Culcheth Primary School

Social Media Policy

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Culcheth Community Primary School

1 Introduction

1.1 The widespread availability and use of social networking applications brings opportunities to communicate with various groups of people in new ways. Whilst recognising the benefits which using social media brings, this policy sets out the principles designed to ensure that all members of our workforce use social media responsibly so that the confidentially of students, staff and the reputation of the school/Academy Trust are safeguarded. All members of the workforce must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate when using social media.

1.2 This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during School / working hours or otherwise. This policy applies regardless of which device is used to access social media

1.3 Personal communications via social media accounts that are likely to have a negative impact on professional standards or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

2 Definitions and Expectations

2.1 All School staff have a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school and treat colleagues and pupils with professionalism and respect.

2.2 The term social media is intended to be a broad term that may include (but is not limited to): blogs; wikis; social networking sites; forums; bulletin boards; online gaming; apps; video/photo sharing sites; chatrooms and instant messenger.

2.3 Safeguarding children is paramount and is a key responsibility of all staff members. Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with pupils of the school via social networking.

2.4 All School staff must consider not publishing specific and detailed private thoughts, concerns, pictures or messages on any social media services, especially content that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others.

2.5 Staff should be aware that posting on line is instant and visible immediately and can be passed on quickly, therefore it is very difficult to remove once it has been posted.

2.6 Using social media on school devices for personal use during working hours is not permitted.

2.7 School staff should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to

copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's policies and procedures.

2.8 School staff must always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

3 Personal Use of Social Media

3.1 The safe and responsible use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites should be discussed with all members of staff as part of staff induction and will be revisited and communicated via regular staff training opportunities.

3.2 Safe and professional behaviour is outlined for all members of staff (including volunteers) as part of the School Code of Conduct and as part of the Schools' Acceptable Use Policy.

Reputation

3.3 All members of staff are advised that their online conduct on social media can have an impact on their role and reputation within the school and should be conscious at all times of the need to keep personal and professional lives separate.

3.4 Civil, legal or disciplinary action may be taken if staff are found to bring the profession or school into disrepute, or if something is felt to have undermined confidence in their professional abilities.

3.5 All members of staff are advised to safeguard themselves and their privacy when using social media sites. Advice will be provided to staff by sharing appropriate guidance and resources on a regular basis. This will include (but is not limited to):

- Setting the privacy levels of their personal sites.
- Being aware of location sharing services.
- Opting out of public listings on social networking sites.
- Logging out of accounts after use.
- Keeping passwords safe and confidential.
- Ensuring staff do not represent their personal views as that of the setting.

3.6 Members of staff are encouraged not to identify themselves as employees of the school on their personal social networking accounts; this is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the setting, and to safeguard the privacy of staff members.

3.7 All members of staff are encouraged to carefully consider the information, including text and images, they share and post online and to ensure that their social media use is compatible with their professional role and is in accordance with our policies and the wider professional and legal framework.

3.8 Information and content that staff members have access to as part of their employment, including photos and personal information about pupils and their family members or colleagues must not be shared or discussed on social media sites.

3.9 Members of staff must notify the Leadership Team immediately if they consider that any content shared on social media sites conflicts with their role or if they discover a website containing inaccurate, inappropriate or inflammatory written material, or images which have been taken and/or which are being used without their permission.

Communicating with pupils and parents and carers

3.10 Communication with children both in the 'real' world and through web based and telecommunication interactions should take place within explicit professional boundaries. This includes the use of computers, tablets, phones, texts, e-mails, instant messages, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, chat rooms, forums, blogs, websites, gaming sites, digital cameras, videos, web cams and other hand-held devices. (Given the ever-changing world of technology it should be noted that this list gives examples only and is not exhaustive.) Staff should not respond to requests from pupils or make any requests themselves to connect with pupils via social media and should not engage in conversations in open forums. They should ensure that their communications are open and transparent and avoid any communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming behaviour'.

3.11 If ongoing contact with pupils is required once they have left the school, members of staff will be expected to use official communication tools provided by the school.

