**RIBBLE VALLEY ACROBATIC ACADEMY**

**Social Media Policy**

**1. Definition of social media**

For the purposes of Ribble Valley Acrobatic Academy's (RVAA) Social Media policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video- and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

**2. Use of social media at work**

Employees are not allowed to access social media websites for personal use from RVAA's computers or devices at any time during work hours. This includes any laptop/palm-top/hand-held computers or devices distributed by RVAA for work purposes.

RVAA understands that employees may wish to use their own devices, such as hand-held devices, to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees MUST limit their personal use of social media on their own equipment to authorised rest breaks.

**3**. **Monitoring use of social media during work time**

RVAA reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The Company considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that an employee has:

* been using social media websites and/or other websites for personal use when he/she should be working; or
* acted in a way that is in breach of RVAA’s rules.

RVAA reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of one year. Access to websites or platforms may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

**4**. **Use of Social Media in a Personal Capacity**

RVAA recognises that employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that they can damage RVAA if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

Employees can say that they work for RVAA, which recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media. However, the employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain RVAA's name.

If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which RVAA operates), they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

* bring RVAA into disrepute, for example by:
  + criticising or arguing with clients, colleagues or rivals;
  + making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
  + posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
* breach confidentiality, for example by:
  + revealing trade secrets or information owned by RVAA;
  + giving away confidential or personal information about an individual (such as a colleague, supplier or customer contact); or
  + discussing RVAA's internal workings (such as arrangements/agreements with clients, future business plans that have not been communicated to the public, or details of incidents/accidents);
* breaching copyright, for example by:
* using someone else's images or written content without permission;
* failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
* doing anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
* making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief or age;
* using social media to bully another individual; or
* posting images that are discriminatory or offensive, or links to such content.

**5. Disciplinary action over social media use**

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to RVAA, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.