

# Use of Social Media Policy



RHODES AVENUE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## **1. Introduction**

Rhodes Avenue School (hereafter referred to as the school) recognizes that social media and social networking sites play a particular role in society but some applications and websites can present risks and dangers. Once something is posted online, anyone can view it even if it is deleted afterwards. Consequently, the school manages and monitors social media activity concerning the school; to know what is being posted about the school and restrict any negativity in a fair and responsible manner.

This policy aspires to provide clarity. To set out how social media should be used, to state who is responsible for maintaining the school profile, what is appropriate/inappropriate and what protocols should be used when engaging with other users.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and documents:

- Online Safety Policy;
- Acceptable Use Policy;
- Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy;
- Prevent Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## **2. Aims**

This policy is not statutory but it is good practice to have a document that aims to:

- Ensure that the community knows the expectations and limitations of using social media in both a professional and personal capacity;
- Provide a document that can be referred to pupils and parents/carers if social media is used inappropriately;
- Inform the community that sanctions will be appropriate and consistent.

## **3. Practice**

There are seven key areas:

- Parents/Carers and Social Media
- Use of Social Networking by Staff in a Personal Capacity;
- Extremism;
- The Use of Social Networking Sites by Pupils;
- The Use of Social Networking Sites by the School;

- Dealing with Online Safety (including Cyber-Bullying).
- Inappropriate Use of Social Networking sites

## **1. Parents/Carers and Social Media**

Primarily the preferred methods of school communication include: the Prospectus, the Governors' Annual Report to Parents/Carers, the school website, Headteacher's Newsletters, Termly Class Letters, dedicated iPad for messages based in the Reception, Group Call messages and day-to-day verbal discussion at the school gate or classrooms.

School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and a means for resolving differences of opinion. The school believes that effective communication follows the principles of mutual respect, courtesy, clarity and good manners which will ensure the best learning and teaching experiences for the whole school community. Consequently the school requests parents and carers to make complaints through official channels (refer to Complaints Policy) rather than posting disagreements on social networking sites.

The school's expectation is that parents and carers should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about the school or any school member and follow official lines of communication.

The school's *Acceptable Use Policy* outlines the rules for using computing in school and these rules also apply to use of social networking sites. The school expects the community to engage respectfully with the school and each other on social networking sites.

Examples of negative netiquette would constitute posts which are or could be construed as bullying, aggressive, rude, insulting illegal or otherwise inappropriate or which may bring the school, teaching profession or community into disrepute. This applies to public pages and private posts; for example chat forums.

Sharing complaints or dissatisfactions on social media may provide temporary satisfaction but is unlikely to resolve the issue, it may cause upset to staff, pupils and parents/carers, undermine staff morale and sully the reputation of the school, which is important for the pupils the school serves.

If there is evidence of inappropriate use of social networking, the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors will contact the parent/carer and request a meeting to discuss the reasons for the post and may ask for it to be removed.

If a member of the school community has a concern or issue with the school, the school urges them to contact the school directly and in private to resolve the matter. If an issue cannot be sorted then the school's complaints procedures (refer

to the Complaints Policy) may offer alternative redress.

In order to protect the privacy of the school community parents/carers must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites if these photographs have been taken at a school event.

Email is the official electronic communication channel between parents/carers and school, and staff will only communicate professionally through *Staff Mail* which is linked to the USO authentication system and is fully auditable and is managed by London Grid for Learning's (LGfL) *Trustnet*. This is for the mutual protection and privacy of all staff and parents, as well as to support data protection. The school's agreed time for parents/carers to email staff are between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

## **2. Use of Social Networking by Staff in a Personal Capacity**

The Teachers' Standards (2013) state that: '*Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach...*' and the school believes that all staff should follow these guidelines.

Staff should have the strictest privacy settings for social network sites and avoid discussing the school or its stakeholders on social media and be mindful that their personal opinions might be attributed to the school or local authority and consequently may bring the school into disrepute.

All staff members are reminded by this document that it is important to comply with the school's position which is outlined in the *Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)* on digital images and video and the use of school and personal devices (refer to Online Safety Policy). Permission must be sought before loading photographs, videos or any other information about other people online. If this practice takes place without clear consent, it can be in breach of Data Protection/GDPR legislation.

The statements in the AUP which all members of the school community sign pertain to social media activity. Breaches of the AUP will be dealt with in line with the school's *Employee Disciplinary Procedure and Code of Conduct Policy*.

Further to any breach, where an incident relates to an inappropriate, upsetting, violent or abusive social media post by a member of the school community, the school will request that the post be deleted and will expect for this to be actioned promptly.

