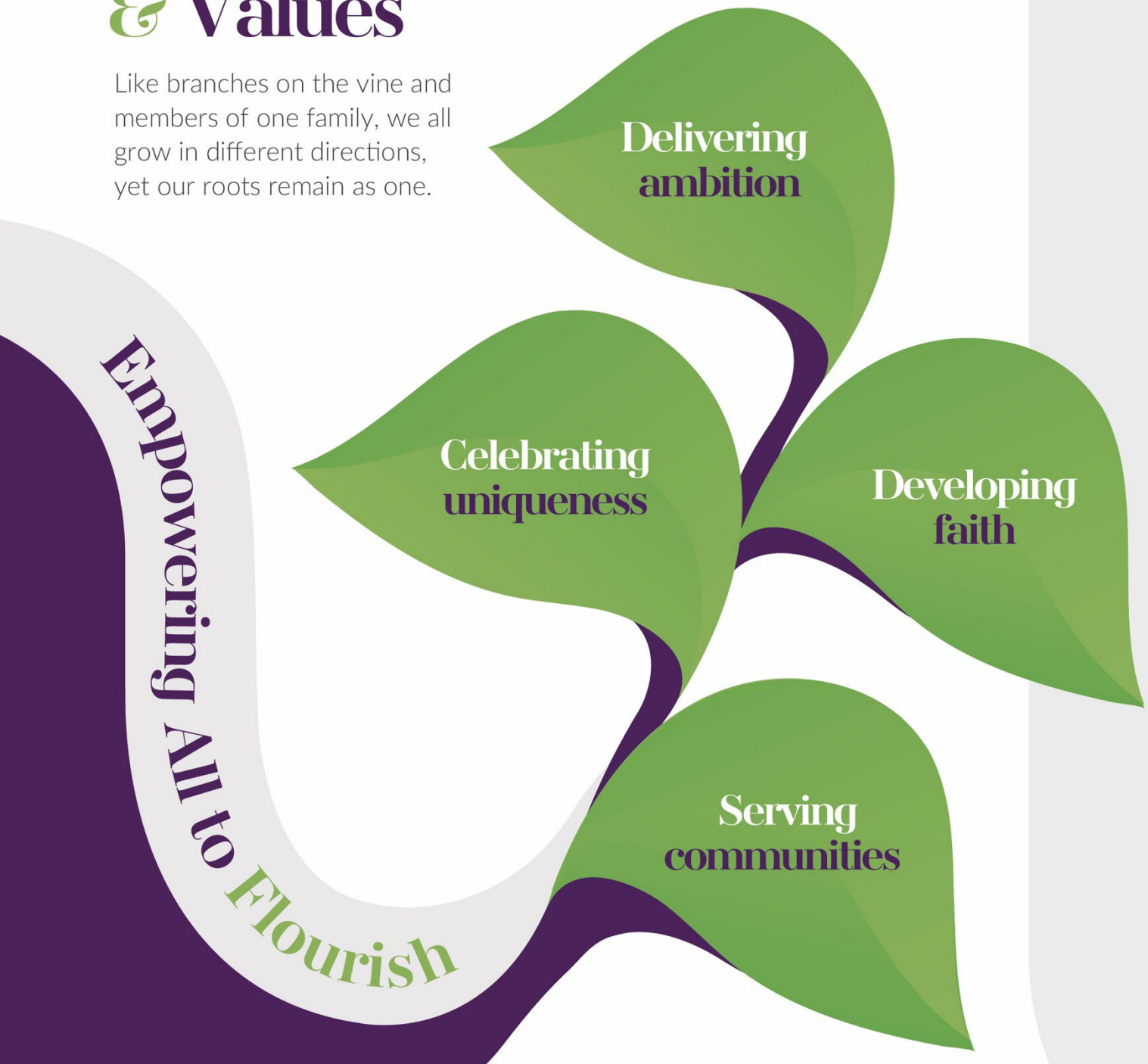
Vine

Empowering All to Flourish

Social Media Policy

Vision & Values

Like branches on the vine and members of one family, we all grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one.



Last Reviewed	**Summer 2025**
Reviewed By (Name)	**Trust Board**
Job Role	**Governing Board**
Next Review Date	**Summer 2027**
Version produced Spring 2026	Amendments indicated in green text. New template implemented from Education Data Hub. Removed KCSiE year reference to ensure it refers to latest version. KCSiE links and references updated **3. Recognised school/trust/academy Channels -** added a paragraph re Grok - the AI tool linked to X/Twitter **10. Relevant Legislation-** added The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

This document will be reviewed annually by the Head of Communications, and sooner where significant changes to the law occur.

