

STYAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Styal Primary School



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

September 2023

To be reviewed in September 2024

This policy is applicable to all employees of Styal Primary School including Governors, supply staff and contractual staff and covers all uses of social networking applications which are used privately.

AIMS

To support all employees by establishing clear guidelines on the proper use of social media so that:

- the School is not exposed to legal challenge;
- the reputation of the School is not adversely affected;
- employees including Governors and contractual staff do not put themselves in a vulnerable position;
- employees including Governors and contractual staff understand how information provided via social networking applications can be representative of the School; and
- the use of social media does not impact on the School.

PRINCIPLES

The School recognises that many employees including Governors and contractual staff make use of social media in a personal capacity and, in the majority of cases, this is uncomplicated and trouble-free. Whilst the School respects an employee's, including Governors and contractual staff's rights to a private life it has no wish to interfere with this. When using such sites employees, including Governors and contractual staff must consider the potential impact it could have on their professional position, their own reputation and that of the School. The following identifies how an employee's (including Governors and contractual staff) personal life and work life can start to overlap.

- By identifying themselves as employees of the School, i.e. adding the School name on profiles, the perception of users will be that staff are representative of the School. It is therefore important that employees are mindful of the professional standards that are expected of them. Anything posted, including innocent remarks, have the potential to escalate into something that could potentially damage the image and reputation of the School, or undermine its work. The originating comment may be traced back to an employee (including Governors and contractual staff) of the School and, even if they have not been involved in the latter stages of the comments, they may find themselves subject to a disciplinary investigation.
- Individuals making complaints search the web for information about staff involved in their case – finding social networking sites, blogs and photo galleries that could give fuel to their concerns or help them to identify personal information about them.
- Journalists increasingly use the web to research stories, and may reprint photos or comments that they find.
- Law firms research social networking sites as a matter of course in preparing divorce, private law children's cases and other court proceedings.
- KCSIE 2023 clarifies that schools should explicitly inform shortlisted candidates (before interview) that they look on social networking sites to find out information about people applying for jobs.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Definition of social media

For the purpose of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. The term social media refers to a number of online networking platforms such as:

- blogs (written, video, podcasts), e.g. WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr;
- micro-blogging websites, e.g. Twitter;
- social networks, e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn;
- forums/message boards; and
- content-sharing sites, e.g. Flickr, YouTube and Instagram.
- instant messaging platform eg Whatsapp

Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow the guidelines outlined in this policy in relation to any social media that they use.

Personal use of social media at work

Employees are not allowed to access social media websites for their personal use from the School's computers or devices at any time. This includes laptop/palm-top/hand-held computers or devices (e.g. mobile phones) distributed by the School for work purposes.

The School understands that employees may wish to use their own computers or devices, such as laptops and palm-top and hand-held devices (e.g. mobile phones), to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees must limit their personal use of social media on their own equipment. Staff can use their own equipment, but must limit their personal use of social media on their own equipment to their official rest breaks such as on their lunch break. The use of any personal computers or devices must be discreet, appropriate (e.g. never in the presence of pupils) and in no way interfere with work.

Personal computer, phones etc should be stored away, locked in a store cupboard in the classroom during the day.

Photos must be taken on a school IPAD and not a personal mobile phone.

Social media in a personal capacity

The School recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, the employee's (including Governors and contractual staff) online profile, e.g. the name of a blog or a Twitter name, **must not contain the School's name**. Furthermore, while they are not acting on behalf of the School, employees must be aware that they can **damage the School if they are recognised as being one of the School employees**. Any communications that employees (including Governors and contractual staff) make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- a. bring the School into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising the School ;
 - criticising or arguing with management, colleagues, children or their families;

- making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations; or
 - posting images that are inappropriate, for example, photographs of themselves or colleagues taken at work or links to inappropriate content;
- b. breach confidentiality, for example by:
- revealing any information owned by the School ; or
 - giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or child) or an organisation, e.g. the School or the Local Authority;
- c. abuse their position of trust when working with children/young people, for example by:
- contacting children or their families through social networking sites unless the reason for this contact has been clearly and firmly established by the Head teacher;
 - accepting any requests to become a named friend on a social networking site made by a child/young person; or
 - uploading any photographs or video containing images of children/young people for whom the employee holds a position of trust unless in line with the School procedures;
- d. 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; or
- e. 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, including Governors and contractual staff of the School);
 - using social media to exclude other individuals; or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive.