Where the post has been made by a third party, the school may report it to the platform where it is/was hosted and may contact the Professionals' Online Safety Helpline (UK Safer Internet Centre) for support or for help to accelerate the process of removal. The police or other authorities may be contacted if a post is potentially illegal or dangerous.

Guidelines:

- Set privacy settings and check regularly;
- No link between work email address and social media accounts;
- Consider changing display name or profile picture to something unidentifiable, or if not ensure that the image is professional;
- Staff need to be mindful that by using the public school wi-fi for social media, social network applications recognise wi-fi connections and will make 'friend' suggestions based on who else uses that same wi-fi connection (such as: pupils and parents/carers);
- Not tag other staff members in images or posts;
- Not to accept pupils as 'friends' in their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16);
- Ignore requests and messages from pupils and block them from viewing profiles and report any activity to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Online Safety Lead (OSL) and take a screen shot of any further online communication;
- Avoid social media sites in school hours;
- Are strongly advised not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts;
  - Pupils may have indirect access through their parents/carer's to anything a staff member posts, shares, comments or is tagged in;
- Refrain from posting comments about job, colleagues, school, pupils, parents or governors;
- Avoid social networking in a way that conflicts with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Not give personal contact details to children - e-mail address, home or mobile telephone numbers, details of web based identities'.

If a staff member is being troubled on social media by a member of the community they will:

- report the incident(s) to the DSL/OSL;
- save evidence of any abuse with the date and time it occurred;
- avoid retaliation.

Any inappropriate social media behaviour by staff will be referred to the Headteacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action. If the behaviour concerns the Headteacher it will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

### **3. Extremism**

The school will fulfil its legal obligations relating to radicalism and all forms of extremism under the Prevent Duty (refer to the schools Prevent Policy). Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, nor give them a voice or opportunity to visit the school, nor browse, download or send

material that is considered offensive or of an extremist nature.

#### **4. The Use of Social Networking Sites by Pupils**

Many social media platforms have a minimum age of 13 years yet despite this watermark the school has dealt with cases arising from pupils using a range of media applications. The school consequently has to strike a difficult balance of not encouraging underage use and at the same time needing to acknowledge the world outside the school gates in order to support our pupils to cope with issues if they arise. Notwithstanding aberrations, we urge parents and carers to respect age ratings on social media platforms (including games) and not support underage use.

Online safety lessons (Computing and PSHE/SMSC) will investigate social media and other online behaviours – how to be a good friend online and how to report bullying misuse, intimidation or abuse. However pupils will also learn from the models of behaviour they see and experience, which will often be from adults so a bi-partisan approach is the most successful. Parents and carers can best support the school by discussing the applications, websites and games their children use and agree - with whom, how long, when and where.

If social media sites are used within the Computing curriculum, staff will carry out a risk assessment prior to learning and determined whether the applications and tools are appropriate. They will also monitor content and parents/carers will be asked for permission before lessons commence.

In any event, pupils are not allowed to be 'friends' with or make requests to any staff, governors or volunteers via social media nor 'follow' them on accounts such as Instagram or Facebook (minimum age applies). Staff will remain professional and report any of these activities to a senior leader.

#### **5. Use of Social Networking Sites by the School**

The school manages its social media accounts (*Twitter* to promote the school and *WhatsApp* for communication between Senior Leaders) through designated staff – Headteacher/Deputy and Technical Support - knowing passwords and account details. Staff with personal social media accounts will not access school media accounts using their devices for security reasons and to avoid posting updates to the wrong account.

The school will:

- use a dedicated school e-mail account to register social media accounts;
- neither reply to positive nor negative comments (the school may acknowledge someone who posts a negative opinion and if appropriate may invite them into school to discuss their concerns);
- not enter into an argument online;
- 'unfriend' any troll who uses targeted systematic abuse against the school community;
- remove objectionable comments;

- report any user to the social network/contact the police /law enforcement if comments are significantly threatening or specific;
- set rules around language and tone;
- will consult the UK Safer Internet Centre's 'Professionals'.

## **6. Dealing with Online Safety (including Cyber-Bullying)**

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in line with the *Behaviour for Learning* and *Anti-Bullying* policies which set out the processes and sanctions regarding any type of bullying by a child on the school roll via inappropriate, upsetting or abusive social media posts.

## **7. Inappropriate Use of Social Networking Sites**

Through annual staff INSET all stakeholders are reminded that online safety is part of the school's child protection responsibilities and procedures. General concerns regarding pupils will be handled in the same way as any other safeguarding concern. Staff will inform the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) and the Online Safety Leader (OSL) of any concerns or incidents. (Refer to the Online Safety Policy for greater detail).

In the case of negative use of social networking – regarding the school - by parents/carers the Headteacher will contact the parent asking them to remove their comments and ask them to seek redress through appropriate channels; a phone call, letter or the school's complaint procedure.

