Social Networking Policy

Policy Information

Date of last review:	October 2025	**Review period:**	Annually
Date ratified by Local Governors:		**Policy owner:**	Computing Lead Mrs R Cashmore

Reviews/revisions

Review date	Changes made	By whom
October 2025 October 2026	Updated according to new practice and information.	R Cashmore

This policy sets out the standards of conduct expected of staff, students, governors, volunteers, and parents/carers in relation to the use of social networking platforms.

The school recognises that social networking sites and applications (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, WhatsApp, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, forums) are an important part of everyday life. While these technologies provide opportunities for communication, collaboration, and learning, they also present potential risks to safeguarding, confidentiality, and the reputation of the school.

This policy aims to ensure that social networking use by members of the school community is safe, responsible, and consistent with the values and standards of the school.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect staff, students, and the school community from potential risks associated with social networking.
- To provide clear guidance on acceptable and unacceptable use of social networking platforms.
- To safeguard professional relationships between staff and students.
- To uphold the school's duty of care regarding child protection, safeguarding, and data protection.

This policy applies to:

- All employees, governors, contractors, and volunteers.
- All students enrolled at the school.
- All parents/carers engaged with the school community.
- Use of both school-owned devices and personal devices where activity impacts, or could impact, the school.

Definitions

Social Networking: The use of online platforms for communication, information-sharing, or social interaction.
Personal Use: Use of social networking unrelated to school business.
Professional Use: Use of social networking as part of official school duties.

Guiding Principles

- Respect for the dignity and rights of all individuals.
- Commitment to safeguarding children and young people.
- Protection of confidentiality and privacy.
- Preservation of the school's reputation.
- Compliance with statutory requirements (e.g., Data Protection Act 2018, Safeguarding legislation, Keeping Children Safe in Education, Prevent Duty).

Staff Expectations

- Staff must maintain professional boundaries online and must not accept or invite current students to be "friends" or "followers" on personal accounts.
- All communication with students must be conducted via approved school systems (e.g., school email, learning platforms).
- Confidential information relating to students, staff, parents, or theschool must not be disclosed on social networking sites.
- Staff must not post images or videos of students without prior written consent from parents/carers and the Headteacher.
- Staff are expected to use privacy settings appropriately to protect personal information.

- Any safeguarding concerns encountered online must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Student Expectations

- Students must use social networking responsibly and in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and ICT Acceptable Use Agreement.
- Cyberbullying, harassment, hate speech, or the sharing of inappropriate content will not be tolerated.
- Students must not create or distribute content that brings the school into disrepute.
- Students should not attempt to "friend" or follow staff on personal accounts.
- Any inappropriate or unsafe online behaviour should be reported immediately to a trusted adult or safeguarding lead.

Parent/ Carer Expectations

- Parents/carers are encouraged to model positive online behaviour for their children.
- Social networking should not be used as a forum to raise complaints or grievances against the school, staff, or other students. Concerns must be raised through the appropriate school channels.
- Parents/carers must not share images or videos of children (other than their own) on social media without consent.
- Defamatory, offensive, or threatening remarks about the school, staff, or students on social media will be taken seriously and may result in legal or disciplinary action.

Breaches of Policy

- **Students:** Breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and may result in disciplinary sanctions, parental involvement, or referral to external agencies.

- **Staff:** Breaches will be managed under the Staff Disciplinary Policy and may result in formal disciplinary action, including dismissal.

- **Parents/Carers:** Breaches may result in restricted access to school premises, reporting to external authorities, or legal action where appropriate.

Monitoring and Enforcement

The school reserves the right to monitor use of its IT systems and to act upon any online activity, whether on school devices or personal accounts, that impacts or risks the safety, welfare, or reputation of the school community.

Training and Awareness

- Staff will receive training on professional standards of online behaviour and safeguarding implications.
- Students will be educated through the curriculum on responsible digital citizenship and online safety.
- Parents/carers will be offered guidance on supporting children's safe use of social networking.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team in consultation with governors, the safeguarding team, staff, students, and parents/carers. Updates will reflect changes in legislation, technology, and best practice