



## **POLICY FOR USING & PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

**This Policy was adopted by:**

**The Directors of Ventrus Multi Academy Trust**

**on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

**Signed by Hugh Whittaker, Chair of Directors**

This policy is subject to copyright and must not be published on any school/academy website that can be accessed by the public.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**Social media** is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites, content sharing websites and many other similar online channels.

This policy sets out principles and highlights the expectations for Ventrus employees, Governors and Directors relating to using social media.

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES & EXPECTATIONS**

### **2.1 Adhere to the Ventrus Employee Code of Conduct & other related policies.**

All Ventrus employees, Governors and Directors, are subject to this Code which sets out the minimum standards that apply. In addition, other policies, including those listed below; govern employee behaviour with respect to the disclosure of information online, including personal activities.

### **2.2 An employee is responsible for their own actions.**

Anything an employee, Governor or Director posts online can potentially affect the reputation of VENTRUS and is ultimately the responsibility of the employee, Governor or Director. VENTRUS encourages business use of VENTRUS website and the wider internet to help VENTRUS improve its efficiency, effectiveness and management of information but employees must do so properly, exercising sound judgement and common sense.

### **2.3 Be aware that business and personal lives do overlap.**

Online, an employee, Governor or Director's personal and business lives are likely to overlap. Whilst VENTRUS respects the free speech rights of its employees, it is important to remember that information/comments posted online originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on and might be viewed by customers, colleagues and/or management.

Participation in public forums must be professional, must not adversely affect VENTRUS reputation, customer relations or public image and must not bring VENTRUS into disrepute. This duty extends to an employee's off-duty time.

When an employee, Governor or Director participates in a public forum as part of their job they should specify their job title/role.

When an employee, Governor or Director participates in a public forum as a private individual they must make that clear and only use their private e-mail address.

## **2.4 Consider carefully anything that you say.**

Employees, Governors and Directors are personally responsible for their words and actions. An Employee, Governor or Director must ensure that any information posted is not confidential and gives a balanced view. An employee, Governor or Director must not make any derogatory, untrue or discriminating comments about VENTRUS, its employees, Governors, Directors or customers, or any comments that are likely to bring VENTRUS into disrepute. Employees, Governors and Directors should also not canvass members of the public or interest groups via the internet or any other social media.

Be aware that whilst there may be no intention to be detrimental to VENTRUS, the end result could be that it is damaging VENTRUS's reputation.

Confidential information, including information which is available to an employee due to the nature of their job, but is not in the public domain, should not be disclosed unless specific permission has been granted to do so.

**If there is any doubt, do not post it.**

## **2.5 Do not respond to negative comments posted online.**

If negative or disparaging comments about VENTRUS are posted online or third parties try to spark negative conversations, a VENTRUS employee, Governor or Director must not respond and should bring this to the attention of their manager.

## **2.6 Know that the Internet is permanent.**

As soon as information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if it is removed or deleted later or attempts are made to make it anonymous. Information can be disseminated very quickly via social media and is virtually impossible to retract once it has been published; even if has been online for only a short time, it may well have been picked up and cached by computers around the world.

## **3.0 Standards of behaviour**

VENTRUS is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way it does business. However, employees, Governors and Directors must use all forms of social media with extreme care, together with sound judgement and common sense.

Failure to adhere to this policy and those policies listed at paragraph 1 may result in formal action within the Disciplinary Policy (employees only).

## **4.0 Further Advice**

Further information can be obtained by contacting VENTRUS HR Team on 01392 256020.



