like any further information regarding the above, please contact the school.