

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Introduction

The school, staff, parents, and pupils utilise social media within personal and professional contexts, and it is essential that there are some guidelines in place to maintain control and an informed approach to these online tools.

While these media have a range of excellent opportunities for growth and improved communication, this policy also recognises the necessary precautions used when accessing and posting on social media accounts.

This policy maintains stakeholder and general confidence in the school's decisions and services thanks to responsible social media usage.

### Scope

This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the official school accounts on various social media platforms. While no social networks are specifically defined, social media platform is understood to include sites where content is posted directly by the users and shared with both the general public and private followers.

### Social Media and the Law

Hopes and Dreams must be committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services where required and meet the highest standards.

Disclosure of confidential information on social media breaches a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Common law duty of confidentiality
- Data Protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation 2018

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Personal-identifiable information (eg. pupil or employee records which are protected by the Data Protection Act 2018)
- Information divulged with the expectation of confidentiality
- Business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Commercially sensitive information
- Politically sensitive information

Staff members should also be aware of other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright. These include:

- The Libel Act 1843
- Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003
- Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act 1988

Hopes and Dreams and any associated bodies could be held responsible for information disclosed or legal problems caused by employees while working at Hopes and Dreams.

## **Principles**

Be professional, responsible, and respectful

The most important aspect of social media to remember is that broadcasting information online is no different to providing the information in another written or verbal format – if it is unacceptable to speak in a particular way or disclose particular information in person or within a school assembly, it is just as unacceptable to place it on a public social media profile.

As such, it's imperative that staff maintain a separate outlet for personal and professional lives. Staff should not put themselves into a situation where there is a conflict between your work for the school and your personal interests.

Staff must not engage in activities involving social media which may bring Hopes and Dreams or the associated bodies into disrepute. Staff must also not represent their personal views as the views of Hopes and Dreams on any social media or web platform.

It is prohibited to:

- Discuss personal information about pupils, Hopes and Dreams, or other staff on social media
- Use social media to attack, insult, or defame any pupils, family members, colleagues, associated organisations, or the School

All social media use must be accurate, fair, transparent, and professional when representing the School.

## **Personal Use of Social Media**

Most, if not all, staff will have a personal presence on social media sites and the School does not mean to infringe on this interaction. In order to maintain personal privacy and a healthy distinction between personal and professional lives, it's imperative that staff take certain measures to protect their own social media profiles.

Staff members should use the maximum available privacy options on social media profiles where they post about their day to day lives. For example, Facebook allows users to close off all but the most basic information from non-friends. Many colleagues within the education industry choose to use pseudonyms if they are concerned that pupils may try to find their accounts – this is not a requirement or expectation for staff. Staff should keep their passwords confidential and avoid logging into their personal accounts while on School premises.

When posting from personal profiles, it is important to remember which posts are visible to the public and which are not. Posts on a personal profile with high privacy settings cannot be seen by the general public, but posts in a public group from the same profile can be. Likewise, event photographs posted on venue social media sites are accessible to the general public, including pupils and their parents.

Staff members must not have contact with any current pupils through social media, unless the pupils are family members or have a relationship with the staff that preceded their entry to the School. Hopes and Dreams does not expect staff members to discontinue routine and normal contact with family members or friends via personal social media once the school provides services for them. However, any information staff members obtain as a result of their employment must not be used for personal gain or passed to others who may use it as such.

Staff members should also not have contact with pupils' family members through social media if that contact is likely to create a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity or professional abilities.

If any staff member is aware of inappropriate communication it must be reported immediately as above.

Limitations placed on the school regarding posting pupil full names and identifying information, as well as photographs, extends to personal social media use if it includes pupils.

Official school email addresses and other official contact details must not be used to set up personal social media accounts.

The school does not permit personal social media use while at work.

Finally, staff should be aware of the implications of placing personal information online and avoid sharing items which jeopardise their own privacy.

### **Using Social Media on Behalf of Hopes and Dreams**

Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with each other, unless otherwise agreed.

Staff must not set up any social media profiles for the school without specific permission to post on that medium. All profiles must be filled out in full and contain the Hopes and Dreams branding.

Staff members can only update and use the official school accounts with permission, and must not share the passwords or access details with other staff without permission.

It is important to be careful when posting pupil information online – whether on the school blog or on social media sites. When posting on social media:

- Do not use the pupil's full name – only use the first name and first initial (if there are several children with the same name mentioned)
- Do not post images of individual pupils unless talking about an individual achievement
- Ensure that you have parental consent to post images (i.e. If a parent has refused to have their child photographed or have those photographs posted, it is imperative that all staff respect that preference and are fully informed of these cases)
- Ensure that all links to external sites are appropriate and safe
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of School-sanctioned social media will result in immediate removal from School social media
- Only ever engage with pupils on social media where the messages are public
- Do not post images that clearly display parent or teacher car number plates as a prominent feature in the photograph
- Only post images and updates that uphold the school reputation and general personality of the school
- Use proper spelling and grammar in all updates – if there is a character limitation explain that it is update 1/2 or 2/2 rather than using text speak
- Only post updates that are relevant to the general school following, unless responding to a particular question
- Never post in all caps
- It is acceptable to retweet or thank people for positive messages
- Do not tag staff members in photographs
- Information must be worthwhile and accurate
- Updates must respect the audience and be sensitive in tone and topics discussed
- Personal opinions should not be expressed on official sites

### **Monitoring internet use**

Hopes and Dreams monitors internet usage and email activity without prior notification or authorisation from users.

Users of the School system and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send, or receive using the school system or accounts.

## Breaches of policy

Breaches of any part of this policy may result in disciplinary action taken against the staff member(s) involved.

The extent of disciplinary action is dependent on the severity of the breach. Consequences can include informal verbal warnings, formal verbal warnings, removal from School social media duties, or further disciplinary action and dismissal.

This policy was adopted on: November 2019

Signed on behalf of the Nursery School: .....  .....

Next review date: November 2020