Social Media Policy

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History of Policy Changes

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change

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Introduction

Hamwic Education Trust (HET) believe that all pupils should receive a high quality, enriching, learning experience in a safe and inclusive environment, which promotes excellence through a broad curriculum that prepares them for their future and opens doors to a diverse array of opportunities as well as that all pupils and adults within HET flourish as individuals and together.

Social media is a broad term for any kind of online platform that enables people to directly interact with each other.

We recognise the benefits of social media, but it also brings potential risk, to the school and to individuals. For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is defined as websites and applications (apps) that allow people to create or share content and/or participate in social networking. Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, X (Formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, WordPress, Tumblr, Ask.fm, WhatsApp.

We realise that a growing number of educationalists and education groups use discussion groups, online chat forums and bulletin board to share good practice and disseminate information and resources. The use of online discussion groups and bulletin boards relating to professional practice and continuing professional development is encouraged, although employees are reminded that they are representing the school, and appropriate professional standards should apply to all postings and messages.

This Social Media Policy outlines guidelines for the appropriate and responsible use of social media by school employees, pupils, and stakeholders.

The purpose is to promote positive interactions, protect the school's reputation, and ensure the safety and privacy of all users.

Purpose

The school recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Employees are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media to positively promote the school to our community. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation.

This policy also ensures the local governance committee maintains its duty to safeguard children, the reputation of the school and those who work for it and the wider community.

All employees are expected to comply with this policy. All leaders are responsible for ensuring their team read, understand and comply with this procedure.

In order to be an official 'school platform':

- Master privileges and access permissions are to be held by the school
- The school must have editorial oversight of all content
- The number of employees with administrative rights should be limited to those necessary

'Quasi school' social media, for example a Instagram account such as 'Miss Stuart History @ Secondary School' are not official school platforms unless the above conditions are met. The school will not accept liability for content and postings on accounts containing the school name which have not been authorised and do not meet the official 'school platform' criteria. Personal information and pictures should not be posted without appropriate consent and oversight. Authorised accounts will remain the property of the school and may be deleted at any time by the school.

A breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action.

Scope

This policy is subject to the school's Codes of Conduct and Acceptable Use Agreements and:

- Applies to all employees and to all online communications that 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 employees and pupils 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's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Definitions

- **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, personal accounts should NOT be used to communicate on behalf of the school. Personal communications that mention the school or mentions anything or anyone school related, 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
- **Digital communications** with pupils are also considered. Employees may use social media to communicate with learners via a school-authorised social media account for teaching and learning purposes, but must consider whether this is appropriate, and consider the potential implications. Employees must never use their personal accounts for communicating with pupils. For example, a department may wish to have an Instagram account which pupils and parents can follow to share resources, but employees should not enter into private conversations (e.g. direct messages on Instagram) with pupils. From a safeguarding perspective, we would not approve using Facebook accounts or groups for this, however pupils following an approved school public social media account would be acceptable

Roles and Responsibilities

The local governance committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the headteacher/school leadership team.

School Leadership Team

- 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 employees and external agencies as required
- Receive completed applications for social media accounts
- Approve account creation

IT Team

- Create the account following SLT approval
- Store account details, including passwords securely
- Be involved in monitoring the account
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead employees has left the organisation (closing or transferring)

All Employees

- Know the contents of and ensure 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 he/she has posted via school accounts
- Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school

Process for creating new accounts:

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department Instagram account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page.

Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the school leadership team (via the school business manager) which covers the following points: -

- The aim of the account
- The intended audience
- How the account will be promoted
- Who will run the account (at least two employees should be named)
- The account must be open to the public, not private/closed
- Reason why the main school account cannot be used for the intended purpose

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.

Once set up, the following rules must apply:

- Employees should set up a distinct and dedicated social media site or account for educational purposes. This should be entirely separate from any personal social media accounts held by that employee, and should be linked to an official school email account
- The current password or login details for all social media accounts must be provided to IT who will retain a record of such information
- Employees must ensure that they do not identify a pupil using their full name. Only first/forenames or initials may be used
- 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 leadership team
- Employees should not engage with any direct messaging of pupils through social media where the message is not public
- Employees should not seek to view, link up or view pupil accounts. For example, in the case of Instagram, employees should not "follow back" those who follow, share or like school comments/posts

Compliance

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other school policies. For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach our IT policies and procedures
- breach our code of conduct
- breach our disciplinary policy or procedures
- breach our anti-bullying and harassment policy
- breach our equal opportunities policy
- breach our data protection policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague or pupil online)
- breach any other laws or regulatory requirements

Employees must make themselves aware of and act in accordance with their duties under the DfE statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe* as these relate to:

- their own online activity
- the online activity of pupils and other colleagues and
- information of which they become aware online including their duties relating to children missing from education, child sexual exploitation, FGM and preventing radicalisation (Prevent)

Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Any employee suspected of committing a breach of policy will

be required to co-operate with our investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details. You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Monitoring

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. 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.

