



The Schools HR Co-operative
Every School Matters

Social Media Policy

Model HR Policies & Procedures for Schools and Academies

September 2015

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

Whilst recognising the benefits of Social media and the opportunities for communication this provides, this policy sets out the principles in which staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media to ensure the school upholds the highest possible standards of confidentiality, accountability and its reputation are safeguarded.

All staff working within the School are in a position of trust, they are therefore required to familiarise themselves with this policy and raise any concerns where they may arise to safeguard our children and protect our employees. Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites; Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.

Staff should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Staff should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use both in work and in their private lives.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff working in a school including the governing body and contractors. The aim is to advise staff and others of the expectation of working in a school environment when using Social Media, and highlighting:

1. The importance of ensuring that relevant privacy settings are activated and regularly reviewed.
2. The restrictions of maintaining a professional relationship and professional conduct are adhered to.
3. Guidance on what is acceptable and what is unacceptable when using Social Media

This policy provides clear avenues through which those concerns can be raised and reassuring staff who raise concerns that they will not be victimised if they have a reasonable belief and the disclosure was made in good faith.

3. Policy

Using Social Media on behalf of the School

Members of staff must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

Only official school sites must be used for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another. There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others, and written consent from the Headteacher must be obtained. Sites created must not breach the terms and conditions of social media service providers, particularly with regard to minimum age requirements. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

Staff are not allowed to access social media websites from the school's computers or devices at any time unless written consent has been obtained from the Headteacher. This includes any portable devices e.g. Tablets, smartphones etc. provided by the School for work purposes. As such, steps have been taken to restrict access to sites such as Twitter, Facebook and other social media websites on its computers.

Any recording devices e.g. Cameras, video cameras, mobile phones etc. must only be used for specified purposes as directed by the school.

The School understands that staff may wish to use their own computers or devices, such as laptops and smartphones, to access social media websites whilst they are at work. Staff must limit their use of social media on their own equipment to their official rest breaks such as their lunch breaks.

Staff using Social media in a personal capacity outside of the school environment must recognise that whilst they are not acting on behalf of the school, the school may be adversely affected if the school is identified as the staff members' place of work and negative or inappropriate comments are made. Staff are permitted to say that they work for the school, which recognises that it is natural for its staff to sometimes want to discuss their work on social media. However, the staff member's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the school's name.

Staff must also be mindful of the information they put on Social Media and consider how this will reflect on the School, its employees, pupils and their families.

It should not bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:

- Maintaining any relationship with pupils on Social Media e.g. staff should decline 'Friend' requests, unless the pupil(s) are immediate family members. If requests are received from pupils who are not family members, this must be raised with the Headteacher or another member of the Senior Management Team. Measures will then be taken to communicate to students that such connections should be with the Schools official site where appropriate.

- Having any contact with pupils' family members through social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
 - Criticising or arguing with parents, colleagues etc;
 - Making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
 - Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
 - Giving personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number or personal email address.
 - Using personal equipment (e.g. mobile phone device) to communicate with children or young people.
 - Not having the relevant written permission from parents for communication, using the schools equipment. Permission must detail the specific reasons why this communication is required.
 - Making contact for personal reasons
 - Using the internet or other communication channels to send personal messages to children/Young people.
 - Responding to/ request personal information from a child or young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of your professional role.
 - Mentioning in a negative manner, the school its pupils, parents or colleagues.
 - Commenting on any incidents that occur or have occurred within the school.
 - Posting photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families.
- **Breach confidentiality, for example by:**
 - Discussing confidential or personal information about an individual (such as a colleague or pupil) or organisation (such as a supplier of services); or
 - Discussing the school's internal workings (such as ongoing Personnel issues, or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the wider public);
 - The school does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
 - School or email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media.
- **Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:**
 - Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
 - Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the school); or
 - Posting images that are or are likely to be considered discriminatory or offensive.
 - Using social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations.

- **Breach copyright, for example by:**

- Using someone else's images or written content without permission;
- Failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something

Other

- No contact should be made via Social Media with pupils unless they are immediate family members.

5. Raising concerns

Any concerns should be raised with your Line Manager or the Headteacher.

6. Disciplinary action

All staff within the school are required to adhere to this policy. Staff should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the school, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

Where a contractor becomes aware that one of their employees has breached this policy they will need to notify the school, and ensure that appropriate action is taken against the employee.