



Social Media Policy

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Social media channels can be a great way of communicating with students, their parents and the wider community. For many young people and parents, these are familiar ways of receiving news and commenting on current affairs and, managed well, they can offer a quick, easy and cheap method of communication to schools.

According to Ofcom's Adults' Media Use & Attitudes report 2020, around 70% of adults have a social media profile while the proportion of 12-15 year olds with a social media profile has remained relatively stable since 2015 hovering around 70% (Ofcom Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2019).

This social media policy is written to make sure that social media is managed appropriately for the whole school community. It applies to staff use of the school's social media accounts and use of their personal accounts. The principles set out are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that the confidentiality of students and other staff and the reputation of the school are safeguarded.

Legal framework

The school is committed to ensuring that all staff provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- the Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality, and
- the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)
- The General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. student and employee records protected by the DPA and GDPR
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

Staff should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The school could be held responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff who harass co-workers online or who engage in bullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render the school liable.

Principles for the use of social media on behalf of the school

The administrators and moderators of any school social media accounts must be employees of the school and acting on the authorisation of the headteacher. Staff must act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

In addition, you must:

- Be aware at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school and your personal interests.
- Be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the school.
- Not engage in activities involving social media that might bring the school into disrepute or represent your views as those of the school.
- Not discuss on social media personal information about students, the school staff or other professionals you interact with as part of your job.
- Not use social media to attack, insult, abuse or defame students, their families, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations or the school.
- Consider the copyright of the content you are sharing and, where necessary, seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Ensure that your use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Personal use of social media

In order to safeguard your reputation and the reputation of the school, you are required to follow these guidelines in your personal use of social media.

- You must not have contact through any personal social media with any student or members of their family, from this school, unless the students are family members or there is a friendship with the family outside of the school environment.
- You must decline 'friend requests' from students that you receive to your personal social media accounts. If you receive requests from students who are not family members, you should discuss these in general terms in class.

- Information that you have access to as part of your employment, including personal information about students and their family members, must not be discussed on your personal social media.
- Photographs, videos or any other types of images of students and their families must not be published on your personal social media.
- School email addresses must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.

Guidance for your own privacy and safety

- You are advised to set the privacy levels of your personal accounts as strictly as you can and opt out of public listings on social networking sites.
- You should keep your passwords confidential and change them frequently.
- You should be careful about what you post online; it is not advisable to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information.