Potters Green School

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Social Media Guidance for School Staff

(Introduced September 2020)

1. Introduction

1.1 The school accepts that employees may engage in the responsible use of social media. Responsible use of social media can be positive for learning and teaching. It can also be personally enjoyable and beneficial.

1.2 This guidance will make clear what standards are expected of anyone who works for the school and uses social media as well as what actions may be taken when it is considered a member of staff may have breached this guidance.

1.3 This guidance applies to all staff use of social media, including:

1.3.1 on behalf of school
1.3.2 as part of their work directly with pupils and/or parents
1.3.3 in their wider professional lives; and
1.3.4 in their personal lives

1.4 In this guidance we define **social media** to mean:

'Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.'

1.5 In this guidance, the word **staff** includes permanent, temporary and casual staff, agency staff, and volunteers during their time working with the school.

1.6 In this guidance, the word **parents** is used to mean the parents, carers and others with parental responsibility for a pupil at the school.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this guidance is to;

a) clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking by staff;
b) encourage social networking to be used in a beneficial and positive way;
c) safeguard staff, pupils, parents and members of the public from inappropriate behaviour and abuse through social networking;
d) safeguard the reputation of the school, other schools, other organisations and employers from unwarranted abuse through social networking; and

e) set out the procedures that will be followed where it is considered that staff have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking.

3. Responsibility and accountability

3.1 Headteacher

3.1.1 should ensure that all existing and new staff become familiar with this guidance and its relationship to the school's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT and e-safety;

3.1.2 should provide opportunities to discuss appropriate social networking use by staff on a regular basis and ensure that any queries raised are resolved swiftly;

3.1.3 must ensure that any allegations raised in respect of access to social networking sites are investigated promptly and appropriately, in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure, code of conduct and internet safety guidelines; and

3.2 School staff

3.2.1 should ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this guidance and its relationship to the school's standards, policies and guidance on the use of ICT and e-safety;

3.2.2 should raise any queries or areas of concern they have relating to the use of social networking sites and interpretation of this guidance – with their line manager in the first instance; and

3.2.3 must comply with this guidance

3.3 School's HR Provider

3.3.1 will advise and support headteachers and line managers on the application of this guidance.

3.4 School governors

3.4.1 will review this guidance and its application biennially (or more frequently as required); and

3.4.2 should ensure that their own behaviour is in line with that expected – as outlined in the governors' code of conduct and in accordance with this guidance.

4. When using social media at any time

4.1 Staff **must not** place a child at risk of harm.

4.1.1 Staff **must** follow statutory and school safeguarding procedures at all times when using social media.

4.1.2 Staff **must** report all situations where any child is at potential risk by using relevant statutory and school child protection procedures.

4.2 Staff **must not** allow their use of social media to affect their ability to do their job in any way.

4.2.1 Social media relationships **must** be declared along with other personal relationships or interests whenever necessary or appropriate. For example, staff are required to declare personal relationships with colleagues or children, and social media relationships must be declared in the same way.

4.2.2 Any social media relationships, and the context of that relationship, should be declared in writing to a member of the senior leadership team. This will be kept on staff's personnel file.

4.3 Staff **must** maintain the reputation of the school, its staff, its pupils, its parents, its governors and its wider community.

4.4 Staff **must not** contribute to or intentionally access any social media content which is illegal, discriminatory, sexual, or otherwise offensive. Such behaviours could lead to damage to their professional reputation or damage to the reputation of the school. This damage would breach the social media guidance. Such behaviours may also result in criminal proceedings.

4.5 Staff **must not** use social media to criticise or insult the school, its staff, its pupils, its parents, its governors or its wider community, either directly or indirectly.

4.5.1 Staff should be aware that there are other, more appropriate, methods of raising valid concerns about the school and its staff, including the Grievance and Whistleblowing Policies.

4.6 Staff **must not** use social media to harass, bully or intimidate any pupil, parent, member of staff, governor or other member of the wider school community.

4.7 Staff **must not** breach school confidentiality.

4.7.1 School staff **must** follow the school's data protection responsibilities when using social media.

4.7.2 Staff **must not** reveal any private or confidential school matters when using any social media.

4.8 Staff are responsible for their actions (and its consequences) whenever they use social media.

4.8.1 Staff are responsible for **all** their social media content, including photographs and posts that they have shared.

4.8.2 Staff must understand that social media offers no guarantee of privacy and that any content they produce can be shared more widely by others. A member of staff's professional reputation or the reputation of the school could be damaged by content, perhaps which was intended to be private, being shared more widely than intended. Staff are advised to use the highest levels of privacy and security.

4.8.3 Staff would still be held responsible for any consequential breach of this guidance as they were responsible for producing the original content, including posts that they have shared.

4.9 Staff are responsible for the configuration and use of any personal social media accounts they have. They are responsible for determining the level of security and privacy of **all** their social media content. Staff are advised to use strong passwords to protect their accounts and consideration may be given to not using their full name to make them less easy to identify by parents, children etc.