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

Behaviour & Use

- 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 employees must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy
- Employees must not use social media to infringe on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments about employees
- School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain
- Employees must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school
- If a journalist makes contact about posts, made using social media, employees must consult with the headteacher before responding
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of employees, and escalated where appropriate
- The use of social media by employees 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 screenshot, block, report or delete other users or their comments/posts and notify the school business manager as soon as possible

- 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. Key words to consider when composing messages are:

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

Use of images

The school maintains a list of those parents/carers who have objected to or who have placed any restrictions or limitations on the use of images of their child. **Employees should familiarise themselves with the names of the pupils on this list.** It is a disciplinary offence to use, post or publish a photograph or video image of a pupil contrary to the instructions of their parent/carer. All employees should read the contents of the photo consent form and be aware of the conditions of use.

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 using the photo consent form. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes should be respected
- Under no circumstances should employees share or upload pupil pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts and only if we have express written parental consent to publish their picture on social media (see the school photo permissions list)
- Employees must ensure that they do not identify a pupil using their full name. Only first/forenames or initials may be used
- Employees should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Pupils 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 employees inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately and notify the school business manager.

Monitoring posts about the School

- As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively 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
- Where possible/necessary, direct any official requests that are created on social media to go through the official channels, rather than responding to them on social media e.g. someone asking what time parents evening starts is ok to respond to, but someone enquiring about getting a reprint of a pupil report should be directed to the school office

General Guidance for Employees: Social Media Rules

These rules should be followed, to ensure we meet the required standards:

i. Be kind:
    - Use common courtesy.
    - Consider the potential effect on others of your words or content you post.

ii. Be honest:
- Be transparent about your role, especially when representing the school in an official capacity.
- Only post about things you know to be true and only if it is appropriate to share them.

iii. Be sensitive:
- Be especially careful when posting about potentially inflammatory subjects.
- Do not give advice or information that you know to be contrary to the School's policies or interests.
- Do not reveal any sensitive information about the school or about any plans that are not yet public.
- In the event of an incident affecting the school or any members of the school community only official communications channels and accounts should comment or share news or updates.
- Be aware of the potential risks of communicating with current and ex-pupils in ways which may be considered as inappropriate, particularly if it could be shown that the adult-pupil relationship of trust had been breached.
- Only use official school platforms to post school information, celebration, news and photographs. Ensure all posts are in line with the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any inappropriate contact from pupils to a member of SLT at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations from escalating.
- Employees are reminded that, as a safeguarding issue, they should always be careful about who they are 'talking to'. It is very easy to hide an identity in an on-line conversation.

iv. Protect confidentiality:
- Don't share anything private about anyone else, especially pupils.
- Don't share anything about yourself that you wouldn't want the rest of the school community to see.
- Be aware that what you post could divulge information such as your home address.
- Follow the Data Protection Policy at all times.
- Apply appropriate security and privacy settings to your social media accounts and the devices you use to access them.
- Be aware of 'phishing' attempts through social media, where scammers may try to obtain information about you or other people, including passwords or financial information.

v. Maintain professional standards
- Remember you are representing the school and the same standards of conduct should be followed online as well as offline, especially concerning children.
- Do not post or share offensive, discriminatory or illegal content, or anything that would bring the school into disrepute.
- Maintain professional boundaries and do not befriend pupils on social media.

vi. If in doubt, don't post!
- Once you've posted something to the internet it cannot be taken back.
- Even if you delete content it may already have been copied or saved by another user, and could be shared wider.
- Even if you have posted in a closed or private group other members may not respect the rules or your confidentiality.

Concerns and complaints relating to social media activity or account should be directed to Susannah Hill.

Managing school 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'ts

- 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 grievance

Personal Use

Managing your personal use of social media:

- **Nothing** on social media is truly private
- When posting on social media, check, check and check again which account you are about to post with. You do not want to post a personal message or photo to an official school page!
- 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 – 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

Employees

- Employees are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils of the school on any personal social media network account
- Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. No official school based communication should happen through the use of personal social media accounts.
- 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 for authorised employees

Pupils

- The school's online programme should enable the pupils to be safe and responsible users of social media
- Pupils 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 behaviour policy

Parents/carers

- Parents/carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures