



**St James' CE VA Primary School**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Approved by Governors July 2016**

**Review due annually, as part of safeguarding/e-safety reviews**

### **Related Documents**

At Chapter 3, Section 5 of the Personnel Handbook the document 'Safer Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings' sets out the code of conduct expected from staff working in maintained schools within the Borough with regard to safer working practices. The advice includes a commentary on communication with pupils and use of the internet.

E-safety policy, including Acceptable Use of ICT

Safeguarding policy

Staff code of conduct

Staff handbook

## **Internet and Social Media Policy**

1. From the perspective of the School social media offers a new way to communicate key messages and engage with pupils, parents, governors and other stakeholders. It also offers the School opportunities for public consultation, a two way dialogue with pupils, staff, governors and parents for the purposes of influencing school policy and direction.
2. When using social media and internet sites the School will apply the same rules that would apply to the actions of employees in general as covered by the Safer Working Practices document and, therefore, draws no distinction between the conduct online and conduct offline. The School will take a view about staff actions in respect of social media and the internet either inside or outside of work that affect employee's work performance, the performance of others or the interests of the School.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

3. When using social networking sites and the internet staff should ensure that this does not damage the reputation of the School (or yourself) whether this is carried out during school time or privately. Staff are personally responsible for the content they publish on social media sites and the internet and must be mindful that this information will be in the public domain. Employees must have regard to the fact that they will be responsible for any commentary which is deemed to be a breach of copyright, defamatory, libellous or obscene.

## **Transparency**

4. It is recognised that the line between professional and personal business can sometimes be blurred. It is important that individuals are thoughtful about the content and potential audiences for anything contributed to a social media site or the internet. It is vital that employees should be honest about their identity, and, where appropriate, be clear that any views shared are the employees as an individual and not necessarily the views of the School.
5. The use of social media on behalf of the School should only be used in a way that will add value to the School, and accordingly all employees have a duty to present accurate information and ensure that pupils, other staff, governors and parents are not misled.
6. Any member of staff contacted by the published media or radio or television about a post they have made on a social networking site should inform the Head teacher immediately.
7. Any member of staff who is contacted by a pupil or a member of a pupil's family via social media must report this contact in writing to the Head Teacher immediately. A screenshot should be taken of the attempted contact.
8. The School recommends that staff do not include members of pupils' families as contacts ('friends') on social media, even where there are personal relationships outside of the working environment. The School, does, however, recognise that it has no right to prevent this type of contact.
9. The School recommends that all staff set their privacy settings at the highest level to prevent unwanted access from the wider school community.

## **Monitoring**

10. While the School does not monitor employees through social networking sites or the internet if there were concerns with regard to the activities of a member of staff or an investigation was taking place then the School would consider accessing social media sites. This covers both private and professional use of social media.

## **Legal Issues**

11. All employees of the School should take the following into consideration when using social media:-
  - Be aware of the School policy and guidelines for using social media whether this is for personal use or as part of the working role.
  - Be familiar with the legal areas outlined below before writing about colleagues or sharing information about the School.
  - Ensure that posted material does not disclose privileged or confidential information.
  - Remember that defamation is the act of making a statement about a person (or an institution) that is considered to harm their reputation. Where such a defamatory statement is written down (either in print or online) this is referred to as libel.
12. In drafting this policy the School recognises that it may be held responsible for something an employee has written or said if it is on behalf of the School or on a school sanctioned site. Action can also be taken against anyone repeating libellous information from another source so careful checks are needed before quoting statements from other social network sites or the internet.

## **Conclusion**

13. The School respects the legal rights of employees with regard to the use of social networking and the internet. In general what an employee does in their own time is their affair and the School recognises that some staff may wish to publish private material on the internet including, but not limited to, social networking websites. Any activities, however, in or outside of work involving the internet are prohibited by this policy if they affect or could affect the School's reputation or service delivery interests, job performance (of the member of staff concerned or others) in a negative way in the reasonable opinion of the governors.
14. Employees may face disciplinary action if they harass, intimidate or demean other employees of stakeholders in the School on a social networking site. Employees must make every effort to ensure that any remarks on a social media website are credible and accurate with a disclaimer that the views are those of the member of staff and not of the employer. It is likely that to share confidential or private information about the School, its employees or governors on a social media site or the internet will result in a disciplinary investigation.

## Twitter Usage Policy

### Aims of Using Twitter:

- To quickly share and celebrate children's achievements, successes and school updates.
- To demonstrate safe and responsible use of social media
- To provide parents and other members of the school community with regular updates and information about the life of the school

The school Twitter account will be run from school devices by the Head Teacher.

The school Twitter account will be a Public account. Senior leaders will monitor the followers and block any who appear to not be school focused.

The school Twitter account will usually tweet between the hours of 8am and 6pm between Monday and Friday. The only time tweets outside of this time are for school events (e.g. football matches, residential trips, performances) or to share urgent school news (e.g. closure due to adverse weather).

The school Twitter account will only follow educationally or community focussed link accounts (eg Bedfordshire Police, parent accounts).

The school Twitter account will occasionally reply to any 'replies' on Twitter. This is not the platform to discuss or debate school related issues, so parents should not expect any response to their tweet. Parents or other users who do not abide by this may be blocked.

Any users who use derogatory, offensive, defamatory or other tweets deemed inappropriate will be blocked.

The school Twitter account will only use children's first names when referencing children.

The school Twitter account will only use Twitter to share positive messages about the school.

The account may be used to share news and information during a school trip. The account will be run by a senior teacher on a 3G or 4G connected phone for the period of the trip. Photos taken on the phone for the purpose of sharing on Twitter will be deleted once they have been shared.

The school will change the Twitter account password on a termly basis.

Individually targeted content will not be posted e.g. "Well done Josh a better lesson today". Tweets to a year group or class along the lines of "don't forget the..." are acceptable.

By endorsing twitter we may be encouraging children to use twitter so reinforce e-safety rules such as "Never tweet anything that would be potentially upsetting; make sure you know how to report to anything you find that disturbs you; be careful who you talk to they may not be all they appear; never meet anyone from twitter world without telling your parents." Etc.

Twitter's own safety rules can be read on: [https://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-abuse-or-policyviolations#topic\\_166](https://support.twitter.com/groups/33-report-abuse-or-policyviolations#topic_166)