

The Meadows School



Social Media Policy

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Amendment Register

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1. Introduction

Rationale

This policy has been adopted and written in relation to The Social Media Policy at the Meadows School and should be read in conjunction with the LA's policies and procedures and any DFE Policy, statements and guidelines.

Social media is the term commonly given to websites, online tools and applications which allow users to interact, often by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interest. Social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement. For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to any interactive Web platform, including social networks, internet forums and blogs. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media. Staff should assume that all online activity is covered by this policy.

The Meadows School is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites. For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation, whilst providing a framework of good practice.

2. Scope

This policy applies to teachers, support staff, governors, volunteers and all who work on the school site.

This policy takes account of all the appropriate legislation and sets out to:

- Assist those who work with students to work safely and responsibly, to monitor their own standards of behaviour and to prevent the abuse of their position of trust with students.
- Offer a code of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal and recreational use.
- Advise that, in the event of unsafe and/or unacceptable behaviour, disciplinary or legal action (including gross misconduct leading to dismissal) will be taken if necessary in order to support safer working practice and minimise the risk of malicious allegations against staff and others who have contact with students.
- Protect employees from cyberbullying

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's internet safety policy.

3. Use of social media in the school

The Meadows School employees are encouraged, where relevant, to use social media via established school accounts, as a means to foster openness and engagement with local communities, families/carers by sharing details of school activities, as well as being a platform to advise of any service disruptions.

Staff are not permitted to access social media websites for personal use from the school's computers or other school device at any time unless authorised to do so by a member of the senior leadership team. However, staff may use their own devices to access social media websites for personal use while they are in school, outside of lessons or other structured sessions. Excessive use of social media, which could be considered to interfere with productivity, will be considered a disciplinary matter.

Staff should assume that anything they write (regardless of their privacy settings) could become public, so should ensure that they are professional, maintaining a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives.

Any use of social media made in a professional capacity **must not**:

- Bring the school into disrepute.
- Breach confidentiality.
- Breach copyrights of any kind.
- Bully, harass or be discriminatory in any way.
- Be defamatory or derogatory.

4. Use of social media outside of school

Those working with children have a duty of care and are therefore expected to adopt high standards of behaviour to retain the confidence and respect of colleagues and students both within and outside of school. They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information effectively so that it cannot be misused by third parties.

The Meadows School appreciates that staff may make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, staff must be aware that if they are recognised from their profile as being associated with the school, opinions they express could be considered to reflect the school's opinions and so could damage the reputation of the school.

For this reason, staff should:

- Avoid mentioning the school by name, or any member of staff by name or position.
- Ensure opinions follow the guidelines above so as not to bring the school into disrepute, breach confidentiality or copyright, or bully, harass or discriminate in any way.

- Not accept students as “friends” on social media, as this could potentially be construed as ‘grooming’, nor should they accept invitations to become a ‘friend’ of any students.
- Carefully consider contact with a student's family members because this may give rise to concerns over objectivity and/or impartiality
- Carefully consider inviting work colleagues to be “friends” on social networking site. Social networking sites blur the line between work and personal lives and it may be difficult to maintain professional relationships or it might be just too embarrassing if too much personal information is known in the work place.
- Take great care when making a comment, post or blog, or ‘liking’ a post as it has the potential to be widely read / seen and re-distributed. Communications can be misinterpreted, taken out of context and are open to abuse. Any sensitive, emotive or political content could damage reputation whether it was intentional or otherwise
- Not post or share photographs of students under any circumstances
- Before joining the school, new employees should check any information they have posted on social media sites and remove any post that could cause embarrassment or offence.

Whilst The Meadows School does not routinely review employees' personal comment on social media sites or personal accounts, the Meadows School does reserve the right to review these if matters relating to their content are raised as a matter of concern. This would include matters concerning potential abuse of sickness absence, illness and incapacity where it came to light that actions evidenced on an employee's personal site were contrary to what was being portrayed for employment purposes or were contrary to medical advice.

5. Reporting of unacceptable content

If employees see any inappropriate content about The Meadows School, its staff, partners, families or students, or content that could bring the school in to disrepute, it is their duty, in the first instance, to bring this to the attention of the Headteacher.

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the school's disciplinary policy. Serious breaches of this policy, such as incidents of bullying or of social media activity causing damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.