

Social Media Policy

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“One of the most consistently high-achieving independent schools in Britain” Sunday Times Schools Guide

Introduction

Social media (e.g. Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as YouTube have social media elements to them.

Westbourne School recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents/carers and learners are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, parents, carers and children.

Scope

This policy is subject to the Schools code of conduct, acceptable use agreement and Staff Handbook.

This policy:

- applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school
- applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere
- encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.

The school respects privacy and understands that staff and learners may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications are those made via personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, or impacts on, the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Roles and responsibilities

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for:

- Facilitating training and guidance on Social Media use.
- Developing and implementing the Social Media policy.
- Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.



- Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
- Receiving completed applications for social media accounts.
- Approving account creation.

Administrators/Moderators of Social media accounts are responsible for:

- Creating the account following SLT approval.
- Storing account details, including passwords securely.
- Being involved in monitoring and contributing to the account.
- Controlling the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring).

All staff are responsible for:

- Knowing the contents of and ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.
- Attending appropriate training.
- Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via school accounts.
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school.

All students are responsible for:

- Adhering to the School's [Acceptable User Agreement](#)
- Using social media responsibly, remembering to:
 - Develop and tend to your real life relationships and experiences.
 - Take an honest self-assessment of your use.
 - Be yourself and be nice!
 - Set limits and take breaks. For example, no posting during homework time, shutting the phone off or keeping in another room during sleeping hours.
 - Don't share your passwords with friends.
 - Learn about privacy settings and review them often.
 - Utilise social reporting policies and sites.
 - Always think before you post

All Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) are responsible for:

- Setting guidelines and limits for when your child has use of their phone or device and what they can use it for.
- Monitoring usage and messages for appropriateness.
- Restricting access to certain sites.
- To be mindful of age restrictions on sites, these are there to protect and safeguard children.
- Reminding children that digital media leaves a digital footprint; this means that messages and images are stored and are traceable.
- To use it sensibly and safely.



Process for creating new accounts

The School community is encouraged to consider if a Social Media account will help them with their work and anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the SLT outlining:

- the aim of the account
- the intended audience
- how the account will be promoted
- who will run the account (at least two staff members should be named)
- will the account be open or private/closed

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents/carers.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

Any comments, queries or complaints made through those accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at a weekend) even if the response is only to acknowledge receipt.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must escalate to SLT.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely serious by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- The use of social media by staff while at work may be monitored, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.



- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Handling abuse

- When acting on behalf of the school, handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity.
- If a conversation turns and becomes offensive or unacceptable, school users should block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and should inform the audience exactly why the action was taken
- If you feel that you or someone else is subject to abuse by colleagues through use of a social networking site, then this action must be reported using the agreed school protocols.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards. Keywords to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- Informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

In line with our [Digital Policy](#), school use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use any photos or video recordings should be sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected.
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload learner pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts.
- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Learners should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.

- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately and report it via the low level concerns reporting form.
- Staff must not, under any circumstances, use their own devices to take photographs of pupils.

Personal use - Staff

- Personal communications are those made via personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken
- The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.

Personal use - Students

- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils/students of the school on any personal social media network account.
- The school's education programme should enable the learners to be safe and responsible users of social media.
- Learners are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the use of the school's pupil code of behaviour policy.

Monitoring posts about the school

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to proactively monitor the internet for public postings about the school.
- The school should effectively respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Appendix 1 - Managing your personal use of Social Media

Key things to consider when using social media:

- "Nothing" on social media is truly private.
- Social media can blur the lines between your professional and private life. Don't use the school logo and/or branding on personal accounts.
- Check your settings regularly and test your privacy.
- Keep an eye on your digital footprint.
- Keep your personal information private.



- Regularly review your connections/'friends' – keep them to those you want to be connected to.
- When posting online consider; scale, audience and permanency of what you post.
- If you want to criticise, do it politely.
- Take control of your images – do you want to be tagged in an image? What would children or parents say about you if they could see your images?
- Know how to report a problem.

Appendix 2 - Managing Westbourne Social Media accounts

The Do's:

- Check with a senior leader before publishing content that may have controversial implications for the school.
- Use a disclaimer when expressing personal views.
- Make it clear who is posting content.
- Use an appropriate and professional tone.
- Be respectful to all parties.
- Ensure you have permission to 'share' other peoples' materials and acknowledge the author.
- Express opinions but do so in a balanced and measured manner.
- Think before responding to comments and, when in doubt, get a second opinion.
- Seek advice and report any mistakes using the school's reporting process.
- Consider turning off tagging people in images where possible.

The Don't's:

- Don't make comments, post content or link to materials that will bring the school into disrepute.
- Don't publish confidential or commercially sensitive material.
- Don't breach copyright, data protection or other relevant legislation.
- Consider the appropriateness of content for any audience of school accounts, and don't link to, embed or add potentially inappropriate content.
- Don't post derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory content.
- Don't use social media to air internal grievances.

