



## St Hilary School Social Media Policy

### 1.0 Introduction

This policy aims to outline the responsibilities of employees when accessing social media, either personally or using it for School purposes. The purpose of this policy is to provide advice for line managers and members of staff about how to manage organisational risks when social media is used for both business and personal use, and to ensure that its use is acceptable to avoid bringing the for School into disrepute.

Social media is the term used to describe the online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media can involve building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

The School recognises the value that social media can have if used in a responsible and professional way. While it is recognised that employees are entitled to a private life, the School is committed to maintaining confidentiality and professionalism at all times whilst also upholding its reputation by ensuring employees exhibit acceptable behaviours.

Individuals are personally accountable for their behaviour and may be held liable for any breaches of this policy. All individuals who work on School premises, including agency, contract workers and volunteers are therefore expected to abide by the School's policy on social media. Not acting in accordance with the policy will be taken into consideration when offering work.

The School will adhere to its obligations under the legislation relevant to the use and monitoring of electronic communications, which are predominantly the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000; the Communications Act 2003; Data Protection Act 1998; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Defamation Act 1996 and the Equality Act 2010.

This policy supports the aims of the Acceptable use of IT Equipment, Staff Code of Conduct and the Disciplinary Policy.

The School treats equality of opportunity seriously and has an equality framework that is applicable to staff in order to promote and ensure equality of opportunity. Implementation of this procedure must be clear and transparent and not subject to any unfair discriminatory practices. All staff are required to familiarise themselves and understand this procedure.



## St Hilary School Social Media Policy

### 2.0 Data protection and monitoring

Computers and servers are the property of the School and are primarily designed to assist in the performance of work duties. To ensure appropriate use of the internet, the School's internet system is linked to South West Grid for Learning and their software monitors all websites visited by employees for business and security purposes. Therefore, employees should have no expectation of privacy when it comes to the sites they access from School computers, devices or remote desktop service.

The School may exercise its rights to intercept internet access under the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000 for the following business reasons:

- To establish the existence of facts relevant to the School's business
- To ascertain compliance with regulatory practices or procedures relevant to the Group
- To ensure that employees using the system are achieving the standards required
- To prevent or detect crime
- To investigate or detect the unauthorised use or abuse of the telecommunications systems, including using social media websites
- To ensure effective operation of systems, e.g. to detect computer viruses and to maintain an adequate level of security

To be able to exercise its rights, the School must make all reasonable efforts to inform every person who may use the internet systems that monitoring may take place. The communication of this policy to all employees meets this requirement as;

1. This policy will be displayed on the school website and a paper copy is available in the school office and staff room.
2. All new staff through their induction will be requested to confirm they have read and understood it before being able to access the School IT network unsupervised.

### 3.0 Privacy settings and personal information

Default privacy settings for some social media websites allow some information to be shared beyond an individual's contacts. In such situations, the user of the site is personally responsible for adjusting the privacy settings for the account. Information available on social media sites could be produced as evidence by either the School or an employee, should it be necessary during School procedures, or legal proceedings. Therefore, employees are strongly encouraged to review their access and privacy settings for any social media sites to control, restrict and guard against who can access



## St Hilary School Social Media Policy

the information on those sites. Even if privacy and security settings are utilised, anything posted on social media sites may be made public by onward transmission.

Social media offers the ability to share personal information rapidly and easily. Employees should be aware of the School's Acceptable Use of IT Equipment, particularly with regard to protecting passwords and personal information to reduce the risks of abuses such as identity theft.

To avoid identity theft, employees are advised to refrain from publishing any personal or sensitive information on social media websites, e.g. date of birth, home address, telephone number or any information related to personal bank accounts.

### **4.0 Acceptable use of social media at work**

The School IT Systems are first and foremost business tools, and as such personal usage of the systems is a privilege and not a right. Employees are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites where this is part of the normal duties of their work.

Employees responsible for contributing to the School's social media activities should be aware at all times that they are representing the School.

The Group accepts that employees may wish to use social media channels as a way of communicating personally with the public and/or friends; however its use at work should be restricted to the terms of this policy. Employees should limit their use of social media to official rest breaks or times when they are not on duty (before and after work).

Employees may wish to use their own personal devices to access social media websites, while at work. Employees should limit their use of social media on their own personal equipment to their official rest breaks or times when they are not on duty (before and after work).

Personal use of social media should not interfere with employees' work duties and responsibilities. Excessive personal use of social media website and abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence.

### **5.0 Expected standards of conduct on social media websites**

#### 5.1 Appropriate conduct

The line between public and private, professional and personal is not always clearly defined when using social media. If an employee identifies themselves as a member of



## St Hilary School Social Media Policy

staff at the School, this has the potential to create perceptions about the School to a range of external audiences and also among colleagues and students.

When communicating either in a professional or personal capacity, within or outside the workplace, employees **must**:

- Conduct themselves in accordance with other policies, procedures and the School's Staff Professional Code of Conduct, particularly when using social media accounts to portray the School's activities, as this is an extension of the School's infrastructure.
- Be professional, courteous and respectful as would be expected in any other situation.
- Think carefully about how and what activities are carried out on social media websites.
- Be transparent and honest. The School will not tolerate employees making false representations. If employees express personal views, it should be made clear that the views do not represent or reflect the views of the School.
- Remove or request the removal of any inappropriate comments, images or videos.

### 5.2 Inappropriate conduct

While using social media in any capacity, employees' actions can potentially damage the School's reputation.

When communicating either in a professional or personal capacity, within or outside the workplace, employees **must not** conduct themselves inappropriately. The following are examples of inappropriate conduct:

- Posting any comments, images, photographs and/or video clips about pupils.
- Posting or uploading inappropriate comments, images, photographs and/or video clips about colleagues or ex-colleagues, ex-pupils, parents or clients.
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the School, other employees or pupils.
- Engaging in activities that have the potential to bring the School into disrepute.
- Breach of confidentiality by disclosing privileged, sensitive and/or confidential information.
- Making comments that could be considered to be bullying, harassing or discriminatory against any individual.
- Posting remarks which may cause offence and constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation.



## St Hilary School Social Media Policy

- Engaging in discussions or anything which may contravene the School's equality and diversity policy and may have the potential to cause serious harm to the business.
- Use of offensive, derogatory or intimidating language which may damage working relationships.
- Blurring the boundaries of professional and personal life.
- Pursuing personal relationships with pupils, ex-pupils or parents.
- Participating in any activity which may compromise your position at the School.
- Behaviour that would not be acceptable in any other situation.
- Knowingly accessing, viewing or downloading material which could cause offence to other people or may be illegal.
- Commenting on any work-related matters.
- Posting any material that breaches copyright legislation.
- Using a School email account to create a personal social media account.
- Doing anything that may conflict with the interests of the School.
- Using social media websites in any way which is deemed to be unlawful.

Any member of staff absent from work on grounds of ill health must not post updates on any social media site including any reference to the school or the nature of the absence. This is considered a serious act and breach of this instruction will lead to disciplinary action.

The above examples are not exhaustive or exclusive.

Employees will be held personally liable for any material published on social media websites that compromise themselves, their colleagues and/or the School.

### 5.3 Acceptance of friends

The School understands the positive use of social media as part of the educational process. Social media is used by many people, particularly pupils to communicate with their peers and the public. Students may wish to form personal relationships with employees, however to ensure professional boundaries are maintained, employees **must not** under normal circumstances accept and/or invite the following individuals to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services:

- Current pupils, including vulnerable students who are adults or children
- ex-pupils under the age of 18

Staff must be aware that entering into such relationships could be viewed as an abuse of an employee's position of School and breach the standards of professional behaviour and conduct expected at the School. The School reserves the right to take disciplinary



## **St Hilary School Social Media Policy**

action if employees are found to be in breach of this policy, with the potential of dismissal for serious breaches.

Acts of a criminal nature or any safeguarding concerns must be referred to the school child protection or whistle blowing officer.

### **6.0 Use of social media during recruitment and selection process**

The School does not specifically view social media websites as part of the pre-employment process, however where any information is made known to the group from any source it can reasonably take account of this information and may need to discuss it with applicants.

Any information that relates to applicants' protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 will not be used as part of the recruitment and selection process.

### **7.0 Inappropriate conduct and excessive use**

Any breach of this policy, including inappropriate conduct of the kind listed in section 5 above, or of a similar nature, and any excessive personal use of social media websites will be dealt with in accordance with the School disciplinary procedure.

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees in line with the School disciplinary policy and may also result in the withdrawal of access to social media websites/ withdrawal of internet access. Persistent or serious breaches of this policy may lead to dismissal.

### **8.0 Responsibilities**

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and for reporting any breaches of the policy to the headteacher or deputy headteacher.

If employees have concerns about information or conduct on social media sites that are inappropriate, offensive, demeaning or could be seen to be bullying, this should be reported to the headteacher or deputy headteacher immediately.

**Reviewed: November 2018**

**To be reviewed: November 2021**