

# The Heights Primary School Policy for **SOCIAL MEDIA** Version 1.1



**Responsible officer:** Headteacher  
**Responsible Committee:** Pupil and Staff Welfare

Date of last review: June 2017  
Date of next review: June 2018

## **Introduction**

Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and forums are rapidly replacing traditional media and mass communication methods. These tools present opportunities for the school, but also challenges.

The ability for anybody with Internet access to instantly publish to the world brings with it professional responsibilities that all staff and others representing the school need to understand, even if they do not use social networks for work purposes.

The school understands the benefit of using these channels to stay connected to all stakeholders.

## **Purpose of policy and guidance**

- To minimise the reputational, legal and governance risks to the school and its employees arising from use of social media by staff and others in both personal and professional capacities.
- To enable the safe use of social media for the purposes of communication and engagement.
- To ensure a consistent approach is applied across the school, focused on achieving educational objectives and ensuring the safeguarding of children and staff.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to the use of social media by all school employees and volunteers for both business and personal purposes regardless of whether they are accessed using school equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff. Members of the Academy Trust and Governors have also voluntarily agreed that they will comply with the policy as if members of staff.

For the purposes of this policy 'social media' refers to websites and online services that allow users to publicly interact with each other. This includes but is not limited to:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Blogs
- LinkedIn and other professional recruitment networks
- Message boards/forums
- Comments under news items and other articles.

## **Users' responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media must be reported promptly to your line manager.

## **Governors and senior staff responsibilities**

Governors and senior staff are responsible for ensuring that employees, volunteers and others representing the school, are aware of this policy and act in accordance with its requirements.

## **Compliance**

If any employee is found to have breached this policy they may be subject to the school's disciplinary procedure. If a criminal offence is considered to have been committed, further action may be taken to assist in the prosecution of offenders.

## **Monitoring**

All school ICT systems may be monitored in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy so personal privacy cannot be assumed.

The school respects the privacy of its employees. However, postings made on a personal account may attain a wide readership and will therefore be considered public rather than private. Publicly accessible postings may be investigated if there is a suspected breach of this policy.

## **Use of social media at work and at home**

School ICT equipment is primarily reserved for educational use. However, in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy you can access and use social media in your own time during break periods providing it does not interfere with your work. The following applies to all staff regardless of what equipment is used or when postings are made:

- Discussing the school, your work and the people you work with on social networks should not be considered private, even in a forum with restricted access (such as on someone's Facebook wall). It is not the same as having an offline discussion among friends or a one-to-one email conversation. Social networks are designed to make sharing as easy as possible, so anything you say may be circulated to a wider audience and could be brought to the attention of governors, school staff and parents.
- Staff are personally responsible for anything they post online.
- You must not do or say anything that may harm the reputation of the school or undermine your role as a representative of the school.
- You must show proper consideration for the privacy of the people your work with.
- You must comply with your responsibilities under the Dignity at Work Policy.
- You must not allow your professional and personal use of social media sites to become blurred; you need to be mindful of your duties not to:
  - Disclose school information without authority
  - Unless authorised, take part in any political or public activity which compromises or might be seen to compromise your impartial service to the school and its stakeholders.
  - Make derogatory comments about the school, its policies or procedures.
  - Make derogatory comments about other employees or stakeholders.
  - Continue to engage with others who become abusive or aggressive.
- You may identify yourself as a school employee and contribute to a conversation to inform customers or protect the schools' reputation. The school encourages this use of social media, but it falls under professional use so you should first read all of this policy and the guidance provided.
- Staff will be required to remove postings that are deemed to be in breach of this policy.

## **Legal implications**

Staff should be aware that there are a number of legal (including criminal) implications associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Liability can arise under the laws of:

- Defamation
- Copyright
- Discrimination
- Human Rights
- Protection from harassment
- Criminal Justice
- Data Protection

## **Professional use of social media**

'Professional use' is when you use social media for official school business or post in a way that implies that you represent the school.

This includes:

- Publishing information via a school-owned account
- Posting in your role as an employee of the school
- Posting as an official spokesperson for the school.

Appropriate professional use of social media is encouraged but you should familiarise yourself with the guidance given herein before posting.

Staff must not 'friend' or enter any private online contact with children. Friend requests should be politely declined by explaining that it is against school policy that is designed to protect staff, children and the public from any misunderstandings. School staff should be aware of their professional responsibility and the reputation of the school when using social media in a personal capacity.

We are mindful that social media is changing so rapidly that this policy cannot account for every technological development between policy revisions. Therefore we are reliant on all those to whom the policy applies acting at all times in accordance with the spirit of the policy.