SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

❖ We may actively encourage the responsible use of social media. Responsible use of social media can be positive for learning and teaching. It can also be personally enjoyable and beneficial. This policy will make clear what standards are expected of anyone who works for Geeks Room and uses social media as well as which actions may be taken when it is considered that a member of staff / volunteer may have breached this policy.

This policy applies to all staff use of social media, including:

➢ on behalf of Geeks Room
➢ as part of their work directly with students
➢ in their wider professional lives; and
➢ in their personal lives.

In this policy, we define social media to mean: 'Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.'

In this policy, the word 'staff' includes permanent, temporary and casual staff, agency staff, and volunteers during their time working with Geeks Room.

In this policy, the word 'parents' is used to mean the parents, carers and others with parental responsibility for a student at Geeks Room.

This policy works alongside other legislation, DFE statutory guidance, and other organisation and local authority policies, as well as other Geeks Room policies such as the Code of Employee Conduct, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies, and the Terms and Conditions. These all also apply where relevant.

❖ Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

➢ Clarify what Geeks Room considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking by staff;
➢ Encourage social networking to be used in a beneficial and positive way;
➢ Safeguard staff, students, parents and members of the public from abuse through social networking;
➢ Safeguard the reputation of the organisation, other organisations and employers from unwarranted abuse through social networking; and
➢ Set out the procedures that will be followed where it is considered that staff have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking.

❖ Responsibility and accountability

➢ **Administrator / CoderDojo Champions:**

• Should ensure that all existing and new staff are trained and become familiar with this policy and its relationship to Geeks Room's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT and e-safety;

- Should provide opportunities to discuss appropriate social networking use by staff on a regular basis and ensure that any queries raised are resolved swiftly;
- Must ensure that any allegations raised in respect of access to social networking sites are investigated promptly and appropriately, in accordance with the Geeks Room's disciplinary procedure, code of conduct and internet safety guidelines; and
- Should ensure there is a system in place for regular monitoring.

➢ Staff / Mentor:
- Should ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this policy and its relationship to the Geeks Room's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT and e-safety;
- Should raise any queries or areas of concern they have relating to the use of social networking sites and interpretation of this policy –with their Team Leader in the first instance; and
- Must comply with this policy where specific activities or conduct is prohibited.
- Will advise and support Administrator and Team Leader on the application of this policy.

❖ When using social media at any time
- Staff must not place a child at risk of harm.
- Staff must follow statutory and Geeks Room safeguarding procedures at all times when using social media.
- Staff must report all situations where any child is at potential risk by using relevant statutory and Geeks Room child protection procedures.
- Staff must not allow their use of social media to affect their ability to do their job in any way.
- Social media relationships must be declared with other personal relationships or interests whenever necessary or appropriate.
- Staff must maintain the reputation of Geeks Room, its staff, its students, its parents, its board of Directors, its wider community and their employers.
- Staff must not contribute to or access any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual, or otherwise offensive when linked in any way to Geeks Room. This link could be, as examples, by identification with Geeks Room, during the working day, on Geeks Room premises or when using Geeks Room equipment. Such behaviours may also result in criminal proceedings.
- Staff must recognise that contributing to or accessing any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual or otherwise offensive during personal use could lead to damage to their professional reputation or damage to the reputation of Geeks Room. This damage would breach the social media policy. And, again, such behaviours may also result in criminal proceedings.
- Staff must not use social media to criticise or insult Geeks Room, its staff, its students, its parents, its board of directors or its wider community.
- Staff should be aware that there are other, more appropriate, methods of raising valid concerns about Geeks Room and its staff.
- Staff must not use social media to harass, bully or intimidate any student, parent, member of staff, directors or other member of the wider Geeks Room community.
- Staff must not breach Geeks Room confidentiality.
- Geeks Room staff must follow the data protection responsibilities when using social media.
- Staff must not reveal any other private or confidential Geeks Room matters when using any social media.
- Staff are responsible for their actions (and their consequences) whenever they use social media.
- Staff are responsible for all their social media content.

- Staff must understand that social media offers no guarantee of privacy and that any content they produce can be shared more widely by others. A member of staff's professional reputation or the reputation of Geeks Room could be damaged by content, perhaps which was intended to be private, being shared more widely than intended.
- Staff would still be held responsible for any consequential breach of this policy as they were responsible for producing the original content.
- Staff are responsible for the configuration and use of any personal social media accounts they have. They are responsible for determining the level of security and privacy of all their social media content.
- Staff must raise all doubts, questions and concerns related to social media with Geeks Room leaders. Staff must seek advice if they are not sure if any particular use of social media (or a related action) is appropriate or would potentially breach this policy. Staff cannot rely on their ignorance or lack of knowledge to defend any breach of this policy.

❖ When using social media on behalf of Geeks Room

Geeks Room uses social media as a communications channel to engage with their wider community.

- Staff must be given explicit permission to use social media on behalf of Geeks Room by a Director or the Administrator.
- These staff must follow all related procedures when acting on behalf of Geeks Room.
- Staff must have separate user accounts for Geeks Room's use of social media.
- Staff must not use Geeks Room social media for any personal discussions or for any individual personal matters even if initiated by other members of the Geeks Room community. Users must be directed to more appropriate communication channels.

❖ When using social media as part of working with students

- Staff must ensure that all social media use when working with students is sanctioned by Geeks Room; only uses explicitly agreed social media; and, follows agreed policies and procedures.

❖ When using social media in staffs' wider professional life

- Staff must be clear that their social media content is personal and not endorsed or supported by Geeks Room.
- Staff can identify Geeks Room where appropriate but cannot use account names, organisation branding or anything else that could imply that the content is official Geeks Room content.
- Staff must be particularly careful to not reveal any details of staff, students, parents or other members of the Geeks Room community that make it possible to identify any individuals.
- Staff must use appropriate behaviour and language at all times. As a guide, this should be similar to that which would be used when taking part in a face-to-face meeting with other education professionals

❖ When using social media in staffs' personal life

- The personal use of social media must neither interfere with a member of staff's ability to maintain their professional reputation nor impact on the reputation of Geeks Room.
- Staff must take all reasonable steps to ensure the proper separation of their professional and personal lives.
- Staff must not use Geeks Room social networking accounts for personal content.

- Staff must respect the wishes and privacy of any other members of Geeks Room community with whom they have personal social media contact.
- Staff must not use personal social media with any student with whom they solely have, or have had, a staff/student relationship. This includes ex-students until they reach the age of 18.
- Geeks Room staff can have social media contact with students or ex-students where other appropriate relationships exist. As examples, a student who is also a family member or a family friend. These relationships must be open and transparent. The member of staff can report these social media relationships to senior leaders for their own protection.
- Staff must retain any communications to students or ex-students rejecting any approaches made on social media and ensure that they are professional in tone. Staff must also consider reporting these to senior leaders to ensure transparency.
- Staff must not use personal social media with anyone with whom they solely have a staff/parent relationship.
- Staff at Geeks Room can often have more complex relationships than just being a member of staff or a parent. As examples, staff can also be parents (of students at Geeks Room), in relationships or have friendships with other staff or parents; or also directors. Any member of staff can report any social media relationships to senior leaders for their own protection.
- Staff must make sure that their personal social media activities consider who they have social media relationships with – particularly any other members of Geeks Room community – and moderate their social media behaviour accordingly.
- Personal use of social media at Geeks Room:
- Geeks Room staff can make reasonable personal use of social media during the working day or while at the premises. This must not interfere with any work activities.
- Staff can only use social media when no students are present and during breaks or non-directed time.
- Staff can use Geeks Room devices where social media sites can be accessed using Geeks Room systems. This use must also follow the Geeks Room's staff acceptable use policy (AUP). There is no obligation on Geeks Room to make social media sites available to staff.
- Staff can only use personal devices with social media while at Geeks Room where the use of personal devices is allowed by Geeks Room. Again, this use must still follow Geeks Room's acceptable use policy (AUP).

❖ Excessive use of social media at work

- Staff must not spend an excessive amount of time while at Geeks Room on personal use of social media. They must ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their duties.

❖ Monitoring use of social media on Geeks Room equipment

- Geeks Room reserves the right to monitor all staff internet use, including when staff are making personal use of social media, on Geeks Room systems or equipment. Misuse of social media – even personal use – on Geeks Room equipment is a breach of the Geeks Room's acceptable use policy.

❖ Disciplinary action over social media use

- All staff are required to adhere to this policy. Staff should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Please refer to our Terms and Conditions. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to Geeks Room, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal and fine.

- Similarly, where there is a serious breach of this policy, action may be taken in respect of other members of staff who are not employees (volunteers) which may result in the termination of their appointment.
- The Administrator should take advice from the Chair of the board of Directors before considering disciplinary action.

❖ If you have any concerns

- When using social media, you may have a concern about what you are seeing or being told by another user which has safeguarding implications or may cause harm to the reputation of the Geeks Room and/or its community. If you have any such concerns you should contact the Administrator, the named safeguarding contact in Geeks Room for advice.
- If a member of staff becomes aware that a student (or group of students) or parent has made inappropriate/insulting/threatening comments about them, or other staff members, on a social networking site; then they should consider reporting this to the Administrator so that the appropriate process can be followed and support can be offered to the employee.

❖ How can staff minimise risk when using electronic communication and social networking?

Staff members should:

- always maintain a formal and courteous and professional tone in communicating with students and ensure that professional boundaries are maintained;
- only use official channels of communication e.g. Slack and work e-mail addresses and be aware of and comply with Geeks Room's policies and guidance;
- not exchange private text, phone numbers, personal e-mail addresses or photos of a personal nature with students;
- firmly decline student-initiated 'friend' requests from students and do not instigate any yourself. Use your own discretion when dealing with friend requests from parents. It is acceptable to decline these invitations and remind parents of more formal channels which they can discuss their students' education;
- operate online in a way in which would not call into question your position as a professional;
- realise that students will be naturally curious about your personal life outside Geeks Room and may try to find out more about you.
- manage your privacy settings and keep them under review. These are particularly important with regards to photos, and remember that no privacy mechanism is 100% guaranteed;
- ensure your settings prohibit others from tagging you in any photos or updates without your permission and you can ask others to remove any undesirable content related to you;
- audit and re-evaluate the information about you and who has access to it;
- be aware that potential employers may try and view your online social media profiles;
- consider that conversations held online may not be private. Be aware of who may have access to what you post;
- assume that information you post can be accessed and altered;
- not discuss students, colleagues, parents or carers online or criticise your employer or others within the Geeks Room community;
- respect student privacy and confidentiality at all times;
- use strong passwords and change them regularly. Protect your mobile phone/smart phone/tablet computer with a PIN, especially when at Geeks Room to protect access to its content and potential misuse;
- bring the matter to the attention of Geeks Room using the proper procedures if you are the victim of cyber bullying or uncomfortable with comments, photos or posts made by students of or about you.