



ICT Policy

September 2025

Signed (Chair of Trustees):	
Date:	September 2025
Date of Review:	September 2026

Arbor Academy Trust reviews this policy annually. The Trustees may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the Government introduces new regulations, or if the Trust receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved. This document is also available in other formats e.g. e-mail and enlarged print version, on request to the School Offices and is displayed on the schools' websites.

ICT Policy

The need for a policy

All Arbor Academy Trust's information communication technology (ICT) facilities and information resources (data and information assets of the school) remain the property of Arbor Academy Trust and not of particular individuals, teams or departments. By following this policy we will help ensure that ICT facilities are used:

- legally;
- securely;
- without undermining Arbor Academy Trust;
- effectively;
- in a spirit of co-operation, trust and consideration for others;
- so that they remain available.

The policy relates to all ICT facilities and services provided by Arbor Academy Trust, although special emphasis is placed on email and the internet. All employees, volunteers and any other users of our IT are expected to adhere to the policy.

1. Disciplinary measures

- Deliberate and serious breach of the policy statements in this section may lead to Arbor Academy Trust taking disciplinary measures in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Arbor Academy Trust accepts that ICT – especially the internet and email system – is a valuable business tool. However, misuse of this facility can have a negative impact upon employees and volunteer's productivity and the reputation of the organisation.
- In addition, all of the organisation's phone, internet and email related resources are provided for business purposes. Therefore, the organisation maintains the right to monitor the volume of internet and network traffic, together with the email systems. The specific content of any transactions will not be monitored unless there is a suspicion of improper use.

2. Security

- As a user of Arbor Academy Trust's equipment and services, you are responsible for your activity.
- Do not disclose personal system passwords or other security details to other employees, volunteers or external agents, and do not use anyone else's log-in; this compromises the security of Arbor Academy Trust. If someone else gets to know your password, ensure that you change it or get the computer technician to help you.
- If you intend to leave your PC or workstation unattended for any reason, you should lock the screen to prevent unauthorised access. If you fail to do this, you will be responsible for any misuse of it while you are away. Signing off is especially important where members of the public have access to the screen in your absence.
- Any USB drives or other storage devices used on Arbor Academy Trust's network should be encrypted and secure, and only those that are the property of Arbor Academy Trust should be used. Please see paragraph 7 for more detail.
- Do not attempt to gain unauthorised access to information or facilities. The Computer Misuse Act 1990 makes it a criminal offence to obtain unauthorised access to any computer (including workstations and PCs) or to modify its contents. If you do not have access to information or resources you feel you need, contact the Headteacher/ Head of School.

3. Use of Email

When to use email:

- Use email in preference to paper to reach people quickly (saving time on photocopying / distribution) and to help reduce paper use.
- Use the phone for urgent messages (email is a good backup in such instances). Use of email by employees of Arbor Academy Trust is permitted and encouraged where such use supports the goals and objectives of Arbor Academy Trust.
- However, Arbor Academy Trust has a policy for the use of email whereby employees must ensure that they:
 1. Comply with current legislation;
 2. Use email in an acceptable way;
 3. Do not create unnecessary business risk to Arbor Academy Trust by their misuse of the internet.

4. Unacceptable behaviour

- Sending confidential information to external locations without appropriate safeguards in place. See paragraph 5 of this document for more details.
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered indecent, pornographic, obscene or illegal.
- Distributing, disseminating or storing images, text or materials that might be considered discriminatory, offensive or abusive, in that the context is a personal attack, sexist or racist, or might be considered as harassment or bullying.
- Using copyrighted information in a way that violates the copyright.
- Breaking into Arbor Academy Trust's or another organisation's system, or unauthorised use of a password / mailbox.
- Broadcasting unsolicited personal views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters.
- Transmitting unsolicited commercial or advertising material.
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste employee's effort or networked resources.
- Deliberately or recklessly introducing any form of computer virus or malware into the corporate network.

