Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as You Tube have social media elements to them.

The school recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and learners are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, parents, carers and children.

Scope

This policy is subject to the school's codes of conduct and acceptable use agreements.

This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school.
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere.
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school

The school respects privacy and understands that staff and learners may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy, however we ask that staff consider their standing within the community and uphold the professional values of the school.

Digital communications with learners are also considered. Staff may use social media to communicate with learners and parents via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications. Staff may not use their personal accounts to add past or present pupils or parents. Staff should never use their personal social media accounts to communicate with parents, carers or pupils.

Organisational control

Roles & Responsibilities

- **SLT**
  - Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
  - Developing and implementing the Social Media policy
  - Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
  - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
  - Receive completed applications for Social Media accounts
  - Approve account creation.
  - Posting on public school social media accounts.
- **Administrator/Moderator**
  - Create the account following SLT approval
  - Administrators are all members of SLT
  - Store account details, including passwords securely
  - Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
  - Control the process for managing an account
- **Staff**
  - Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
  - Attending appropriate training
  - Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content he/she has posted via school accounts
  - Ensure any comments on school social media pages are in line with this policy.

Process for creating new accounts

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Senior Leadership Team which covers the following points:-

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- Will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. Parents have been advised that any comments, queries or complaints will be redirected to contact the school directly via phone or email. We also encourage parents to speak their child's class teacher in the first instance. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account. Such

comments will be immediately deleted and dealt with in line with school policies. The school social media page has a filter to block any comments which contain inappropriate language.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about school, staff, pupils or parents/carers. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media staff must follow the school media policy before responding.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- Staff may not use their personal accounts to add past or present pupils or parents. Staff should never use their personal social media accounts to communicate with parents, carers or pupils.
- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the school, respond to harmful and / or offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of online communications, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Key words to consider when composing online content are:

- Engaging
- Conversational

- Informative
- Professional

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to.

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload learner pictures online other than via official school channels with the agreed parental consent.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Learners should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.

Personal use

- **Staff**
    - Personal communications are those made via a personal online accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
    - Staff may not use their personal accounts to add past or present pupils or parents. Staff should never use their personal social media accounts to communicate with parents, carers or pupils.
    - Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy, however we ask that staff consider their standing within the community and uphold the professional values of the school.
- **Learners**
    - Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior learners of the school on any personal social media account.
    - The school's education programme should enable the learners to be safe and responsible users of social media.
    - Learners are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy
- **Parents/Carers**
    - If parents/carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.
    - Parents/Carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures.

Monitoring posts about the school

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the Internet for public postings about the school.
- The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Appendix

Managing your personal use of Social Media:

- "Nothing" on social media is truly private
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don't use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint
- Keep your personal information private
- Regularly review your connections – keep them to those you want to be connected to
- When posting online consider; Scale, Audience and Permanency of what you post
- If you want to criticise, do it politely.
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem

Managing school social media accounts

The Do's

- Make it clear who is posting content
- Use an appropriate and professional tone
- Be respectful to all parties
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting process
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible
- Ensure the account is set up securely and the account can be transferred to another approved staff member in the event of the account holder leaving the school.

The Don'ts

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation
- Don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content. Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts.
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances

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