4.10 Staff **must** raise all doubts, questions and concerns related to social media with school leaders. Staff must seek advice if they are not sure if any particular use of social media (or a related action) is appropriate or would potentially breach this guidance. Staff cannot rely on their ignorance or lack of knowledge to defend any breach of this guidance.

5. When using social media on behalf of the school

Some schools use social media as a communications channel for the school and to engage with the wider community.

5.1 Staff **must** be given explicit written permission to use social media on behalf of the school by a school leader.

5.2 These staff **must** follow all related procedures when acting on behalf of the school.

5.3 Staff **must** have separate user accounts for school use of social media, where appropriate.

5.4 Staff **must** not use school social media for any personal discussions or for any individual personal matters even if initiated by other members of the school community. Users must be directed to more appropriate communication channels where appropriate.

6. When using social media as part of working with pupils and students

Some schools are starting to use social media to engage with their own pupils to support learning.

6.1 Staff **must** ensure that all social media use when working with pupils is sanctioned by the school; only uses explicitly agreed social media; and, follows agreed policies and procedures.

7. When using social media in staff's wider professional life

Social media is a useful tool for engaging and collaborating with the wider education community.

7.1 Staff **must** be clear that their social media content is personal and not endorsed or supported by the school.

7.2 Staff **can** identify their school where appropriate but cannot use account names, school branding or anything else that could imply that the content is official school content.

7.3 Staff **must** be particularly careful to not reveal any details of staff, pupils, parents or other members of the school community that make it possible to identify any individuals.

7.4 Staff **must** use appropriate behaviour and language at all times. As a guide, this should be similar to that which would be used when taking part in a face-to-face meeting with other education professionals.

8. When using social media in staff's personal life

8.1 The personal use of social media must neither interfere with a member of staff's ability to maintain their professional reputation nor impact on the reputation of the school, either directly or indirectly.

8.2 Staff **must** take all reasonable steps to ensure the proper separation of their professional and personal lives.

8.2.1 Staff **must not** use school social networking accounts for personal content.

8.2.2 Staff **must** respect the wishes and privacy of any other members of their school community with whom they have personal social media contact.

8.3 Staff **must not** use personal social media with any child with whom they **solely** have, or have had, a staff/pupil relationship. This includes ex-pupils until they reach the age of 18.

8.3.1 School staff **can** have social media contact with pupils or ex-pupils where other appropriate relationships exist. As examples, a pupil who is also a family member or a family friend. These relationships must be open and transparent. The member of staff should report these social

media relationships to senior leaders for their own protection, as per section 4.2.

8.3.2 Staff **must** retain any communications to pupils or ex-pupils rejecting any approaches made on social media and ensure that they are professional in tone. Staff **must** also report these in writing to a member of the senior leadership team to ensure transparency. This will be kept on staff's personnel file.

8.4 Staff **must not** use personal social media with anyone with whom they solely have a staff/parent relationship.

8.4.1 Staff at schools can often have more complex relationships than just being a member of staff or a parent. As examples, staff can also be parents (of pupils at the school), in relationships or have friendships with other staff or parents; or also governors. Any member of staff should report any social media relationships in writing to a member of the senior leadership team for their own protection. This will be kept on staff's personnel file.

8.5 Staff **must** make sure that their personal social media activities take into account who they have social media relationships with – particularly any other members of school community – and moderate their social media behaviour accordingly.

8.6 Personal use of social media at school:

8.6.1 School staff **can** make reasonable personal use of social media during the working day or while at school, subject to clause 8.6.4. This must not interfere with any work activities.

8.6.2 Staff can only use social media when no pupils are present and during breaks or non-directed time.

8.6.3 Staff **can** use school devices where social media sites can be accessed using school systems. Use of this should be reasonable and not excessive.

There is no obligation on the school to make social media sites available to staff.

8.6.4 Staff **can** only use personal devices with social media while at school where the use of personal devices is allowed by the school.

9. Excessive use of social media at school

9.1 Staff **must not** spend an excessive amount of time while at school on personal use of social media. They must ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their duties.

10. Monitoring use of social media on school equipment

10.1 The school reserves the right to monitor **all** staff internet use and content, including when staff are making personal use of social media, on any school systems or equipment.

11. Disciplinary action over social media use

11.1 All staff are required to adhere to this document. Staff should note that any breaches of this guidance may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this guidance, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the school, may constitute gross misconduct and may lead to summary dismissal.

11.2 Similarly, where there is a serious breach of this guidance, action may be taken in respect of other members of staff who are not employees (volunteers) which may result in the termination of their appointment.

11.3 The head teacher must take advice from their HR provider before considering disciplinary action.

12. If you have any concerns

12.1 When using social media, you may have a concern about what you are seeing or being told by another user which has safeguarding implications or may cause harm to the reputation of the school and/or its community. If you have any such concerns you should contact the headteacher or the named safeguarding contact in school

12.2 If a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil (or group of pupils) or parent has made inappropriate/insulting/threatening comments about them, or other staff members, on a social networking site; then they should consider reporting this to the headteacher so that the appropriate process can be followed and support can be offered to the employee.

Implemented by school on September 2020

Review by: As required