5. Confidentiality

- Always exercise caution when committing confidential information to email since the confidentiality of such material cannot be guaranteed. Arbor Academy Trust reserves the right to monitor electronic communications in accordance with applicable laws and policies. The right to monitor communications includes messages sent or received by system users (employees and temporary employees) within and outside the system as well as deleted messages. See paragraph 5 for more detail.

6. General points on email use

- When publishing or transmitting information externally be aware that you are representing Arbor Academy Trust and could be seen as speaking on Arbor Academy Trust's behalf. Make it clear when opinions are personal. If in doubt, consult your line manager;
- Check your inbox at regular intervals during the working day. Keep your inbox fairly empty so that it just contains items requiring your action. Try to decide what to do with each email as you read it (e.g. delete it, reply to it, save the whole email in a folder, or extract just the useful information and save it somewhere logical);

- Keep electronic files of electronic correspondence, only retaining what you need to. Do not print it off and keep paper files unless absolutely necessary;
- Treat others with respect and in a way in which you would expect to be treated yourself (e.g. do not send unconstructive feedback, argue, or invite colleagues to make public their displeasure at the actions / decisions of a colleague);
- Do not forward emails warning about viruses (they are invariably hoaxes and the computer technician will probably already be aware of genuine viruses – if in doubt, contact them for advice);
- Do not open an email unless you have a reasonably good expectation of what it contains, and do not download files unless they are from a trusted source. For example, do open **report.docx** from a colleague you know but do not open **explore.zip** sent from an address you have never heard of, however tempting. If unsure talk with the colleague who sent the email and alert IT Support if you are sent anything like this unexpectedly; this is one of the most effective means of Arbor Academy Trust protecting against email virus attacks.

7. Email signatures

- Keep these short and include your name, title, phone number and website address.

8. Use of the Internet

1. Use of the Internet by employees and volunteers is permitted and encouraged where such use supports the goals and objectives of the school.

2. However, when using the Internet, employees and volunteers must ensure that they:

- Comply with current legislation;
- Use the internet in an acceptable way;
- Do not create unnecessary business risk to the organisation by their misuse of the internet.

3. Unacceptable behaviour

In particular the following is deemed unacceptable use or behaviour by employees and volunteers (this list is non-exhaustive):

- Visiting internet sites that contain obscene, hateful, pornographic or other illegal material;
- Using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud, or software, film or music piracy;
- Using the internet to send offensive or harassing material to other users;
- Downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such licence;
- Hacking into unauthorised areas;
- Creating or transmitting defamatory material;
- Undertaking deliberate activities that waste employees' effort or networked resources;
- Deliberately or recklessly introducing any form of computer virus into X's network.

4. Chat rooms / instant messaging (IM)

- The use of chat rooms and instant messaging is permitted for business use only. This use must have been agreed with your line manager.

5. Extremism

- Arbor Trust has obligations relating to radicalisation and all forms of extremism under the Prevent Duty Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, give them a voice or opportunity to visit the school, nor browse, download or send material that is considered offensive or of an extremist nature.

6. Obscenities / pornography

- Do not write, publish, look for, bookmark, access or download material that might be regarded as obscene or pornographic.

7. Copyright

- Take care to use software legally and in accordance with both the letter and spirit of relevant licensing and copyright agreements. Copying software for use outside these agreements is illegal and may result in criminal charges.
- Be aware of copyright law when using content you have found on other organisations' websites. The law is the same as it is for printed materials.

9. Confidentiality

1. If you are dealing with personal, sensitive and / or confidential information, then you must ensure that extra care is taken to protect the information.
2. If sending personal, sensitive and / or confidential information via email, then the following protocols should be used. If there is any doubt as to the information being sent or the appropriate level of protection required, please check with the Headteacher/ Head of School.
 - Personal, sensitive and / or confidential information should be contained in an attachment;
 - In appropriate cases the attachment should be encrypted, and / or password protected;
 - Any password or key must be sent separately;
 - Before sending the email, verify the recipient by checking the address, and if appropriate, telephoning the recipient to check and inform them that the email will be sent;
 - Do not refer to the information in the subject of the email.