Guidance from the Department for Education about The Vine Schools Trust policies can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trusts/statutory-policies-for-schools-and-academy-trustsContents

Contents

1. Introduction 4

2. Scope and Responsibilities 4

3. Recognised school/trust Channels 5

4. Our Social Media Standards 8

5. Our Social Media Rules 8

6. Access to Social Media at Work, for Personal Use 10

7. Online Safety Concerns 10

8. Inappropriate References to the school/trust or Staff 10

9. Complaints 11

10. Relevant Legislation 11

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1. Introduction

- We recognise the benefits of social media, but it also brings potential risk, to The Vine Schools Trust and to individuals. For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as websites and applications (apps) that allow people to create or share content and/or participate in social networking. Examples include, amongst others Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, WordPress, Tumblr, Ask.fm, WhatsApp, Messenger. This policy also refers to online gaming platforms and MMORPG ('massively multiplayer online role-playing games') e.g. World of Warcraft.
- We realise that a growing number of educationalists and education groups use discussion groups, online chat forums and bulletin boards to share good practice and disseminate information and resources. The use of online discussion groups and bulletin boards relating to professional practice and continuing professional development is encouraged, although staff are reminded that they are representing The Vine Schools Trust, and appropriate professional standards should apply to all postings and messages.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with The Vine Schools Trust HR advice and guidance.

2. Scope and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all use of social media, by all staff, governors/Trustees and volunteers, including personal use, work-related use, during working hours or out of hours, onsite or offsite, through The Vine Schools Trust internet network or otherwise, on The Vine Schools Trust owned or personal devices, on official The Vine Schools Trust social media accounts/platforms or personal accounts/platforms. This should be read in conjunction with the IT Acceptable Use Policy.

All staff are expected to comply with this policy. All leaders are responsible for ensuring their team read, understand, and comply with this procedure.

In order to be described as an official 'The Vine Schools Trust platform' account:

- Master privileges and access permissions are held by The Vine Schools Trust
- The school should have editorial oversight of all content
- The number of staff members with administrative rights should be limited to those necessary

'Quasi school' social media, for example a Twitter account such as 'Miss Stuart History @ Secondary School' are not official The Vine Schools Trust platforms unless the above conditions are met. The Vine Schools Trust will not accept liability for content and postings on accounts containing The Vine Schools Trust / school name which have not been authorised and do not meet the official 'The Vine Schools Trust platform' criteria. Accounts used will be listed in the Privacy Notice, and personal information and pictures must not be posted without appropriate consent and oversight. Authorised accounts will remain the property of The Vine Schools Trust and may be deleted at any time by The Vine Schools Trust.

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Our Data Protection Officer - DPO will provide assistance and further guidance on the use of social media with regards to data protection.

A breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action.

If there are concerns that comments or posts may potentially be defamatory or libellous, The Vine Schools Trust may seek legal advice.

3. Recognised The Vine Schools Trust / School Channels

The Vine Schools Trust official social media channels are:

Platform	**Account/Page name**	**Master administration role**	**Approved users (posting)**	**Date**	
				Opened	Closed
Facebook	Vine Schools Trust https://www.facebook.com/VineSchoolsTrust/	Ellie Turnbull	Ellie Turnbull The Write Impression	2019	
LinkedIn	Vine Schools Trust https://www.linkedin.com/company/22043906/	Ellie Turnbull	Ellie Turnbull The Write Impression Emma Wigmore	2019	
Facebook	Bulphan https://www.facebook.com/bulphanacademy		Ryan Thomas Helen Turnnidge Cece Morin James Dickson	2023	
Facebook	Belchamp St Paul https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082851146423	Unknown	Unknown	-	
Facebook	Christchurch https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcofeprimaryschool/	Ellie Turnbull	Ellie Turnbull		
Facebook	Great Clacton https://www.facebook.com/greatclactoncofejunior	No current access	No current access		

