

Social Media Policy



Created on:	27th September 2021
By:	D. Mallinder
Approved on:	
Signed on behalf of Governing Body:	
Role:	
Next review date: (biannually)	September 2023

The school is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites.

The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the school is not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of the school is not adversely affected
- That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives' for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the School representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

All school representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social networking sites in worktime

Staff can only use personal devices with social media while at their school where the use of personal devices is allowed by the school. Again, this use must still follow the school's acceptable use policy (AUP). Staff must ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their duties.

Social Networking as part of School Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Head teacher or a member of the SMT first.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services does not need to be approved by the Head teacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

School representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The School expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Social Networking applications:

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- No staff member should have a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Head Teacher
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil in the school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18
- No member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the head teacher. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment
- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in school
- Staff must be clear that their social media content is personal and not endorsed or supported by their school. Where staff discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which they work), they must make it clear that the views expressed are theirs.
- Staff **must** be particularly careful to not reveal any details of staff, pupils, parents or other members of the school community that make it possible to identify any individuals.

Guidance/protection for Pupils on using social networking

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites.
- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- All pupil mobile phones must be handed into the teacher at the beginning of the school day, the Internet capability must be switched off.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Head teacher. Parents will be informed if this happens
- No school computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day unless for direct school use

- Pupils will report any improper contact or cyber bullying to the class teacher as soon as it occurs.
- We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying

Child protection guidance

If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above, they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes
- If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality
- If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your child protection policy until the investigation has been carried out

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on school premises, The School protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

This can be a complex area, and these examples might help:

- A child is receiving taunts on Facebook and text from an ex pupil who moved three months ago: This is not a school responsibility, though the school might contact the new school to broker a resolution.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using Facebook or texts. The pupils are in the school: The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school.
- A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using social media. The pupils are in Y5: The school has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the school. However, they are also fully within their rights to warn all the parents (including the victim) that they are condoning the use of social media outside the terms and conditions of the site/app and that they are expected to ensure that use of the site/app stops. At any further referral to the school, the school could legitimately say that the victims and perpetrators had failed to follow the schools recommendation. They could then deal with residual bullying in the school, but refuse to deal with the social networking issues.
- Once disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the school's adopted anti bullying policy.
- If parent / carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment
- This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.
- If a parent/carer is making threats on-line against a member of school staff – this is counted as bullying. The member of staff must inform the Head teacher immediately and the parent/carer spoken to. Should the situation not be resolved, the police and LA should be informed.

Monitoring use of social media on school equipment

The school reserves the right to monitor all internet use.

The school's ICT provider routinely monitor internet traffic data (websites visited, time and date of visit) to ensure school policies are being adhered to. Periodic reports will be created by ICT so that schools may monitor the use of these facilities. The information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally including with the employee's line manager, HR and ICT staff if there are reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a breach of the rules set out in the school's policies.

Staff need to be aware that such monitoring might reveal sensitive and personal information about you. For example, if staff regularly visit social media sites which detail the activities of a particular political party or religious group, then those visits might indicate their political opinions or religious beliefs. By carrying out such activities using our facilities they give explicit consent for the processing of any sensitive personal data which may be revealed by such monitoring.

The information gathered through monitoring will be retained only long enough for any breach of this policy to come to light and for any investigation to be conducted. Information obtained through monitoring will not be disclosed to third parties (unless the school/Council is under a duty to report matters to a regulatory authority or to a law enforcement agency). More information on monitoring and employee's rights in relation to data can be found in the school/Council's Data Protection policy and Acceptable Use guidance.