10. Arbor Academy Trust's cloud based network

- Keep master copies of important data on Arbor Academy Trust's cloud based network and not solely on your PC's local C: Drive or portable disks. Not storing data on Arbor Academy Trust's cloud based network means it will not be backed up and is therefore at risk.
- Ask for advice from the computer technician if you need to store, transmit or handle large quantities of data, particularly images or audio and video. These large files use up space very quickly.
- Be considerate about storing personal (non- Arbor Academy Trust) files on Arbor Academy Trust 's cloud based network.
- Do not copy files that are accessible centrally into your personal directory unless you have good reason (i.e. you intend to amend them or you need to reference them and the central copies are to be changed or deleted) since this uses up space unnecessarily.

11. Removable media

If storing or transferring personal, sensitive, confidential or classified information using Removable Media you must first contact the Headteacher/ Head of School for permission, but

- Always consider if an alternative solution already exists;
- Only use recommended removable media;
- Encrypt and password protect;
- Store all removable media securely;
- Removable media must be disposed of securely by the computer technician.

12. Personal use of ICT facilities

Social media

- For the purposes of this policy, social media websites are web-based and mobile technologies which allow parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. They include websites such as Facebook, X, Google+ and LinkedIn. They also cover blogs and image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr. This is not an exhaustive list and you should be aware that this is a constantly changing area.
- Use of Social Media at work
 - Employees and volunteers are not permitted to use social media websites from Arbor Academy Trust's IT equipment, unless this forms part of your work responsibilities.
 - Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in the case of misuse.
 - Inappropriate comments on social media websites can cause damage to the reputation of the organisation if a person is recognised as being an employee or volunteer. It is, therefore, imperative that you are respectful of the organisation's service as a whole including clients, colleagues, partners and competitors.
 - Employees and volunteers should not give the impression that they are representing, giving opinions or otherwise making statements on behalf of Arbor Academy Trust unless appropriately authorised to do so. Personal opinions must be acknowledged as such, and should not be represented in any way that might make them appear to be those of the organisation. Where appropriate, an explicit disclaimer should be included, for example: *'These statements and opinions are my own and not those of Arbor Academy Trust.'*
 - Any communications that employees or volunteers make in a personal capacity must not:
 - Bring Arbor Academy Trust into disrepute, for example by criticising clients, colleagues or partner organisations;
 - Breach the Arbor Academy Trust's policy on client confidentiality or any other relevant policy;
 - Breach copyright, for example by using someone else's images or written content without permission;
 - Do anything which might be viewed as discriminatory against, or harassment towards, any individual, for example, by making offensive or derogatory comments relating to: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation;
 - Use social media to bully another individual;
 - Post images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content).
 - Arbor Academy Trust maintains the right to monitor usage where there is suspicion of improper use.

13. Other personal use

- Use of facilities for leisure or personal purposes (e.g. sending and receiving personal email, personal phone calls, playing computer games and browsing the internet) is permitted so long as such use does not:
 - Incur specific expenditure for Arbor Academy Trust;
 - Impact on the performance of your job or role (this is a matter between each member of employees or volunteer and their line manager);
 - Break the law;
 - Bring Arbor Academy Trust into disrepute;
 - Detrimentally affect the network performance by using large amounts of bandwidth (for instance by downloading / streaming of music or videos);
 - Impact on the availability of resources needed (physical or network) for business use.
- Any information contained within Arbor Academy Trust in any form is for use by the employee or volunteer for the duration of their period of work and should not be used in any way other than for proper business purposes, or transferred into any other format (e.g. loaded onto a memory stick / pen drive), unless necessary for business use, and with prior agreement of the headteacher/ head of school.

14. Portable and Mobile ICT Equipment

- This section covers items such as laptops, mobile devices and removable data storage devices. Please refer to paragraph 7 of this document when considering storing or transferring personal or sensitive data.
- Use of any portable and mobile ICT equipment must be authorised by the Headteacher/ Head of School before use.
- All activities carried out on Arbor Academy Trust's systems and hardware will be monitored in accordance with the general policy.
- Employees and volunteers must ensure that all data belonging to Arbor Academy Trust is stored on Arbor Academy Trust's network and not kept solely on a laptop. Any equipment where personal data is likely to be stored must be encrypted.
- Equipment must be kept physically secure in accordance with this policy to be covered for insurance purposes. When travelling by car, best practice is to place the laptop in the boot of the car before starting your journey.
- Synchronise all locally stored data, including diary entries, with the central organisation systems on a frequent basis.
- Ensure portable and mobile ICT equipment is made available as necessary for anti-virus/malware updates and software installations, patches or upgrades.
- The installation of any applications or software packages must be authorised the headteacher/ head of school, fully licensed and only carried out by the computer technician.
- In areas where there are likely to be members of the general public, portable or mobile ICT equipment must not be left unattended and, wherever possible, must be kept out of sight.
- Portable equipment must be transported in a protective case if one is supplied.

15. Remote Desktop Access

- If remote access is required, you must contact the head of school/ headteacher to set this up.
- You are responsible for all activity via your remote access facility.
- Laptops and mobile devices must have appropriate access protection, i.e. passwords and encryption, and must not be left unattended in public places.

- To prevent unauthorised access to Arbor Academy Trust's systems, keep all dial-up access information such as telephone numbers, logon IDs and PINs confidential and do not disclose them to anyone.
- Select PINs that are not easily guessed, e.g. do not use your house or telephone number and do not choose consecutive or repeated numbers.
- Avoid writing down or otherwise recording any network access information where possible. Any information that is written down must be kept in a secure place and disguised so that no other person is able to identify what it is.
- Protect Arbor Academy Trust's information and data at all times, including any printed material produced while using the remote access facility. Take particular care when access is from a non-office environment.
- Users of laptops and mobile devices are advised to check their car and home insurance policies for the level of cover in the event of equipment being stolen or damaged. Appropriate precautions should be taken to minimise risk of theft or damage.
- Care should be taken when working on laptops in public places (e.g. trains) that any employee or client details are not visible to other people.

16. Electronic monitoring

- You may find that you have access to electronic information about the activity of colleagues. Any such information must not be used by unauthorised individuals to monitor the activity of individual employees in any way (e.g. to monitor their working activity, working time, files accessed, internet sites accessed, reading of their email or private files, etc.) without their prior knowledge. Exceptions are:
- In the case of a specific allegation of misconduct, when the Headteacher/ Head of School can authorise accessing of such information when investigating the allegation;
- When the computer technician cannot avoid accessing such information while fixing a problem, but this will only be carried out with the consent of the individual concerned.

17. IT purchasing

- Purchasing of IT items including hardware and software is prohibited, instead all requests for procurement must be approved by Headteacher/ Head of School and then ordered by the Arbor Trust finance team.
- Any users who place and pay for orders using personal details do so at their own risk and Arbor Academy Trust accepts no liability if details are fraudulently obtained whilst the user is using Arbor Academy Trust's equipment.

18. Care of equipment

- Do not rearrange the way in which equipment is plugged in (computers, power supplies, phones, network cabling, modems etc.) without first contacting the IT Service Desk.

19. Use of social media applications

- The Trust does not permit the use of the following social media applications for work purposes, this includes: WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, X and snapchat.
- All communication between staff should be during the working day and via email, meetings, telephone or via text message on a work or school phone only.
- Personal mobile phones should not be used for or during working hours or for communication regarding staff or pupils within the school.

20. Agreement

- All employees, volunteers, contractors or temporary employees who have been granted the right to use the Arbor Academy Trust's ICT systems are required to sign this agreement confirming their understanding and acceptance of this policy.