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Facebook	Howbridge https://www.facebook.com/howbridgejuniorschool/	Ellie Turnbull Howbridge Junior	Lucie Levett Teddy Watkins Danielle Jones Ellie Taylor	2022	
Facebook	Orsett https://www.facebook.com/orsettcofeprimary/	Ellie Turnbull Ann-Marie Belton	Ellie Turnbull Ann-Marie Belton	2023	
Facebook	Ridgewell https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057032427122	Kirsty Stuart	Kirsty Stuart	-	
Facebook	Rolph https://www.facebook.com/rolphprimary/	Ellie Turnbull Exec Head	Rosie Asbridge	2021	
Facebook	St Andrews https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087857001952	Unknown	Unknown	-	
Facebook	St Cedds https://www.facebook.com/stceddscofeprimaryschool/	Ellie Turnbull	Jade Rook Tara Clarke	2026	
Facebook	St Leonard's https://www.facebook.com/stleonardscofeprimaryschool/	Ellie Turnbull	Gill Crisp Wendy Woods Clare Saunders	2026	
Facebook	St Nicholas https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093890482773	Ellie Turnbull Charlotte Parish Becki Keane	Ellie Turnbull Charlotte Parish Becki Keane Tara Clarke	2023	

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		Tara Clarke			
Facebook	St Margaret's https://www.facebook.com/stmargaretscofeacademy/	Ellie Turnbull Arlene Hayward Claire Marshall	Amy Garrod	2023	
Facebook	St James Harlow https://www.facebook.com/stjamesharlow/	Ellie Turnbull Casey Cox	Ellie Turnbull Casey Cox	2023	
Facebook	William Martin https://www.facebook.com/williammartinschools/	Ellie Turnbull	Hannah Johnson Gina Bailey	2026	

We use these social media accounts to celebrate successes and events in The Vine Schools Trust.

As part of our admission process, parents / carers (pupils where age appropriate) have the option to opt out of sharing of person data in the form of pictures.

A Data Protection Impact Assessment has been carried out on social media as a communication tool.

The official use of social media sites is limited to activities with educational or community engagement objectives.

Schools are responsible for their own account information and login access, whilst the Trust maintains master privileges for Facebook accounts. Other social media account log-ins are held at school level.

Multi-factor authentication (a method of account security that ensures only legitimate users can access accounts and applications), should be enabled wherever possible.

Official social media sites have appropriate privacy settings, are suitably protected and, where possible, linked to from our website.

Official social media use should be conducted in line with existing policies, including anti-bullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality, and child protection.

Any official social media activity involving pupils should be moderated.

Official social media use should be used in conjunction with other methods of communication, so as to reach all members of the community, including those who do not / cannot utilise social media.

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4. Our Social Media Standards

We will ensure online conduct, whether on behalf of The Vine Schools Trust or posted on a personal account by a staff member, does not impact adversely on the reputation and integrity of the setting. As part of our obligations under KCSiE we may check (and record the outcomes of these checks) the online presence including social media searches of our staff, Governors/Trustees and volunteers. Any use of social media that could impact on The Vine Schools Trust should meet these standards:

- Respect others, they may be affected directly or indirectly by your actions online
- Be honest about who you are, and what you know
- Be sensitive to others and to your position within the school/trust
- Protect privacy and respect your confidentiality of that of others
- Maintain professional standards.
- If in doubt, don't post!

5. Our Social Media Rules

These rules should be followed, to ensure we meet the required standards:

i. Be kind:

- Use common courtesy.
- Consider the potential effect on others of your words or content you post
- Always be responsible, credible, fair, and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared.

ii. Be honest:

- Be transparent about your role, especially when representing the school/trust in an official capacity
- Only post about things you know to be true and only if it is appropriate to share them
- Do not post someone else's images or content without prior permission, or with appropriate acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce

iii. Be sensitive:

- Do not enter into discussions with parents or colleagues via social media forums
- Do not post or share images, memes (or similar) or links that are inappropriate or have inappropriate content
- Do not post anything that could be considered; discriminatory, gossip, lies, offensive or threatening comments, comments/images that deliberately, negligently, or recklessly mock, tease, humiliate or harass an individual
- Be especially careful when posting about potentially inflammatory subjects.

