



## **Model Policy on the Use of Social Networking Media**

### **Activity Covered by this Policy**

This policy sets out the standards for acceptable use of social media by staff and learners where such activity is undertaken:

- Using the school/college's own computer systems or other devices linked to the Internet through the school/college's own network
- Using a private computer or device linked to the Internet through the school/college's own network.
- Uploading any content by any means, including from home, to any social media site:
  - a. on behalf of the school/college, and/or
  - b. that relates directly to school/college and/or
  - c. that can be identified as being linked to the school/college and/or individuals linked to the school/college.

For the avoidance of doubt, individuals linked to the school/college includes staff, earners, governors, former colleagues, former learners, parents, contractors or clients.

### **Definition of Social Media**

For the purpose of this policy social media means any facility for online publication and commentary, including without limitation, blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, MySpace, Flickr, and You Tube.

### **Acceptable Use**

Content uploaded to social media sites is not private. Even where it is restricted to viewing by "friends" there remains a capacity for it to be re-posted or distributed beyond its intended audience. As such, staff and learners using social media for any of the activities above should conduct themselves with dignity and respect. In particular they should seek to portray the school/college in a good light.

Staff and learners should not upload any content to social media sites that

- is confidential to the school/college or to its staff or learners,
- brings the school/college into disrepute,
- amounts to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation,
- amounts to bullying,
- contains lewd, sexually explicit, threatening or similar inappropriate or offensive comments, images or video clips concerning individuals linked with the school/college,
- is defamatory or knowingly false,
- undermines the reputation of individuals linked to the school/college,
- breaches copyright,
- is in any other way unlawful

Staff should be aware of appropriate professional and social boundaries and so should not accept or invite learners, former learners under age 18, or \*parents to be “friends” on *personal* social media accounts such as Facebook. All communication with staff and parents via social media should be through the school/college’s own social media accounts.

*\*Note: You may wish to allow networking with parents. In which case it is perhaps sensible to include the following: Where staff network with parents through their own private social media accounts, they must conduct themselves according to the same standards of behaviour that is demanded of them at all other times.*

Use of private social media accounts during lessons is not permitted.

### **Breaches of this Policy**

Complaints about unacceptable use of social networking that has potentially breached this policy will be investigated in accordance with the school/college’s appropriate bullying or disciplinary procedure.

This will include where practical to do so:

- Obtaining a screen capture or print copy of the alleged unacceptable content
- Determining that the source or responsibility of the content was in fact the member of staff or learner

Consideration will be given to the seriousness of the breach, including the nature of the content, how long the content remained visible on the social media site, the potential for re-circulation by others, and the impact on the school/college or the individuals concerned.

If the investigation leads to disciplinary action the consequences will be in accordance with that stated in the appropriate procedure. For serious breaches this could result in dismissal in the case of a staff member or exclusion in the case of a learner.

## **Monitoring**

The school/college will from time to time monitor or record communications that are sent or received from within the school/college's network where it reasonably believes that this policy is being or has been breached. Notices to this effect are available on the school/college intranet; and through the communication of this policy to staff and learners.

## **Legislation**

Acceptable use of social networking must comply with UK law. In applying this policy, the school/college will adhere to its rights, responsibilities and duties in accordance with the following:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Defamation Act 2013

## Appendix: Guidance for Staff

Please remember, nothing you post online is really private. We recommend you:

- Follow this official social networking policy
- Do not add learners as friends or contacts in your own social media accounts.
- Always maintain professional boundaries. Do not engage in discussion with learners online unless through official school or college accounts.
- Think about potential risks (e.g. professional boundaries) of adding parents to your private social media accounts. (Refer to the policy).
- Take care posting comments or making photos of yourself. Anything that someone else deems inappropriate may land you in trouble.
- Never post anything that is offensive or aggressive, even if you are very angry or upset. It can easily be taken out of context.
- If you are tagged in something on Facebook that you consider inappropriate, use the remove tag feature to untag yourself (refer to the Facebook help centre for more details).
- Avoid accepting “friend requests” from people you do not really know. Simply being a “friend” of your own Facebook friend does not mean they should automatically be given access to your information.
- Review your profile information and settings on Facebook, Twitter and other sites to ensure it is appropriate as it may be accessed by others such as colleagues, learners, parents, potential employers and even local journalists.
- Check your privacy and security settings; and avoid using information that might be stolen to access your online bank account.
- If you do intend to rant about teaching, politics, or life in general, consider doing so anonymously, through a networking account or blog that cannot be attributed to you. Check that anything you post does not identify you, your school or college, colleagues, learners or parents.
- Do not make false representations, breach copyright or upload confidential information.