3.12 Staff must not use personal social media accounts to contact pupils or parents, nor should any contact be accepted, except in exceptional circumstances in which prior approval has been given by the Headteacher/principal.

3.13 Any communication from pupils and parents received on personal social media accounts must be reported to the Headteacher/Principal without delay.

4 Official Use of Social Media

4.1 The official use of school social media sites only takes place with clear educational or community engagement objectives, with specific intended outcomes.

4.2 Staff must use school provided email addresses to register for and manage any official social media channels.

4.3 Official social media use will be conducted in line with existing policies, including: antibullying, image/camera use, data protection, confidentiality and child protection.

4.4 All communication on official social media platforms will be clear, transparent and open to scrutiny.

4.5 The School respects staff member rights to privacy and to express themselves. However, the School and staff members must also respect, and diligently protect, the privacy of fellow staff members, pupils, parents, and others. Privacy and confidentiality must be maintained in every possible way. Staff must not discuss pupil or family related information via social networking and public social media, texting, or online unless it is an approved medium and for a school related purpose.

4.6 Official social media use must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the school will adhere to its rights, responsibilities and duties in accordance with the following:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

4.7 Only social media tools which have been risk assessed and approved as suitable for educational purposes will be used.

4.8 Any official social media activity involving pupils will be moderated if possible.

4.9 Parents and carers will be informed of any official social media use with pupils; written parental consent will be obtained, as required.

4.10 If members of staff are participating in online social media activity as part of their capacity as an employee of the setting, they will:

- Always be professional and aware they are an ambassador for the setting.

- Disclose their official role but make it clear that they do not necessarily speak on behalf of the school.
- Always be responsible, credible, fair and honest, and consider how the information being published could be perceived or shared and if it is something that they want pupils, colleagues, or even future employers, to read.
- Always act within the legal frameworks they would adhere to within the workplace, including: libel, defamation, confidentiality, copyright, data protection and equalities laws.
- Ensure that they have appropriate consent before sharing images on the official social media channel.
- Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of the school, unless they are authorised to do so.
- Not engage with any direct or private messaging with current, or past, pupils, parents and carers unless prior approval has been given by the Headteacher/Principal.
- Inform their line manager, the designated safeguarding lead and/or the headteacher of any concerns, such as criticism, inappropriate content or contact from pupils.
- If in doubt, don't post it!

Reporting safeguarding concerns

4.11 Any content or online activity which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the lead safeguarding officer in the school.

4.12 Any online concerns should be reported as soon as identified as urgent steps may need to be taken to support the child.

4.13 With regard to personal safeguarding, staff should report any harassment or abuse they receive online while using work accounts.

5 Pupils' Personal Use of Social Media

5.1 Safe and appropriate use of social media will be taught to pupils as part of an embedded and progressive education approach, via age-appropriate sites and resources.

5.2 We are aware that many popular social media sites state that they are not for children under the age of 13, and as staff members we will remind pupils of this whilst still ensuring that they are taught how to use them safely.

5.3 Any concerns regarding pupils' use of social media will be dealt with promptly and in accordance with existing policies, including anti-bullying, behaviour and Acceptable Use Policies.

5.4 Concerns will be shared with parents/carers as appropriate, particularly when concerning underage use of social media sites, games or tools and the sharing or viewing of inappropriate images or messages that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory to others or harmful to the pupil themselves.

5.5 Through our approach to educating on social media pupils will be advised:

- To consider the benefits and risks of sharing personal details on social media sites which could identify them and/or their location.
- To only approve and invite known friends on social media sites and to deny access to others by making profiles private.
- Not to meet any online friends without a parent/carer or other responsible adult's permission or knowledge and only when a trusted adult is present.
- To use strong passwords.
- To use social media sites which are appropriate for their age and abilities.
- How to block and report unwanted communications.
- How to report concerns both within the school and externally.
- To remove a social media conversation thread if they are the administrator of such a thread that may have been used in an inappropriate way such as with threatening, hurtful or defamatory content.