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- Do not give advice or information that you know to be contrary to The Vine Schools Trust policies or interests.
- Do not reveal any sensitive information about The Vine Schools Trust or about any plans that are not yet public.
- In the event of an incident affecting The Vine Schools Trust or any members of the school/trust community only official communications channels and accounts should comment or share news or updates.
- Be aware of the potential risks of communicating with current and ex-pupils in ways which may be considered as inappropriate, particularly if it could be shown that the adult-pupil relationship of trust had been breached.
- Only use official The Vine Schools Trust platforms to post school/trust information, celebration, news, and photographs. Ensure all posts are in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any inappropriate contact from pupils to a member of SLT at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations from escalating.
- Staff are reminded that, as a safeguarding issue, they should always be careful about who they are 'talking to'. It is very easy to hide an identity in an on-line conversation.

iv. Protect privacy and respect confidentiality:

- Do not breach confidentiality – do not share anything private about anyone else
- Don't share anything about yourself that you wouldn't want the rest of the school/trust community to see.
- Be aware that what you post could divulge information such as your home address.
- Always follow the Data Protection Policy and ensure that you have secured the appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel
- Apply appropriate security and privacy settings to your social media accounts and the devices you use to access them.
- Make yourself familiar with privacy settings – these change often and with little or no warning; users with access to the school/trust account should ensure that privacy settings are routinely updated
- Be aware of 'phishing' attempts through social media, where scammers may try to obtain information about you or other people, including passwords or financial information.

v. Maintain professional standards

- Do not 'befriend' or initiate engagement online with pupils, or families of pupils, (including former pupils who have recently left the school/trust) unless you are the parent of the pupil or a close family member.

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- If you do wish to communicate with or are contacted by a former pupil who has recently left the school/trust, via social media, contact the head teacher before engaging.
- Always be professional and aware that you are an ambassador for The Vine Schools Trust. Remember you are representing The Vine Schools Trust and the same standards of conduct should be followed online as well as offline.
- Do not post or share offensive, discriminatory, or illegal content, or anything that would bring The Vine Schools Trust into disrepute.
- Ensure a clear distinction between The Vine Schools Trust, and personal life when making comments and posts.

vi. If in doubt, don't post!

- Once you've posted something to the internet it cannot be taken back.
- Even if you delete content it may already have been copied or saved by another user and could be shared more widely.
- Even if you have posted in a closed or private group other members may not respect the rules or your confidentiality.

6. Access to Social Media at Work, for Personal Use

Personal use of the Internet including access to social media is only permitted in your own time (e.g. before or after work and during your lunchtime) and should not be left running "in the background", whilst at work. Staff are advised to refer The Vine Schools Trust IT Acceptable Use policies for further guidance.

7. Online Safety Concerns

All staff members will be made aware of the reporting procedure for online safety concerns, including breaches of filtering, youth produced sexual imagery ('sexting', 'nudes'), cyberbullying, illegal content, and radicalisation. Refer to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' – in particular, but not exclusively paragraphs 134-151 Online Safety.

8. Inappropriate References to The Vine Schools Trust or Staff

Members of staff who find that 'friends' have posted inappropriate material, relating to themselves on a social media site should ask them to remove it. If necessary, users could also report comments and posts to the site. Staff should advise the Headteacher if there are likely repercussions for the setting.
Where staff are the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites, site reporting functions should be used. Where possible screen captures ('screen grabs') or photos of any post, page, or thread which may be considered harmful, threatening or abusive should be taken.
Where staff find inappropriate references to The Vine Schools Trust, staff or pupils posted by parents, colleagues, pupils, or other members of the community, this should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible. The Headteacher will take the appropriate course of action, which

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may include contacting the Human Resources team, seeking legal advice or contacting Law enforcement agencies e.g. police. Staff should not attempt to deal with the situation personally.

9. Complaints

There may be times where individuals will bypass The Vine Schools Trust complaints procedures and use social media to criticise The Vine Schools Trust decisions or policy, and, in some cases, make malicious comments about staff or governors/trustees.
Whilst people have a right to freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act 1998, their opinions should not cause harm or distress. Any complaint, dispute or grievance posted on any social media channels which names staff members, pupils, governors/trustees, or volunteers should be reported to the Headteacher as soon as possible.
Concerns and complaints relating to colleague or pupil social media activity should be directed to a member of SLT/Governing body as appropriate.

10. Relevant Legislation

In applying this policy, The Vine Schools Trust will adhere to its rights, responsibilities, and duties in accordance with UK law. The following legislation may be pertinent:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 etc).
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Malicious Communications Act 1988: Section 1
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Communications Act 2003: Section 127
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013
- Online Safety Act 2023.
- The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

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