

# Social Media Policy



**Approved By**

Governing Board

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## 1. Purpose and scope

This policy aims to:

- Set guidelines and rules on the use of school's social media channels
- Establish clear expectations for the way members of the school community engage with each other online
- Support the school's policies on data protection, online safety and safeguarding

Staff, students and parents/carers are required to read, understand and comply with this social media policy.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during school/working hours or otherwise.

It applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using:

- School IT facilities and equipment
- Equipment belonging to members of staff and pupils
- Any other IT/Internet-enabled equipment

All members of the school should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, may be subject to copyright, safeguarding and data protection legislation. Everyone must also operate in line with the school's equalities, harassment, child protection, safer recruitment, and online safety and ICT acceptable use policies.

### 1.1 Definition of social media

For the purposes of this document, 'social media' is considered to include all technologies that allow individuals to communicate and share information (including photos and video). This includes group messaging services such as WhatsApp.

## 2. Risks

The school recognises the risks associated with use of the Internet and social media and regulates their use to ensure this does not damage the school, its staff and the people it serves. Principal amongst these risks are:

- cyber bullying by pupils/students;
- access to inappropriate material;
- offending behaviour toward staff members by other staff or pupils/students;
- other misuse by staff including inappropriate personal use;
- inappropriate behaviour, criticism and complaints from external sources;
- loss or theft of personal data;
- virus or other malware (malicious software) infection from infected sites;
- disclosure of confidential information;
- damage to the reputation of the school; social engineering attacks - i.e. the act of manipulating people into disclosing confidential material or carrying out certain actions;

- civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation;
- staff members openly identifying themselves as school personnel and making disparaging remarks about the school and/or its policies, about other staff members, pupils or other people associated with the school.

### 3. Use of official school social media

The school's official social media channels are as follows:

- X (formerly Twitter) - @harperbell\_SDA

These accounts are managed by the Headteacher who may delegate this to a trusted and trained member of staff. Staff members who have not been authorised by the Headteacher to manage, or post to, the account, must not access, or attempt to access, these accounts.

#### 3.1 Moderation

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will delete as soon as reasonably possible:

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments considered to be spam
- Personal information, such as telephone numbers, address details, etc.
- Posts that advertise commercial activity or ask for donations

Every reasonable effort will be taken to politely address concerns or behaviour of individual users, following the school's complaints policy. If users are repeatedly abusive or inappropriate, they will be blocked.

Staff responsible for our social media accounts will also ensure that all content shared on social media platforms is age appropriate for the school community.

#### 3.2 Following other social media users

The school may follow other users if you follow us on X (formerly Twitter) – being followed by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind

### 4. Personal use of social media by staff

Please note: while we recommend members of staff make their private social media profiles unidentifiable to pupils, we understand many staff will use sites such as X (formerly Twitter) or LinkedIn for professional purposes.

The school recognises an employee's right to a private life. However, the school must also ensure its reputation and confidentiality are protected. Therefore, an employee using any ICT away from school, including email and social networking sites must:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for the school in a way that could have the effect of bringing the school into disrepute

- not express a personal view as a school employee that the school would not want to be associated with
- notify the Senior Leadership Team immediately if they consider that content posted via any information and communications technology, including emails or social networking sites, conflicts with their role in the school
- not have any unauthorised contact or accept 'friend' requests through social media with any pupil/student under the age of 18 (or under age 19 where the school has such provision), (including former pupils/students and/or those who attend other schools) unless they are family members;
- exercise caution when having contact or accepting 'friend' requests through social media with parents so as not to compromise the school's reputation or school information;
- not allow interaction through information and communications technology, including emails or social networking sites, to damage relationships with work colleagues in the school and/or partner organisations, pupils/students or parents
- not disclose any data or information about the school, colleagues in the school and/or partner organisations, pupils/students or parents that could breach the Data Protection Act 1998
- not use the Internet or social media in or outside of work to bully or harass other staff or others

The school expects all staff (including governors and volunteers) to consider the safety of pupils and the risks (reputational and financial) to the school when using social media channels, including when doing so in a personal capacity. Staff are also responsible for checking and maintaining appropriate privacy and security settings of their personal social media accounts.

Staff members will report any safeguarding issues they become aware of.

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff behaviour policy and the code of conduct.

Any communication received from current pupils (unless they are family members) on any personal social media accounts will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or member of the senior leadership team immediately.

Staff should not also do not have contact via personal accounts with past pupils (if ongoing communication is required, this should be using via official school channels).

## 5. Personal use of social media by pupils

The school encourages pupils to:

- Be respectful to members of staff, and the school, at all times
- Be respectful to other pupils and parents/carers
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Pupils should not use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff

- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other pupils or parents/carers
- Post images of other pupils without their permission

Any concerns about a pupil's social media use will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policy.

## 6. Personal use of social media by parents/carers

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils.

When communicating with the school via official communication channels, or using private/independent channels to talk about the school, parents and carers should:

- Be respectful towards, and about, members of staff and the school at all times
- Be respectful of, and about, other parents/carers and other pupils and children
- Direct any complaints or concerns through the school's official channels, so they can be dealt with in line with the school's complaints procedure

Parents/carers should not use social media to:

- Complain about individual members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- Complain about the school
- Make inappropriate comments about members of staff, other parents/carers or pupils
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- Post images of children other than their own

The school will not create whats app groups for parents to use as part of official school communication. School staff will not communicate with parents/carers through whats app using their own devices/numbers. The school texting system (School Ping) must be used.

## 7. Senior leadership responsibility in relation to bullying and harassment

The school owes a duty to take reasonable steps to provide a safe working environment free from bullying and harassment.

For this reason, it is essential that the Senior Leadership Team take appropriate steps to deal with any incident where it is alleged that a staff member has subjected others to abusive or personally offensive emails, phone calls or content on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, or by any other means.

If a Senior Leader is made aware of such an allegation, the Senior Leadership Team should deal with it in the same way as any other incident of bullying or harassment in line with school policies, by investigating the allegations promptly and appropriately and providing the victim with appropriate support to demonstrate that the matter is being dealt with seriously.

Senior Leaders should encourage staff to preserve all evidence by not deleting emails, logging phone calls and taking screen-prints of websites. If the incident involves illegal content or contains threats of

a physical or sexual nature, the Senior Leadership team should consider advising the employee that they should inform the police. In the event that such evidence contains indecent images of children, it is an offence to save, send, or alter an image or to show it to anyone else. Therefore, the evidence must be placed in a secure location such as a locked cupboard where others will not be able to see it. In these circumstances the Police should be contacted immediately for advice.

## **8. Training and awareness**

The implementation and summary of this policy will form part of staff induction and then will be revisited and communicated via regular staff training opportunities.

## **9. Monitoring and review**

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, for legitimate business purposes. This includes ascertaining and demonstrating that expected standards are being met by those using the systems, and for the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

The headteacher will monitor the implementation of this policy, including making sure that it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school.

This policy will be reviewed annually. The governing board is responsible for approving this policy.

## **10. Related policies**

- Child protection policy
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Behaviour policy
- Staff behaviour policy
- Code of conduct