



# Social Media Policy

February 2022

Produced by the Personnel: Schools Team V2.0

[www.sefton.gov.uk](http://www.sefton.gov.uk)

**School:** ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Signed by Chair of Governors:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed by Head Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** 22.2.22

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The policy provides clear guidelines for using social media sites to ensure they are used effectively within the workplace and that employees understand the restrictions associated with their usage, both in a professional and personal capacity. The policy is in place to ensure that the School and its employees/pupils are not exposed to security risks or reputational damage.
- 1.2 The policy must be read in conjunction with the Schools Internet and E-mail policies and the Acceptable Use Policy.

## 2. Definition

- 2.2 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.
- 2.2 This includes (but is not limited to) online social forums such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as blogs and video or image-sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 The social media policy covers all employees who have a contract of employment with the School or who work on behalf of the School.
- 3.2 This also includes temporary contracts, agency workers, contractors and employees on secondment from other organisations.
- 3.3 The contents of the policy cover social media use inside and outside the workplace both during work hours and outside normal working hours.
- 3.4 The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the School's facilities or equipment belonging to individuals.

## 4. Use of Social Media for Work Purposes

- 4.1 Any communications that employees make through a professional social media account, such as a School Instagram and website page, must not:
  - a) Be offensive, discriminatory, defamatory or make inappropriate comments about the School, its pupils, suppliers or any of its employees
  - b) Breach copyright, such as sharing photos, moving images or audio files and documents
  - c) Divulge confidential or personal information about, or belonging to the School, its pupils, its employees or suppliers
  - d) Publish anything which may have the potential to bring the School into disrepute
  - e) Encourage the public to send in personal details to the School via social media
  - f) Contain children's names with their picture
- 4.2 It may also be necessary to create closed blogs and social networking areas for curriculum purposes. Any such activity should be agreed in advance with the Head teacher and appropriate measures must be put in place to ensure the safety of the staff and pupils.

## 5. Personal Use of Social Media

- 5.1 It is acknowledged that many employees access social media sites outside working hours.
- 5.2 While the School does not want to impinge on the personal use of such sites, employees must be aware that inappropriate posts or blogs connected to or against the School or its ethos may result in disciplinary action.

- 5.3 Employees should be aware that personal use can impinge upon their contractual relations with the School, and they may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.
- 5.4 Employees using social media in a personal capacity must abide the list stated in paragraph 4.1 and must not:
- a) Post photograph/videos of themselves, colleagues, or pupils taken in school or which are works related.
  - b) Post information that would lead to the identification of a pupil.
  - c) Accept requests of any pupil of the School or former pupils under the age of 18 to become 'friends' on Facebook or any other social media site.
  - d) Accept requests from parents or guardians of any pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 to become 'friends' on Facebook or any other social media site. Should you wish to accept such a request you must seek advice from the Head teacher.
  - e) Make a request to become 'friends' with any pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 on Facebook or any other social media site.
  - f) Make a request to the parents or guardians of any pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 to become 'friends on Facebook' or any other social media site.
- 5.5 Contact with pupils, as detailed above may lead to the use of Child Protection Procedures and potentially to disciplinary action.

## **6. Use of social media in the recruitment process**

- 6.1 Recruiting managers should not conduct searches about applicants on social media sites as this contravenes the School's equal opportunities policy, and the recruitment and selection guidelines.

## **7. Protecting Employees from Online Abuse**

- 7.1 Employees may become the victim of online abuse or defamation from parents or children. Where this occurs, the employee must report the post/comment/page or profile to the Headteacher/line manager so appropriate support/action can be taken immediately. Further guidance is given in Appendix 1.

## **8. Disciplinary Action**

- 7.1 Failure to follow this policy maybe a disciplinary matter and any breach of a-e in section 4.1 or a-f in section 5.4 of this document will be viewed as potential gross misconduct.
- 7.2 Other violations, such as breaching the Data Protection Act, could lead to fines being issued and possible criminal or civil action being taken against the School and/or the individual(s) involved. Issue may also be referred to the safeguarding team/lead officer.

## Appendix 1

### Protecting Employees from Online Abuse

Due to the massive growth in social media sites like Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter and the use of YouTube, Schools employees may from time to time become the victim of online abuse or defamation by pupils, parents or members of the public. This can be through comments made and published on the internet or through social media networks. Where this occurs, the Head teacher and senior management will work to support its employees in every way possible.

#### **If you are bullied online**

- You should never respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. You should report incidents appropriately and seek support from your line manager or Head teacher.
- Save evidence of the abuse; take screen prints of messages or web pages and record the time and date.
- Where the perpetrator is known to be a current pupil or colleague, the majority of cases can be dealt with most effectively through the school's own mediation and disciplinary procedures.
- Where the perpetrator is known to be an adult, in nearly all cases, the first action should be for a senior staff member to invite the person to a meeting to address their concerns, and if they have a reasonable complaint, to make sure they know how to raise this appropriately. They can request that the person removes the offending comments.
- If they refuse, it should be an organisational decision what to do next – either the school or you could report the matter to the social networking site if it breaches their terms, or seek guidance from the local authority, legal advisers or support from other agencies for example, [The UK Safer Internet Centre](#).
- If the comments are threatening or abusive, sexist, of a sexual nature or constitute a hate crime, you or a representative from the school may consider contacting the local police. Online harassment is a crime.

Further information is available from the Department for Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Legal advice will consider whether a referral warrants further investigation or other action.