



POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES AND ADULTS ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOLS USING AND PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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A. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way - by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as [facebook](#), [google+](#), [twitter](#), [bebo](#), [MySpace](#)), content sharing websites (such as [flickr](#), [YouTube](#)) and many other similar online channels.

This policy applies to all employees within schools where this policy has been adopted. It also applies to all governors and volunteers undertaking work on behalf of the organisation. Schools should ensure contractors and agency workers are also aware of this policy. These groups will be collectively referred to as 'individuals' within this policy.



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All individuals' should be aware of their own conduct and behave in a manner which ensures and promotes acceptable behaviour in relation to their individual use of social media sites.

B. PRINCIPLES AND EXPECTATIONS

B.1. Other related policies

There are other policies, including those listed below which govern employee behaviour in schools with respect to the disclosure of information online, including personal activities. All individuals within schools should make sure that they are familiar with these policies:

- ③ Data Protection Policy
- ③ Personal Information Security Policy
- ③ Conduct Policy for Schools
- ③ Social Media and Online Participation Policy and Guidelines
- ③ Setting the Standards for Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- ③ GTC Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers (for teaching staff only)
- ③ Safer Working Practice For The Protection Of Children And Staff In Education Settings
- ③ Acceptable Behaviour Policy
- ③ Equality Policy

B.2. Individuals are responsible for their own actions

School employees are encouraged to use the ICT systems they have at their disposal to enhance their work and learning opportunities for students' learning. The school, in turn, will expect its staff and volunteers to agree to be responsible users, exercising sound judgement and common sense.

Individuals should bear in mind that anything they post online, at work and at home, can potentially affect the reputation of the school and is ultimately the responsibility of the employee.

Individuals should ensure that privacy and security settings are set and used on all devices. All passwords should conform to the [Password Policy](#), available on the Source.

B.3. Be aware of working and personal lives overlapping

Online, an employee's personal and working lives are likely to overlap. Whilst the school understands that many individuals use social media sites, it is important to remember that information/comments/images posted online originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on and might be viewed by students, parents and colleagues as well as members of the wider community. Be aware of your language and conduct while on these sites, the rules governing staff conduct such as the Policy for Setting the Standards of Acceptable Behaviour and the Schools' Conduct Policy still apply.

Individuals should not accept pupils/students as 'friends' on social media sites.



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If individuals have specific reasons for needing to communicate with students via a social media site they should first discuss this, with their reasons, with their line manager. Individuals must use their professional determination to set appropriate boundaries and if s/he is uncertain, to seek advice from the line manager **before** communicating with pupils/students.

Your conduct must not adversely affect the school's public image nor bring the school into disrepute. This requirement extends to when individuals use social media sites outside normal working hours. It is important that individuals should ensure that their security settings are set appropriately, including those on personal social media sites, so that individual's own sites can only be accessed and used by those approved by that individual. Any information displayed on individual's accounts are deemed to be their responsibility.

B.4. Participation in a public forum

Participation in a public forum must be professional. Individuals should make sure they always act in an honest, accurate, fair and responsible way at all times. Be aware of language and conduct while on these sites, the rules governing staff conduct such as the Policy for Setting the Standards of Acceptable Behaviour and the Schools' Conduct Policy still apply.

When an employee participates in a public forum as part of their job they should specify their job title and ensure his/her line manager is aware of the discussion.

When an employee participates in a public forum as a private individual they must make that clear and only use their private e-mail address.

B.5. Consider carefully anything said/posted

Individuals are personally responsible for their words and actions. An individual must ensure that any confidential and/or sensitive information is not posted. Individuals must not make any derogatory, untrue or discriminating comments about the school, its pupils/students or other employees. Neither should any comments be made that are likely to affect the reputation of the school.

Confidential information, including information which is available to an employee due to the nature of their job, but is not in the public domain, should not be disclosed unless specific permission has been granted to do so.

If there is any doubt, do not post it.



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B.6. Do not respond to negative comments posted online

If negative or disparaging comments about the school, its pupils/students and/or other individuals with connections to the school, are posted online or by third parties to try to spark negative conversations, individuals must not respond and should bring this to the attention of their manager.

B.7. Know that the Internet is permanent

As soon as information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if it is removed or deleted later or attempts are made to make it anonymous. Information can be disseminated very quickly via social media and is virtually impossible to retract once it has been published; even if it has been online for only a short time, it may well have been picked up and copied and/or forwarded on by computers around the world.

C. STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

The school is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way it works. However, individuals must use all forms of social media with extreme care, together with sound judgement and common sense.

Failure to adhere to this policy and those policies listed at paragraph 1 may result in formal action within the School's Conduct Policy for Employees and other appropriate action in relation to governors, volunteers, etc.

In some circumstances, inappropriate communications may result in a police investigation.

D. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT WORK

The use of school-owned laptops/computers/electronic devices to access social media sites for personal use is permitted where such use is restricted to lunch-breaks and usage is reasonable and appropriate.

Employees bringing personal electronic equipment in school, such as laptops/notebooks/hand held devices need to be aware that it is at the risk of the employees and the school will not be responsible for the safekeeping of any such devices. Personal use of these devices must also be restricted to lunchbreaks.

Employees should note their contractual responsibility to devote their time fully to their work during paid hours. The Schools' Conduct Policy will be used to investigate any concerns regarding any employee found to be using electronic equipment for personal use during working hours, the outcome of which may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. As part of any such investigation, the school will check the employee's internet usage and will retain this information as appropriate.



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E. SUMMING UP

- Be aware of your association with the school and Devon County Council in online spaces. If identified as an employee or adult associated with the school and/or Devon County Council, ensure your profile is appropriate and related content is consistent with professional expectations.
- Be aware of language and professional conduct.
- Be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander.
- Do not breach copyright
- Never share confidential or sensitive information.
- Inform senior management if participating online in a professional capacity.
- Individuals should alert senior management immediately if anything has been posted, inadvertently or otherwise, may cause issues for individuals and/or the school.