

SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

NANCLEDRA SCHOOL

February 2020



Preamble

The almost overwhelming tide of social networking sites has been described by ACAS as 'an HR accident waiting to happen'. We now know from experience that this is proving to be true and that employers are grappling with how to deal with employees who post malicious comments about an employer, colleague or student for the world to see.

Yet this has proved to be one of the more challenging changes in terms of controlling misuse by members of staff both in and outside school. Opinion is divided as to whether social media are a threat or an opportunity: on the plus side, they provide an interactive platform for marketing and getting up-to-the-minute information to a wide audience quickly and cost-effectively. On the downside, they pose a potential data security and 'school-into-disrepute' risk and the benefits described above can be counteracted by negative publicity getting into the public domain.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and Governors representing the School. It aims to give advice and establish protocols for representatives of the school who use social media sites to ensure such activities are mindful of the reputation of the school, fellow professionals and colleagues working within the school and the individual's own professional standing. It pertains to using such media both inside and outside the school and principally when members use such media at home. The School Staffing Regulations 2009 place a duty on an employer of staff in schools (be that a maintained, Academy, Voluntary Aided, or Trust) to invoke the school's disciplinary procedure where acts of misconduct have occurred. This is pertinent to incidents of cyber-bullying, or other e-safety incidents covered by this policy, which may take place off-site, but is linked to membership of the School. The School will deal with such incidents within this policy and associated behaviour and anti-bullying policies (linked to the Whole School Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policy)

Governors

Governors are responsible for the approval of this Policy and for reviewing its effectiveness. A member of the Governing Body has taken on the role of E-Safety Governor and will work via the Senior Leadership Team to ensure compliance with this policy.

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

a) Use of social media both in and outside school

It is recommended that staff should receive training in the correct use of social media in order to avoid instances of inappropriate behaviour or blurring of the boundaries of responsibilities when using such media.

When using communication technologies the following is considered as good practice:

- The official school email service may be regarded as safe and secure and is monitored. Staff and students should therefore use only the school email service to communicate with others when in the school, or on the school systems (eg: by remote access).
- Users need to be aware that email communications may be monitored
- Users must immediately report, to the nominated person – in accordance with the school policy, the receipt of any email that makes them feel uncomfortable, is offensive, threatening or bullying in nature and must not respond to any such email.
- Any digital communication between staff and students or parents / carers (email, chat, VLE etc) must be professional in tone and content. These communications may only take place on official (monitored) systems. Personal email addresses, text messaging or public chat / social networking programmes must not be used for these communications.
- Both staff and students are taught about email/social network safety issues, such as the risks attached to the use of personal details. They should also be taught strategies to deal with inappropriate emails and be reminded of the need to write emails clearly and correctly and not include any unsuitable or abusive material.
- Personal information should not be posted on the school's website and only official email addresses should be used to identify members of staff.

- **Use of social networking sites using school equipment is not allowed.**
- **The safeguards listed below must be followed.***
- **These same safeguards apply to members of the school community who access social media at home /outside the school**

* Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children & Young People, May 2019-*Safer Recruitment Consortium* . Paragraph 12

i) Relationships and attitudes

- (a) All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils.
- (b) All staff should ensure that their electronic communications with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.
- (c) From time to time staff may encounter pupils who display attention seeking behaviour, or profess to be attracted to them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that communications cannot be misinterpreted. In these circumstances, the member of staff should also ensure that the head teacher or a senior colleague is aware of the situation.

ii) Inappropriate e-mail/social networking comments and discussions with pupils

- (a) Comments by staff to pupils, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle therefore staff must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about pupils which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst pupils which could be construed as having a sexual connotation.
- (b) Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments are also unacceptable. These are clear examples of 'cyberbullying'.

iii) Reporting incidents

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her electronic communications have been, or may be, misconstrued, he/she should discuss the matter with the Headteacher. Where it is agreed with the head teacher, the member of staff or volunteer should provide a written report of the incident.

b) Advice with regard to Cyberbullying

When publishing information about yourself or having conversations with others online, it is important to be mindful of how you present yourself, who can see your content, and how you can manage it appropriately. When publishing information on a social networking site (such as personal details, images) ask yourself if you would feel comfortable about a current or prospective employer, colleague, student or parent, viewing your content.

Make sure you understand who is allowed to view your content on the sites that you use and how to restrict access to your account. If you are not clear about how to

restrict access to your content, you must regard all the content as publicly available and therefore act accordingly.

Use search engines to check what images/text are associated with your name. This will help establish what information other people can find out about you.

Often, staff become aware of other people posting objectionable material about them from others. Encouraging everyone to report any incidents they find, rather than be a passive bystander, is an important strand of preventing cyberbullying.

If you have a social networking account, DO NOT befriend pupils or add them to your contact lists. In so doing you may be giving them access to personal information and allowing inappropriate contact.