

## SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

*This policy has been derived and adopted from Thames View Infants School's social networking policy by the permission of the Headteacher. This policy should be read in accordance with the school's acceptable use of the internet and e-safety policy.*

Olive Tree is aware of the widespread use of social networking applications and the opportunities to communicate and engage with a wide variety of audiences in new ways. We believe that it is important that we are able to use these technologies effectively towards enhancing education and services.

This policy is to protect staff and children by providing advice on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. There are obvious consequences of using social networking applications and it is our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

### Aim of this policy

- To ensure that the School is not exposed to legal and governance risks;
- That the school's reputation is not brought to disrepute
- That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information has been provided via social networking applications, that it is legitimately representative of the school
- That protocols to be applied where employees are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include but are not limited to:

- Online discussion forums, for example Facebook, Bebo, Myspace;
- Media sharing services for example YouTube;
- 'Micro-blogging' application for example Twitter.
- Blogs i.e. blogger;

### Remit of the policy

This policy applies to all school stakeholders, including, employees, Directors and pupils. The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any school related purpose and regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in a personal capacity or an official capacity to social networking applications.

Access to social networking sites is primarily via the school's official YouTube channel and Facebook, maintained by the designated Social network coordinator.

The use of social networking applications in work time for **personal use is not permitted**.

## School Managing Social Networking Sites (Official Use)

It is important to ensure that employees, members of the public and other users of online services know when a social networking application is being used for official school purposes. To assist with this, all employees must adhere to the following requirements:

- All proposals for using networking applications as part of school service must be approved by the Directors in charge first.
- Only use an official not personal email addresses or account name which will be used for official purposes.
- The school's logo and other branding elements should be used where appropriate to indicate the school's support. The school's logo should not be used on social networking applications which are unrelated or not representative of the school's official position.
- Employees should identify themselves as their official position held within the school on social networking applications like through providing additional information on user profiles.
- Staff should not spend on unreasonable amount of time during the working day developing, maintaining or using sites.
- Employees must not promote or comment on personal, political, religious or other matters.
- Pictures of children taken should follow the guidance set out within the school's acceptable use policy. In particular, those staff permitted to use their own mobile devices to illustrate a school authorised YouTube/Facebook/twitter account must ensure that all pictures of children are removed from the device at the end of the school day.
- Employees should be aware that sites will be monitored.
- Staff may approve friendship/follow requests from the parents within school-authorized Facebook and YouTube accounts but not pupils.

## Personal Social Networking Sites;

All employees of the school should bear in mind that information that they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and freedom of information legislation and the safeguarding vulnerable groups act 2006.

Any communications or content published on a social media networking site which is open to the public view, may be seen by members of the school Senior Management Team (SMT).

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Employees hold positions of responsibility and are viewed as such in the public dominion. Any posting that causes damage to the school, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to an investigation under the local Council's Disciplinary procedures for the school staff which could result in gross misconduct and potentially dismissal.

Employees should not use personal sites for any professional activity. The school reserves the right to require the closure of any applications or removal of content published by employees which may adversely affect the reputation of the school or put it at risk of legal action.

Anyone who becomes aware of inappropriate postings on social media sites must report it to their line manager as soon as possible. The line manager will then follow the disciplinary procedure with liaison of the Directors. If an employee fails to disclose an incident relating to social networking sites, knowing that it is inappropriate and falls within the remit of this policy, then that employee may be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

1. Posting inappropriate images

Indecent images of any employee that can be accessed by students, parents or members of the public are unacceptable and can lead to child protection issues as well as bringing the school into disrepute. Staff must not post pictures of school children within personal sites.

2. Posting inappropriate comments

It is unacceptable for any employee to discuss pupils, parents, work colleagues or any other member of the school community on any type of social networking sites. Reports about oneself may also impact on the employment relationship. Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Olive Tree expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with other related school policies.

3. Social interaction with pupils (past and present)

Employees should not engage in conversation with pupils, past or present irrespective of their age on any social networking site. Offers of assistance to a pupil with their studies via any social networking site is inappropriate and also leaves the employee vulnerable to allegations being made.

Should an employee become aware of an underage person using social networking sites like Facebook then they should report this to the Line Manager. Staff should not use or access social networking sites of pupils /ex-pupils/students.

#### 4. Making Friends.

Employees should be cautious when accepting new people as friends on a social networking site where they are entirely sure who they are communicating with. We recommend that school staff ensure that personal social networking sites are set at private. We also strongly advise the school staff are mindful of the potential audience when posting comments and sharing information/posts. Whilst we acknowledge that it might not always be possible to do so in a contact where staff live local to a school community, we recommend not listing parents as approved contacts.

#### 5. We Advise that personal social networking applications should not:

- Be used to publish any content which may result in actions for breach of contract, defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection, breach of confidentiality, intellectual property rights or other claims for damages. This includes but it is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature including any radicalised, terrorist or extremist political or religious viewpoint which may give reason to undermine the up-keeping of British values that may bring school or the local authority into disrepute.
- Be used for party political purposes of specific campaigning purposes as the local authority is not permitted to publish any material which in whole or part appears to affect public support for a political party (LGA 1986)
- Be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns.
- Be used in an abusive or hateful manner.
- Be used for actions that would put other employees in breach of the code of conduct policy
- Be in breach of the school's disciplinary and equal opportunities policies.
- Be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents.
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school
- References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, and parent or school activity/event.
- Staff should be aware that if their out of work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer, the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.
- No member of staff should interact with an ex-pupil on social networking sites who is under the age of 18.
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child.

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- If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the Child protection lead in school.