The school understands that there may be circumstances where police involvement is appropriate – racist and homophobic comments or where violence is threatened or encouraged. Laws of defamation and privacy apply to social media platforms and it is unlawful for statements to be written which:

- expose an individual to hatred, ridicule or contempt;
- cause an individual to be shunned or avoided;
- lower an individual's standing in the estimation of right-thinking members of society;
- disparage an individual in their business, trade, office or profession.

## **Inclusion/Equal Opportunities**

Equal access is given to all staff and children regardless of ability, gender, culture or ethnic origin. Rhodes Avenue complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and all staff will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment,



victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the abovementioned Act. The school celebrates diversity and encourages inclusion.

### **Review and Monitoring**

There is widespread ownership of this policy and it has been agreed by the Headship team and approved by the Governors. All amendments to this policy will be disseminated to all members of staff and the school community.

This policy will reviewed according to the schools policy schedule or when any significant/ important technological changes or statutory guidance occurs.

### **Persons Responsible for the review of this policy**

Headteacher  
Deputy Head  
Curriculum Committee

## **Appendix**

1. Photographic and Filming Policy for Parents and Carers
2. Pupil Digital Media Consent Declaration Form



## Photographic and Filming Policy for Parents and Carers

This policy applies to sporting events, parents' evenings, plays, assemblies, school trips and any other school event or gathering, whether on school premises or beyond.

The school appreciates the importance families attach to digitally recording key or important moments in their child's development and the general rule is that parents and carers may take photos and videos of the children in their care, **for personal use only**. There may be rare exceptions to this, and we will let you know in advance of events where no filming is possible.

When you capture footage or still images of your children, there is a strong possibility that other children will also be visible or audible. For this reason, no such content should be shared publicly.

Live streaming of images, whether public or private, is not permitted and we request that you do not use any streaming platforms or 'live' features (e.g. Facebook Live) to stream events/circumstances as they occur. You may be asked to leave the premises or event if this takes place.

There are several important reasons for this:

- Some children are deemed at risk by local authority safeguarding and child protection authorities; their image must never be put online for their own protection. You are very unlikely to know who these children are. Others may have complex family backgrounds which mean that sharing their image could have unforeseen consequence. There is the real possibility you could endanger a child by sharing their image in an identifiable context (e.g. where the school is easy to identify and locate).
- Express consent is needed from parents to comply with data protection legislation, which has been enhanced under GDPR and the new Data Protection Bill. Sharing could otherwise potentially incur fines for contravention of data protection rules.
- Some families may object for religious or cultural reasons, or simply for reasons of personal privacy.
- We encourage young people at our school to think about their online reputation and digital footprint: online photos and videos do not simply disappear when they are deleted from accounts.

- Where possible, we will take appropriate staged group shots of pupils whose parents/carers have given appropriate photographic permissions and make these available to you. Equally, and again wherever possible, we will ensure there is time for parents to take photographs of their own children for example by approaching the stage after a performance.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

## Digital Media Consent Declaration Form

Dear Parents/Carers,

Technology provides many perceived benefits; for example mass communication through social networks and the sharing of digital imagery. However it is important that educational institutions continually review and consider the impact of such developments on its community and the wellbeing concerns that some parents/carers may have over technological change.

To some parents and carers posting images on social media sites is instant and celebratory. Similarly images of Rhodes Avenue pupils in school publications and on the school website or videos of their performances can be motivating for the children involved and provide good opportunities to promote the work of our school.

Occasionally, Rhodes Avenue School may be visited by news media to take photographs or film an event. Pupils will often appear in these images which may be published in local newspapers or broadcast on television.

Current data protection legislation and *General Data Protection Regulation (2018)* requires schools to seek parental/carer consent prior to publication of any images. Consequently we would like to know if you give or do not give consent to images/videos of your child being used for school purposes. Please let the school know by completing this form and returning it to the school office. Please note that at any time you can change your mind- whether you wish to give or not give your consent - but you are required to complete another form (which can be obtained from the school office).

If you choose not to give consent your child's name will be entered onto Rhodes Avenue's *Digital Media Register of Non-Consent* and Rhodes Avenue Primary School will take every reasonable precaution to ensure that images/videos of the child will not be published.

Please do not hesitate to talk to me should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Panayiotou  
Deputy Headteacher (GDPR Lead)

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## Digital Media Consent Declaration Form

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Current class: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

this if your child is new to our school)

(do not complete

Parent/Carer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**YES** - I give my consent for images identifying my child by his/her facial features to be used in school publications or online. I can change my mind in the future if I would like to.

**NO** - I do not give my consent for images identifying my child by his/her facial features to be used in school publications or online. I can change my mind in the future if I would like to.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_