Security and identity theft

Employees should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee is part of a "network". Employees including Governors and contractual staff, should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private and should never send abusive or defamatory messages.

Employees including Governors and contractual staff, must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth, place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords. In addition, employees should:

- ensure that no information is made available, or referred to, that could provide a person with unauthorised access to the School and/or any confidential information;
- inform their manager immediately if they suspect that their personal site has been compromised or accessed by an unauthorised person;

- refrain from recording any confidential information regarding the School on any social networking website;
- check their security settings on social networking site so that information is only visible to the people who they want to see it;
- put their name into an internet search engine to see what people can find out about them; and
- help friends and colleagues out by letting them know if they spot things on their pages that might be misconstrued.

Defamatory statements

Material posted on a site or a school's WhatsApp group may be defamatory if it contains something about the School's employees including Governors and contractual staff, partners, children or other individuals that an employee may come into contact with during the course of their work that is not true and undermines the School's reputation. For example, photographs or cartoons that may have been doctored to associate the School or its employees with a discreditable act.

If staff are also parents of the school, they may wish to join the class WhatsApp group. However, if staff are aware of defamatory statements made by parents / carers, they may inform SLT confidentially. (see Parent, Carer and Visitor Policy).

Libellous statements

Material posted on a site may be considered libellous if it is in permanent form and directly or indirectly clearly identifies the School or one of its employees or children with material that damages their reputation. Employees including Governors and contractual staff, should always use their own judgment but should bear in mind:

- that information that they share through social networking sites is still subject to copyright, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Safeguarding legislation;
- the Code of Conduct; and
- other relevant School policies (e.g. Whistleblowing Procedure, Equality Policy and policies and guidance regarding acceptable use of email, intranet and internet whilst at work).

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

All employees including Governors and contractual staff, are required to adhere to this policy. They should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the School's disciplinary procedure. In situations where it becomes known that an employee has posted material to be defamatory or a breach of contract, the employee will be asked to remove the offending material from the social media site immediately.

Serious breaches of this policy, e.g. incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the School, may constitute gross misconduct and could result in dismissal.

PARENTS AND CARERS RESPONSIBILITY

The increasing number of people using social networking sites has had both a positive and adverse effect on the reputation of schools in local communities.

However, in line with expectations of staff (including Governors and contractual staff), the School will not tolerate any malicious comments referencing the school or members of staff, on any social media platform.

Remarks made about a school can be destabilising for a community and, in particular, for the professional status of staff members including the Governors and contractual staff who have had allegations made against them. It can also lead to a 'whispering campaign' which can undermine the leadership of the Headteacher and the Governing Body.

If it is brought to the School's attention that malicious comments have been made on any social networking platform, which detail the name of the school and/or the name of staff members, then the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors will gather evidence, reassure staff and then follow a number of processes to deal with any problems and look at ways to counter any repeat occurrences, along with reminding parents and carers of the correct method for making a complaint (Complaints Policy).

In the age of social media, all institutions need to be robust against criticisms and opinions. Schools cannot monitor every comment put on social networking sites, but they can be proactive in trying to ensure that parents and carers have a responsibility to act as a 'positive digital role model' to their children and they can also serve as a supportive community to report any comments directly to the Headteacher if and when they are made.

EQUALITY

Styal Primary will ensure that, when implementing the Social Media Policy, no employee including Governors and contractual staff, parent or carer will be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender or transgender, marital status or civil partnership, racial group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, pregnancy or maternity, social or economic status or caring responsibility. This means that the policy may need to be adjusted to cater for the specific needs of an individual including the provision of information in alternative formats where necessary.

MONITORING

Data relating to the operation of this policy will be collated and monitored regularly to ensure that the policy is operating fairly, consistently and effectively. Issues that are identified from the data will be dealt with appropriately.

Date of policy: September 2023

Reviewed by: September 2024

Headteacher: Louise Boardman

Chair of Governors: Lee Walsh

Related policies: Complaints Policy, Equality Policy, Parent / Carer / Visitor Code of Conduct Policy, Whistleblowing Policy