

# Edward Peake C of E (VC) School

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## Social Media Policy

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Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits for all school stakeholders. This policy gives clarity to the way in which social media/mobile phones are to be used by pupils, governors, visitors, parent helpers and all staff at Edward Peake School. It will also provide guidance for parents.

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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, pupils 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. Use of official school social media

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

- Facebook; X (formerly Twitter)
- Individual department areas such as Inclusion and curriculum areas have their social X social media profiles.

These accounts are managed by school staff. Staff members who have not been authorised to manage, or post to, the account, must not access, or attempt to access, these accounts.

### 2.2 Facebook

The school posts on Facebook:

- Alerts about changes (e.g. fundraising , severe weather updates,)
- Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- Advertisements for school events or activities
- Job vacancies or requests for volunteers
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers
- Achievements of pupils and staff
- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals

The school will not post on Facebook:

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent)
- Harmful or abusive comments
- Messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school
- Links to staff members' personal accounts

### 2.2 X (formerly Twitter)

The school posts on X:

- Alerts about changes (e.g. fundraising, severe weather updates,)
- Reminders (e.g. approaching deadlines, events or class activities, reminders about policies/procedures)
- Advertisements for school events or activities
- Job vacancies or requests for volunteers
- Links to newsletters, guidance and factsheets for parents and carers
- Achievements of pupils and staff
- Photos or posts about school trips, events and activities
- Seasonal greetings and messages about religious festivals

The school will not post on X (formerly Twitter):

- Names and photos of individuals (unless they have given consent)
- Harmful or abusive comments

- Messages to specific people
- Political statements
- Advertisements for businesses unless directly related to the school
- Links to staff members' personal accounts

## 2.3 Moderation

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

- Abusive, racist, sexist, homophobic or inflammatory comments
- Comments we consider 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.

## 2.4 Following other social media users

The school:

- Will only 'like' Facebook pages with a non-commercial interest – being 'liked' by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind
- May follow other users if you follow us on X (formerly Twitter) – being followed by us doesn't imply endorsement of any kind

## 3. Personal use of social media by staff

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.

When using social media, staff must not:

- Staff must never add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 18).
- Staff are strongly advised not to add parents or colleagues as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff must not post comments about the school, pupils, parents or colleagues including members of the Governing Body.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should regularly review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults Who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Inappropriate use by staff and governors may lead to disciplinary action as outlined in the Code of Conduct for All Adults policy.

- Use personal accounts to conduct school business
- Complain about the school, individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Reference or share information about individual pupils, colleagues or parents/carers
- Post images of pupils
- Express personal views or opinions that could be interpreted as those of the school
- Link their social media profile to their work email account

Any concerns regarding a member of staff's personal use of social media will be dealt with in line with the staff 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).

It is important that all staff and governors conduct themselves in a professional way and ensure that potential risks are mitigated when using social networking. Care should be taken to avoid: -

- Publishing anything that brings the school into disrepute
- Releasing confidential information into the public domain
- Initiating or continuing an online discussion between some but not all members of the Governing Body undermining collective knowledge and responsibility.

#### **4. 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.

#### **5. Use of social media by pupils within school.**

The school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) outlines the rules for using IT in school and these rules therefore apply to use of social media sites. Such sites are blocked on the school network for pupils through the digital firewall and therefore cannot be used/accessed using equipment school. The use of mobile/smart phones by pupils is strictly prohibited and therefore no social media should be accessed on the school site. Information regarding the procedures for dealing with a breach by a pupil can be found the ICT Acceptable Use Policy Incorporating E-Safety, Data Security & Disposal of ICT Equipment Policy.

## **6. Social media platforms**

In terms of private use of social networking sites by a child it is generally understood that children under the age of 13 are not permitted to be registered on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Reddit, Snapchat, X and Secret.

However, the minimum age on LinkedIn is 14, on WhatsApp and TikTok it is 16 and on Vine it is 17 years old.

Some platforms, such as YouTube, WeChat and Kik, have a minimum age required of 18, although children aged 13-17 can sign up with parental permission.

It is therefore acknowledged that pupils could have access to these sites outside of school and this may cause issues which could impact on pupils during the school day. It remains the sole responsibility of parents and carers to police pupil activity on social media platforms accessed outside the school network.

## **7. Communication with parents/carers**

The school expects parents/carers to help us model safe, responsible and appropriate social media use for our pupils. Parents and carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking via the Home School Agreement.

Methods of school communication include the website, Twitter, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for every pupil.

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

We would recommend that Parents/carers do 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.
- Post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.
- Draw attention to, or discuss, behaviour incidents
- Post images of children other than their own

If a member of staff or governor becomes aware of any inappropriate pictures or comments on social networking sites they should advise the Headteacher immediately.

## **8. Dealing with incidents of online bullying/inappropriate use of social networking sites**

The school's Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a pupil on the school roll.

In the case of inappropriate use of social networking by parents, the Headteacher/and or the Governing body will contact the parent asking them to remove such comments and seek redress through the appropriate channels such as the Complaints Policy. Any requests for the removal of content will be also be put in writing.

The Governing Body understands that, "There are circumstances in which police involvement is appropriate. These include where postings have a racist element or where violence is threatened or encouraged."

Furthermore, "Laws of defamation and privacy still apply to the web and it is unlawful for statements to be written...which:

- expose (*an individual*) to hatred, ridicule, contempt or extremism
- cause (*an individual*) to be shunned or avoided
- lower (*an individual's*) standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society or
- disparage (*an individual in their*) business, trade, office or profession."

(National Association of Headteachers)

## 9. Training and awareness

The safeguarding team regularly deliver assemblies to all pupils on the appropriate use of social media.

## 10. 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).

Due to the ever changing nature of information and communication technologies it is best practice that this policy be reviewed annually.

## 8. Related policies

- Safeguarding and Child protection policy
- ICT and internet acceptable use policy
- Behaviour policy
- Staff behaviour policy
- Mobile phone use policy

Date approved: July 2024

Review date: July 2025