

social**media**check 

# Social Media Check enhances recruitment security and ensures children's safety at the Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust



Customer Story



The Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust is a community of five primary schools located across Bristol and North Somerset. As a relatively new multi-academy trust, led by Dr Danny Doyle, the organisation prioritises the safety of its students and strives to mitigate risks during the recruitment of new staff. To strengthen its safeguarding procedures, in addition to traditional background checks, the Trust utilises Social Media Check. This platform is employed to vet shortlisted candidates, as well as the central team, trustees, senior leaders, and teaching staff, providing an extra layer of security in the recruitment process.

## Highlights

- Social Media Check provides an additional layer of security, complementing formal background checks and ensuring staff suitability
- Staff are empowered to clean up their online presence, promoting awareness and positive behaviour
- The reports are valuable during Ofsted inspections, helping demonstrate robust safeguarding and recruitment processes



Danny Doyle,  
Trust Leader







## The need for a sense of security

While the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidelines were updated in September 2022, to include guidance on conducting online checks during the hiring process, Newman Catholic Trust had already taken proactive steps long before this update.

Dr Danny Doyle, the leader of the Trust, explains how his past experiences shaped the decision to implement such checks early on: ***“Previously, I was asked to support a school that had a serious incident related to social media, with an issue being shared widely, going viral across local schools, and reaching some of our parents and families. It became a point of conflict for the school, the academy trust that I was overseeing, and an employee. There was a significant risk of reputational damage, and it was a really stressful situation to manage. What I learned during that experience is that these things can get out of hand very quickly and cause significant upset, concern, and damage to reputations.”***





## Proactive steps to prevent safeguarding issues

The Trust's journey toward implementing social media checks began after one of its schools was downgraded from *"outstanding"* to *"inadequate"* due to safeguarding concerns. This prompted Dr Doyle and his team to seek solutions that could contribute to a safe and effective safeguarding culture across the school. They got in touch with Social Media Check's director, Nic Whelan, and decided to trial the service. After initial trials, the team was *"impressed by the power of it."*

Dr Doyle reflects: *"We first decided to trial the system ourselves to see what reports it generated and information it found. This gave us a very personal experience of what it was like to have one of these social media checks and to know what the report highlights were. That was an eye-opener. It prompted really interesting conversations, along with some friendly competition between us!"*







The Trust's leader emphasises the importance of taking precautions to avoid issues later, allowing the primary focus to remain on the children. ***"As a new organisation in the South West, we're bringing in several new employees, building a central team, and expanding capacity. We're striving to create something special, and we are entirely reliant on our people. Sometimes, those people may have something online that could disrupt their work, reputation, or career – and that's unnecessary. I've been very mindful to put the right measures in place from the start. This allows me to bring the right people to the table and ensure that these potential issues don't arise."***





## An opportunity to improve by identifying and addressing issues



One of the core values behind the Trust's use of Social Media Check is the focus on prevention. Dr Doyle stresses that the process is not about judging whether someone is *"fit"* or *"unfit"* for their role, but rather about identifying potential issues early on and addressing them before they become problems. ***"We're able to say it's not invasive or oppressive. We're not deeming who's fit and proper for work in this organisation. We're saying this is something that we can both look at, potentially learn from, and address before your employment to avoid any significant issues in the future,"*** Dr Doyle explains.





This mindset fosters open communication and provides opportunities for employees to address any online content that could harm their professional reputation or the Trust's safeguarding standards. It is seen as a chance for self-improvement rather than an accusatory action. Many staff members have reflected on the process as an opportunity to review and clean up their own online profiles. Dr Doyle notes, ***"Almost everybody has gone back and looked at their settings and history, and tried to clean up their profiles. It's more about awareness. It's a good and healthy way of encouraging immediate changes in behaviour while also helping staff think about how they'll conduct themselves in the long term."***





## Strengthening safeguarding with an extra layer of protection

The Trust believes that Social Media Check provides an additional layer of security that would be hard to obtain using other methods. Dr Doyle also points out that the service offers valuable insights that traditional criminal and background checks might miss. ***“It adds an additional layer of checks and scrutiny to ensure the candidate is appropriate for the role. Since profiles are international, I could have used Social Media Check in my school in Dubai, just as I can in my schools within the UK. Supplementing this with formal criminal and background checks gives us a way to triangulate what has been formally recorded, potentially on a police record, and what is not,”*** he explains.

Social Media Check has now been integrated into the Trust’s policies and documentation, including job advertisements. Dr Doyle adds that they are moving their Single Central Record (SCR) to Every HR by IRIS, where the check reports will be automatically added as additional information.





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The reports have also proven useful during Ofsted inspections and when engaging with external stakeholders or potential new schools joining the Trust. Dr Doyle shares, *“If it’s Ofsted, any other stakeholder, or a school looking to join the Trust, we’re able to very clearly and concisely explain what we do, why we do it, and how that ensures compliance with KCSIE. It also shows that our safe recruitment and safeguarding procedures are robust.”*





## Reassuring staff and overcoming anxieties

Dr Doyle shares a story about one staff member who was initially wary of the social media checker. She feared that Social Media Check might flag issues that could cause damage to her reputation. However, once the check was completed, the report provided reassurance, confirming that no damaging content was present or associated with her name.

***“It was really reassuring for her, which is why she then did a complete turn and wanted to put it in place for her team,”*** Dr Doyle explains. The experience highlights the importance of proactive social media checks, not just for recruitment, but for staff well-being, ensuring that individuals can feel confident in their online presence.







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Dr Doyle further reflects on the value of the social media reports: ***“The quality of the report is incredibly insightful, providing valuable and fascinating information. It’s a huge time-saver and offers a detailed analysis, but for me, it’s primarily a valuable learning exercise that sparks healthy conversations. There’s a significant learning opportunity here, as it allows us to review a post and consider how it might be perceived by stakeholders, governors, directors, or parents of the children in your class. It prompts reflection on how this content could impact your professional standing, career progression, or even the overall reputation of the school or organisation.”***

# Key features of Social Media Check

1. Fully GDPR-compliant: Ensures data privacy and legal compliance.
2. Covers all major social media platforms: Comprehensive coverage of popular social media networks.
3. Reviews years and thousands of posts: Ability to analyse extensive social media histories.
4. Completely consent-based: Requires explicit consent from the individual being reviewed.
5. Quick completion: Takes about 5 minutes for the individual to complete the process.
6. Fast reporting: Reports are typically ready in 10-15 minutes after consent is provided, with results available within 60 minutes.
7. Fully auditable: Transparent and trackable process.
8. Eliminates bias: Removes unconscious bias and subjectivity from the review process.
9. Supports 16 global languages: Information can be checked in multiple languages.
10. Varied classifiers: Identifies a wide range of categories, from 'Drugs' to 'Weapons'.





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