



# Social Media Policy

## Purpose

- The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.
- The purpose of this policy is to encourage good practice, to protect Shorefields School and its employees, and to promote the effective use of social media as part of the school activities.
- This policy covers personal and professional use of social media and aims to encourage its safe use by the school and its employees.
- The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the school's IT facilities and equipment, or equipment belonging to members of staff.
- 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.
- This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including full-time and part-time employees, fixed-term employees and agency workers.

## Roles, Responsibilities and Procedure

### Employees should:

- be aware of their online reputation and recognise that their online activity can be seen by others including parents, pupils and colleagues on social media;
- ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this policy and all other relevant school policies,
- be aware that any excessive use of social media in school/college may result in disciplinary action;
- be responsible for their words and actions in an online environment. They are therefore advised to consider whether any comment, photograph or video that they are about to post on a social networking site is something that they want pupils, colleagues, other employees of the school, or even future employers, to read. If in doubt, don't post it!

### Managers are responsible for:

- addressing any concerns and/or questions employees may have on the use of social media;
- operating within the boundaries of this policy and ensuring that all staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

### Definition of social media

- Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. It allows people to share information, ideas and views. Examples of social media include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, Myspace, Flickr and YouTube.

### **Acceptable use**

- Employees should be aware that content uploaded to social media is not private. Even if you restrict it to 'friends', there is still capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond the intended recipients. Therefore, employees using social media should conduct themselves with professionalism and respect.

### **Employees should not upload any content on to social media sites that:**

- is confidential to the school, pupils or its staff
- amounts to bullying
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- brings the school into disrepute
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similarly inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips
- undermines the reputation of the school and/or individuals
- is defamatory or knowingly false
- breaches copyright
- is in any other way unlawful.

### **General**

- Employees should be aware of both professional and social boundaries and should not therefore accept or invite 'friend' requests from current pupils or ex-pupils under the age of 18, or from parents on their personal social media accounts such as Facebook.
- The school understands that many staff members take on secondary paid employment directly with families. In addition to this due to the nature of our pupils, staff often build friendships with parents. Whilst we encourage positive working relationships with parents/carers it is not recommended to be a 'friend' with parents on social networking sites.
- Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships with parents/ carers and colleagues. Or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work places.
- Never enter into social media dialogue with parent/carers or similar over a school related issue, the correct grievance procedures should be followed at all times. Personal communication could be considered inappropriate and unprofessional and may put you and/or your colleagues vulnerable to allegations.
- Employees should note that the use of social media accounts during lesson time is not permitted.

### **Business use of social media**

- There are many legitimate uses of social media within the school curriculum and wider school community to support student learning.
- There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school social media sites. Staff must not create sites unnecessarily or for trivial reasons which could expose the School to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.
- As a guideline, we would expect to only have the one school account which access too; control/monitor and update will be limited to key members of staff.

When nominated individuals are using the schools social media for educational purposes, the following practices must be observed:

- The current password or login details for all social media accounts must be provided to IT who will retain a record of such information;
- The content of the school-sanctioned social media site should be solely professional and should reflect well on Shorefields.
- Images and names of individual pupils will not be shared or used on the schools social networking sites.
- Care must be taken that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe;
- Any inappropriate comments on or abuse of school-sanctioned social media should immediately be removed and reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- Staff should not engage with any direct messaging of students through social media where the message is not public;
- In the event of any member of staff noticing anything detrimental to the reputation of Shorefields they should not reply in person but immediately pass on the information to the head teacher.

#### **External School Events**

- Occasionally for externally arranged events, we will be asked for permission for students to appear on their social media platforms. When this happens, we will seek specific written consent in accordance with our Data Protection responsibilities and hold a copy of this consent on the pupil's record. We will do this in line with our Records and Retention Procedures.

#### **Recruitment**

- We may use social media to advertise vacancies within school. Such advertisements will be prepared and posted by HR.

#### **Breach of this policy**

- Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with our investigation.
- You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy