



## **SOCIAL MEDIA and NETWORKING POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

- (i) This document sets out the school's policy on social media and networking. New technologies are an integral part of our lives and are widespread powerful tools which bring new communication opportunities in teaching and learning for school staff in many ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively but that this should be balanced with protecting our professional reputation and integrity. With this in mind, all staff working with pupils have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard their welfare, and to behave in the best interests of the pupils and the school that they work for. This procedure is also designed to protect staff from possible harassment by a colleague via a social networking site.
- (ii) This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Internet and Email procedure or guidance, the school's IT policy, the school's safeguarding and child protection guidance and any other related procedure for example the school's Model Disciplinary Procedure. If staff fail to adhere to the guidelines set out in this Social Media and Networking Policy, their conduct could be called into question and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them which could ultimately lead to their dismissal.
- (iii) Whilst this policy has attempted to cover a wide range of situations, it cannot cover all eventualities. Staff using social media and networking sites should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motives and intentions.
- (iv) The school understands that employees have the right to a private life and would respect this so long as employees follow the guidelines set out in this document and other documents this policy refers to. The school expects employees to maintain reasonable standards in their own behaviour such that enable them to maintain an effective learning environment and also to uphold public trust and confidence in them and their profession. Employees should avoid any conduct which is likely to bring the school, provision or institution into disrepute.



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### **2. Scope**

- (i) This document applies to all staff who work in the school. This includes all teaching and non-teaching staff. The general principles set out in this policy should also be followed by adults who work at the school but are not employed by the school.
- (ii) For the purpose of the policy, social media and social networking sites are websites by which personal information or opinions can be presented for public consumption and websites which allow people to interact with each other. Examples of social media and social networking sites could be all internet presence including blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Web 2, Bebo, Youtube and MySpace. Please note that this list is not exhaustive as new technology is emerging on a daily basis but it seeks to provide examples to staff. The definition of social networking and media may be increased as new technologies emerge.

### **3. Staff guidelines in relation to social networking and media activity**

- (i) If you wish to have a social media presence, please make sure that your employer is not identified on this presence unless there is, on an objective assessment, a legitimate reason for doing so and ensure that comments made are from your own behalf, for example by writing in the first person and using a personal email address as opposed to your employer's email address.
- (ii) Staff are personally responsible for their communication in social media. This includes any media attachments like photographs or videos. What staff publish on a social media site will be available for any member of the public to read (including parents, members of the Governing Body, colleagues, members of the Local Authority and prospective employers) for a long time. Staff should always think carefully about this when posting personal content.
- (iii) Staff should not post any media attachments such as photographs or videos which have subjects (pupils/colleagues etc) of the school in them. If you wish to post such items you should always speak to the Head Teacher in the first instance.
- (iv) Staff should not place any information regarding their employer, their colleagues, pupils or people they come into contact with as part of their employment on a social networking or media site.
- (v) Staff are advised for their own protection not to put personal information such as home addresses or personal telephone numbers on a social networking or media site.



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### **4. Staff guidelines in relation to pupil contact**

- (i) Staff are not expected to interact with any pupil (or past pupil under the age of 18) of the school on a social media or networking site. For example, the school would not think it appropriate for staff to 'friend' a pupil or request that a pupil 'friend' them.
- (ii) Any electronic communication regarding the school or the work you are carrying out in the school (including telephone and text messaging contact) with pupils or parents/carers should only take place using the schools formal communication systems. Staff should only use the schools website; the schools email address or the schools telephone number when communicating with pupils and parents/carers.
- (iii) Staff should not post remarks or comments on-line or engage in online activities which may bring the school into disrepute.

### **5. Social media and networking sites and cyberbullying**

- (i) Staff should never use social media to abuse or bully or otherwise comment about colleagues, pupils, carers of the pupils or anyone associated in the wider context of the school (eg member of the Governing Body, Local Authority, sponsor etc). Staff are expected to act respectfully when using social media and to avoid language which may be deemed as offensive to other people. For example, the school would not expect you to:
  - post anything that could be construed as discriminatory
  - post anything that could be construed as racist
  - post anything that is untrue or misleading
  - post anything that engages in criminal activity
  - post anything that is defamatory about people or organisations
- (ii) Staff who feel that they are subject to social media bullying by another member of staff or a pupil should where possible save evidence (eg emails, screen prints, text messages) and immediately report this to the Head Teacher for further investigation. Where the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the concern should be raised with the Chair of the Governing Body for further investigation
- (iii) Staff who feel that a colleague is not adhering to this policy should report their concerns to the Head Teacher for further investigation. Where the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the concern should be raised with the Chair of the Governing Body for further investigation.