

### 1. Introduction

**1.1** This policy is in place to minimise the risks to schools through use of social media. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. The school may also vary this policy as appropriate in any case.

**1.2** This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google, Wikipedia, Whisper, Instagram, Vine, Tumblr and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect the school in any way.

**1.3** This policy covers all employees, consultants, volunteers, and agency workers.

### 2. Compliance with related policies and agreements

**2.1** Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any other policies. If an internet post would breach any policy/ procedure in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach the code of conduct for employees in schools
- breach the obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies
- breach any obligations contained in school policies and the Data Protection Act relating to confidentiality
- breach the disciplinary policy and procedure
- breach the bullying and harassment policy
- breach the eSafety and data security policy

**2.2** Staff should never provide professional references on behalf of the school for other individuals without the express authority of the Headteacher including on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the school and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the school.

### 3. Personal use of social media

Personal use of social media is never permitted during working hours or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems.

**4. Prohibited use**

- 4.1 The staff must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the school's interests or reputation, even indirectly.
- 4.2 The staff must not use social media to defame or disparage the school, its employees or any third party; to harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties; to make false or misleading statements; or to impersonate colleagues or third parties.
- 4.3 The staff must not express opinions on the school's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so.
- 4.4 The staff must not post comments about sensitive school-related topics, such as the school's performance, internal disputes involving pupils, parents/carers or employees or do anything to jeopardise the school's confidential information particularly with regards to pupils and other staff. The staff must not include the school's logo or other trademarks in any social media posting or in the staff profile on any social media.
- 4.5 Any misuse of social media should be reported to the Headteacher.

**5. Business use of social media**

- 5.1 If the staff duties require them to speak on behalf of the school in a social media environment, the employee must still seek approval for such communication from their manager who may require the staff to undergo training before the employee does so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to the staff activities.
- 5.2 If the staff is contacted for comments about the school for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, the enquiry should be directed to the Headteacher and the employee should not respond without written approval.
- 5.3 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

**6. Guidelines for responsible use of social media**

- 6.1 The staff should make it clear in social media postings, or in the employee's personal profile, that the employee is speaking on the employee's own behalf.
- 6.2 staff should be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that the employee is personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see. staff should ensure that they use privacy and access settings whilst being aware that they cannot control the use of their postings by others.

- 6.3** The staff should also ensure that their profile and any content they post are consistent with the professional image the employee presents to colleagues, pupils and parents.
- 6.4** If the staff is uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, they are advised to refrain from posting it until they have discussed it with their manager.
- 6.5** If the staff becomes aware of social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the school, the employee should contact the Headteacher.

## **7. Monitoring**

- 7.1** The school reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, employee activities using school IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that school rules are being complied with and for legitimate school purposes.
- 7.2** For further information, please refer to the eSafety and Data policies.

## **8. Breach of this policy**

- 8.1** Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 8.2** The staff may be required to remove any social media content that the school considers to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.