



POLICY (Number: Pvi)
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY / GUIDELINES

Social Media refers to online technology tools that enable people and organisations to share information and resources or to communicate over the internet. (examples: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, Linkdin, Pinterest, YouTube, blogs etc).

Any social media platform used for school / classroom purposes must be approved by your Head of Department.

Your private online presence, while not directly related to your pupils, shapes public opinion about you and your school.

Social Media can be a powerful tool allowing staff to network, connect, share resources, inspire, create contact and grow professionally and personally but it must be used responsibly.

This set of guidelines can apply to all categories of staff and can also be beneficial to parents.

1. It is not a good idea to accept Friend Requests from pupils or parents or to accept requests to follow pupils or parents at school. You are making yourself vulnerable by sharing your personal information or by having access to the personal information of pupils and parents.
2. Do not post photographs of children, teams, children's work etc. online (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) - unless you have written permission from parents.
3. Make sure that all the settings on your accounts protect your privacy and personal details. Despite all the appropriate settings – nothing online is every 100% private so you need to think carefully before you post, comment, share, tweet or comment.
4. Geo-location services make your location visible to your online friends. The option for “checking into” a place shares your location (and any people you may be with) online.
5. Use a strong password to ensure that it is not possible for others to guess your password and gain access to your online profiles and accounts.
6. If you are unhappy with photos that you have been tagged in, untag yourself or contact the source and ask them to remove this content. Check your settings to make sure that you are notified before someone is able to tag you.
7. Protect your Personal and Professional Reputation:
 - Take great care in making accusations or negative statements about anyone or any entity - even if what you are saying is true. Under our law, statements MAY be defamatory EVEN IF THEY ARE true (Our law on defamation is not the same as in the States, which many people assume). In other words, you may be charged with defamation even if what you are saying is totally true. Something needs to be true AND in the public interest (not 'interesting to the public') in order for you to have a defence against defamation. Just avoid it. It's a minefield.
 - Do not talk about your boss, spouse, ex-spouse, ex-friend, neighbour, colleague etc in a negative way and certainly don't bring children into it! Even if you keep the identities of those people anonymous, you can still fall foul of the law if those people can be identified by their relationship to you.
 - Do not badmouth your company/ school online. They are well within their rights to dismiss you, even if you are badmouthing them on your own personal, private Facebook page! (They can do the same if you express racist, sexist etc sentiments online - even if what you are saying has nothing to do with your company or anyone in it)



- If your comments are (or may be deemed to be) racist, sexist, discriminatory based on religion, culture, sexual preference etc they may amount to hate speech. This is a crime for which you can be prosecuted. (And you don't have to go as far as Penny Sparrow to get yourself in trouble)
 - Many people believe that they will be protected by the right to freedom of speech. Your freedom of speech ends when it infringes on another's right to dignity or privacy. Case law suggests that the courts take a pretty dim view of 'I have a right to say what I like' as a defence, when you have invaded someone's privacy or undermined their dignity.
 - 'Naming and shaming' is particularly risky -it can infringe on someone's right to privacy, can amount to harassment and can amount to defamation. Many people believe it is ok to post a picture of someone's car and registration plate if they are driving badly, haven't strapped their kids in or have parked in disabled parking. This can get you into huge trouble - particularly if you were breaking the law while getting the photo/footage (e.g. driving while taking pictures or video on your cell phone)
 - Anything posted online is considered to be 'published' and is therefore not the same as you expressing your opinion in the pub or amongst friends. You cannot use as a defence "It was my own personal opinion". Also, social media posts are not afforded the same protection / leeway under law as journalism.
 - Take great care regarding what you 'Like', repost, agree with in the comments section or retweet. If the post itself is defamatory, an invasion of privacy, hate speech etc, anyone who furthers its dissemination can be held liable.
 - Future employers often use your online presence before considering potential candidates. What does your recent online history say about you?
 - Never send private texts / messages to pupils.
 - Do not post any images or content related to alcohol, smoking etc.
8. If someone asks you to remove a post, do so immediately and count yourself lucky that you are getting a chance to do so.
 9. If you are the victim of inappropriate comments / cyber-bullying / inappropriate messages or comments – print or save all available evidence and report it to your Head of Department.
 10. You also need to report any inappropriate content you see or are made aware of.
 11. Be aware of when you are posting online as this is usually logged on the social media platform. Only use social media before or after your normal working hours. When you are seen to be on social media during working hours your professional reputation will suffer.
 12. Do not use social media to raise issues which have not been addressed through normal school communication channels.
 13. Any privileged or confidential information of the school should stay confidential and should not be shared, even in a seemingly private platform such as a “private message”.