Where individuals from partner organisations are involved and are acting on behalf of the school, they will also be expected to comply with the relevant policies. Violation of this policy could lead to a disciplinary action against the employer under the local authority Code of Conduct Policy for School Staff.

General Guidance/Protection for Pupils/Visitors/Older students on using Social Networking Sites.

- No pupil under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance for Facebook and MSN.
- No pupil may access social networking sites at school at any time of the day.
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. Any attempt will be reported to the SMT and parents.
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying in confidence as soon as it happens. We have zero tolerance to cyber bullying.

### **Cyber Bullying;**

- The signs and effects of cyberbullying are taught in the week day schools during ICT and PSHE lessons and within assemblies, including how to whistle to an adult.
- Parents should be clearly aware of the school's policy of access to social; networking sites.
- Where a disclosure of bullying is made, schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

#### APPENDIX A- Examples of unacceptable behavior using Social Networking Sites

##### 1. Breach of contract

There is an implied term of natural trust and confidence between employer and employee in all employment contracts. A very negative and damaging posting or communication on a social networking site about the school or colleagues may entitle the SMT/line manager to decide that this term has been broken and this will be subject to disciplinary procedure.

Emails are capable of forming contractual documents. Contracts/Agreements can easily be informed by careless emails and non-compliance with the terms of any

such contracts will render an organization liable for a breach of contract claim. Emails tend not to be subject to the same safeguard practices as paper documents which are often checked before they are signed off.

### 2. Defamation

If an employee places defamatory information or material on a social networking site such as bad mouthing another colleague or a pupil of the school, such conduct would be subject to the school's disciplinary procedure and could lead to the employee's dismissal.

### 3. Discrimination

The school's recruitment and selection policy provides the correct and proper procedures to be used in the recruitment and selection of staff. Candidates should be selected on the basis of testable evidence provided on application forms and through the selection process and references as provided by the applicant. Under no circumstances should information from social networking sites be used to make selection decisions. Such action could result in expensive discrimination claims.

Many forms of discrimination claims, including harassment claim can occur via emails, if an employee places discriminatory material about another employee, a member of Director, parents, children, young people and vulnerable adults, this could amount to bullying or harassment of that individual. The school may be liable for such acts unless it took steps that were reasonably practicable to prevent material being placed on a site. Where an employee carries out an act of harassment in the course of their employment, the school is liable for that act even when the act is unauthorized. Once an issue of email harassment has been raised and the harasser identified, immediate action should be taken to stop the harassment and instigate the disciplinary procedure while supporting the harassed employee.

### 4. Breach of Health and Safety

For example, an internet video clip of employees performing stunts wearing organization's uniform. When information like this is found, the school should follow the company's disciplinary procedure to investigate the possibility of a breach of health and safety legislation on the part of the employee. If a school is aware of this and fails to investigate there may be liability for personal injuries in the law of negligence.

Dear Olive Tree Staff Member;

**Reference: Use of Internet-Social Networking Sites**

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As the use of the internet and particularly social networking sites such as Facebook becomes more widespread the local authority has become increasingly aware of the potential problems that can create for staff employed in schools or environments where they have close contact with children or vulnerable adults.

The School's Social Networking Policy sets out clear guidance in this complicated area. I am writing to all staff to help them ensure they are aware of the possible risks connected with the use of social networking sites arising as a result of their employment at a school.

It is strongly advised that all staff should read the school's social networking policy and consider the following points to protect themselves when using any social networking web sites.

## **Confidentiality**

If any information known to you as a result of your employment at the school or any personal details relating to either pupils or their families or information regarding other staff employed by the school appears on a social networking or indeed any area of the internet this could be considered to be a breach of your duty to maintain confidentiality, it is also possible that you could be in breach of the Data Protection Policy Act. This Act protects all personal data whether in electronic or paper format

## **Reputation**

There have been a number of disciplinary cases in public and business organizations arising from comments recorded on social networking websites. As employees working in an organization where we are already required to undergo enhanced CRB checks there is an expectation that the face we show to the rest of the world even outside of our roles in school should inspire respect and confidence. In some cases for example staff had put their holiday photos on their Facebook sites but due to incorrect security settings pupils were able to access them and use them in a manner that caused the staff concerned a great deal of embarrassment and reflected badly on the reputation of their school.

## **Inappropriate Contact**

In times when the internet is recognized as a place where adults do have inappropriate contact with children it is important for staff to ensure that they do not place themselves in a position of vulnerability.

The current general advice from the local authority regarding this issue is that ideally staff should avoid all use of social networking sites but if you decide to use these services to carefully consider the points set out above. Ensure that you do have the correct security settings on your site and review the status of anyone whom you allow to access your site. Human Resources at the local authority have stressed that it is the personal responsibility of all staff to ensure they act responsibly in this area and to seek advice at the earliest possible opportunity if there appears to be a problem.

## **Whistle Blowing**



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You will immediately report any illegal, inappropriate or harmful material or incident you become aware of to the appropriate person, including concerns you have regarding the radicalization of pupils and colleagues.

As this is such an important issue I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this letter by completing the tear-off slip below and turning it to the Line Manager.

If you have any concerns arising from the contents of this letter I will be pleased to help.

Yours sincerely

Abdul Alim

Tahera Akther

Harun Rashid

Director

Director

Director

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*Please complete the tear-off slip below*

Name.....

Branch: TVI / GC / OAK / StM

I confirm that I have received and read the letter ‘**Use of the internet-Social Networking Sites**’ and read the School’s **Social Networking Policy**.

Signed.....

Date.....