Excellence
in all we do

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles that PCHS, staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

1   INTRODUCTION

The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *Twitter* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.

While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that PCHS staff and contractors are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that students, parents and the public at large have confidence in PCHS' decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of students and other staff and the reputation of PCHS are safeguarded.

Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

2   SCOPE

This policy applies to Governors, all teaching and associate staff, external contractors, teacher trainees and other trainees, volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school. These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy. This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for professional purposes; including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the schools. Email is not specifically covered in this policy but guidance can be found in our Code of Conduct.

This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*), blogs, mirco-blogs such as *Twitter*, chat rooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia,* social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

3   LEGAL FRAMEWORK

PCHS is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the

course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

> The Human Rights Act 1998
> Common law duty of confidentiality
> Data Protection Act 1998.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:
> Person-identifiable information, e.g. student and employee records protected by the Data Protection Act 1998
> Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
> School or Learning Trust business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
> Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations
> Politically sensitive information.

Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:
> Libel Act 1843
> Defamation Acts 1952 and 1996
> Protection from Harassment Act 1997
> Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
> Malicious Communications Act 1998
> Communications Act 2003
> Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

PCHS could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass coworkers online or who engage in cyber bullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render PCHS liable to the injured party.

4   RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff Handbook.

5   PRINCIPLES – *BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL*

Staff must be conscious at all times of the need to keep personal and professional lives separate.

Staff should not put themselves in a position where there is a conflict between their work for the school and their personal interests.

Staff must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the school into disrepute.

Staff must not represent their personal views as those of the school on any social medium.

Staff must not discuss personal information about students, PCHS staff and other professionals they interact with as part of their job on social media.

Staff must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame

students, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, or the school.

Staff must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of the school.

6 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of the school in their personal webspace. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services. Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any student from the school, unless the students are family members.

PCHS does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.

Staff members must not have any contact with students' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.

If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable students to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school and through authorised school sites created according to the requirements specified in section 7 and Appendix A.

Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from students they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from students who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost students to become 'friends' of the authorised school site.

On leaving the School's service, staff members must not contact students by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact students from their former schools by means of personal social media. Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about students and their family members, colleagues, PCHS staff and other parties and school(s) must not be discussed on their personal webspace.

Photographs, videos or any other types of image of students and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school uniforms or clothing with school logos or images identifying sensitive school premises must not be published on personal webspace.

School email addresses and other authorised contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media. Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

School's branding, badges, or logos must not be used or published on personal webspace.

PCHS does not permit access to social media sites in school. The Headteacher can approve access for particular activities following submission of a business case and risk assessment that justify the benefits of using social media and minimise the risks.

Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the workplace.

Staff members are strongly advised to ensure that they set the privacy levels of their personal sites as strictly as they can and to opt out of public listings on social networking sites to protect their own privacy. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online; it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

7   USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF PCHS

Staff members can only use authorised school sites for communicating with students or to enable students to communicate with one another.

The authorised Social Media accounts for the school are Twitter and Facebook.

> Twitter = @pchsnews
> Facebook = Prudhoe Community High School

There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating other school sites to communicate with students or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

When a new Twitter account is created, they should 'follow' the main account for that school to allow sharing of information via the authorised Twitter account.

Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

Logos and branding

Only the authorised school logo should be used as the profile picture for an account. If the profile also has a header image, an image of your choice may be used.

If a Facebook page or group is created, a senior member of staff from the department must be made an Administrator for the page/group.

Passwords for all accounts must be shared with the Headteacher who must also be made aware of all staff who have access to the account.

8   USING PERSONAL DEVICES TO TAKE PICTURES

Staff are able to use their own devices - mobile, tablet, digital camera, etc - to take pictures of students and their work, providing parental consent has been given.

Staff are advised to move these images to their Google Drive folder as soon as possible and then delete the images from their device or memory card as soon as possible to avoid potential issues.

9   MONITORING OF INTERNET USE

PCHS monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users. Users of PCHS email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

10   BREACHES OF THE POLICY

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with the PCHS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of the school any illegal acts or acts that render the school liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Contracted providers of School services must inform the relevant school officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.

APPENDIX A
Requirements for creating social media sites on behalf of PCHS.

A.1   CREATION OF SITES

Staff members participating in social media for work purposes are expected to demonstrate the same high standards of behaviour as when using other media or giving public presentations on behalf of the school.

Prior to creating a site, careful consideration must be given to the purposes for using social media and whether the overall investment is likely to be worthwhile for achieving the proposed pedagogical outcome.

The proposed audience and level of interactive engagement with the site, for example whether pupils, school staff or members of the public will be able to contribute content to the site, must be discussed with the Headteacher and individual Line Manager

Staff members must consider how much time and effort they are willing to commit to the proposed site. They should be aware that maintaining a site is not a one-off task, but involves a considerable time commitment.

The relevant line managers must take overall responsibility to ensure that enough resources are provided to keep the site refreshed and relevant. It is important that enough staff members are trained and are able to maintain and moderate a site in case of staff absences or turnover.

There must be a careful exit strategy and a clear plan from the outset about how long the site will last. It must not be neglected, creating a potential risk to the school brand and image.

Consideration must also be given to how the success of the site will be evaluated to assess whether the site has achieved the proposed objectives.

Monitoring of this policy

What?	How?	When?
Regular monitoring	**Headteacher reviews content for appropriateness**	**Termly**

Action	By whom	By when
Updated	DHT	August 2021
Approved	Chair's Action	
To be reviewed	DHT/HT	August 2022