REED FIRST SCHOOL

Learning Together, Learning for Life

Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

The aims of this policy are to:

- enable appropriate use of social media in a safe and secure manner
- safeguard employees in their use of social media and ensure they do not make themselves vulnerable
- minimise the risks to the school through use of social media.

This policy applies to use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect us in any way. This includes conduct outside working hours where use of social media may impact on the school, its reputation, safeguarding obligations, or the trust and confidence required in the employment relationship. It covers all employees, consultants, volunteers, and agency workers.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary this policy as appropriate in any case.

2. What is social media?

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to publish information, share content and interact with others either to a wide audience or through private conversations, such as private messages.

Social media is the term used for internet-enabled tools used on computers, tablets, smartphones and other smart devices etc. to allow people to share information, ideas and views.

3. Types of social media

This policy covers all social media platforms, including, but not limited to:

X, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok and message boards.

It also includes any website where you can contribute or edit content and instant messaging services i.e., WhatsApp, Snapchat etc.

This policy also applies to any other existing or new social media platform not mentioned, whether internal or external or used on a personal or work device.

All forms of social media use are covered by this policy, this can include but is not limited to; posting comments, pictures or videos, blogging, using forums, sending private messages, endorsing other people's content, re-tweeting/circulating posts or adding/editing content on a website.

If it can be determined from your account that you work for us (either visually, verbally or written), we ask that you make it clear that any content and views are your own. Confirming this point does not make you exempt from following this policy.

Please include "these views are my own and not that of my employer" on your profile.

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4. Personal use of social media within working time

Personal use of social media is not permitted during contracted working hours or by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. This includes computers or devices distributed by us for work purposes.

You must limit your personal use of social media on your own equipment to rest breaks such as lunch or break times. The use of personal devices must be not in the presence of pupils and compliant with this policy, safeguarding requirements and professional standards.

5. Business use of social media

If you are contacted for comments about us for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, the enquiry should be directed to the Headteacher, and you should not respond without written approval.

6. Prohibited use of social media

You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage our interests or reputation, even indirectly. This includes content posted, shared or endorsed intentionally or recklessly, whether publicly or through private messaging, where it may reasonably be expected to cause harm or reputational damage.

You should not use social media in a way that breaches any of our policies, the law, or any other regulatory requirements.

6.1. Inappropriate use

Social media use is permitted as long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content and does not interfere with us or your role or responsibilities. Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to:

- any content that could be viewed as malicious, abusive, offensive, obscene, threatening, intimidating or contain nudity or images of a sexual nature.
- discrimination (e.g., racism, homophobia etc.)
- swearing (both verbal and gestured) any content including explicit lyrics.
- making or endorsing harmful or derogatory comments.
- any threatening behaviour that may cause harm to others or our interests or reputation.
- bullying and harassment.
- making false or misleading claims/ statements.
- impersonating colleagues or third parties.
- posting or sharing information that could jeopardise our confidentiality, particularly regarding sensitive topics related to us, such as our performance, internal disputes involving pupils, parents, or employees.
- disparaging us, its employees or any third party.
- sharing sensitive or personal information about us or employees that should not be

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discussed or shared or is personal data protected under data protection legislation. For example., absence information or contact details.

- endorsing, liking, sharing or engaging with content that could reasonably be considered offensive, speculative or likely to cause reputational damage to us. This includes adding or commenting on speculation.
- sharing login details or allowing others to post on your behalf.
- using your professional email address for a personal social media account.
- create social media accounts representing us without prior authorisation.
- expressing opinions on behalf of us or using our logo or other trademarks without express authorisation.

These examples include creating, endorsing, liking, posting, retweeting, sharing, direct messaging or sending any statements, photos, videos, audios, or messages. They also include speaking and/or lip syncing to other creators' content and any music used.

You should never provide professional references or endorsements on behalf of us for other individuals without the express authority of the Headteacher including on social or professional networking sites. Such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to us and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and us.

6.2. Safeguarding and social media

You must not abuse your professional position with pupils on social media. Examples of abuse of position include, but not limited to:

- Accepting any former pupil under the age of 18, or any current pupils, as friends, or requesting such friendships
- Communicating personally with pupils.
- Posting photographs of pupils on sites not owned by us.
- Commenting about or naming pupils.
- Staff must not seek out or engage with pupils via personal social media accounts, including searching for pupils or viewing their profiles unless there is a legitimate safeguarding concern and this is authorised.
- Engagement with ex-pupils – staff should exercise caution in relation to ex-pupils, particularly those who have recently left the school or who may still be under the age of 18. Engaging with ex-pupils through personal social media accounts, or forming personal relationships with them, may constitute a breach of professional boundaries and trust. This is particularly relevant where there is a perceived imbalance of power or influence arising from the staff members former position. Staff must not exploit their professional position to pursue or establish personal, social or otherwise inappropriate relationships with ex-pupils.

If any member of staff becomes aware that they themselves have been or another staff member has been speaking to a pupil or ex-pupil online, they should raise it to their Headteacher immediately.

Any failure to report concerns relating to safeguarding and social media may itself be treated as a disciplinary matter.

6.3. Use of emojis, GIF's and Memes

Using emojis, GIF's or memes can have their benefits, however it is important to use them correctly and appropriately.

You should be aware that messages and comments that include emojis may affect the way text is read. Emojis may mean different things to different people, the use of them may mean the text is deemed inappropriate.

If you choose to use emojis, GIF's or memes you should ensure they are appropriate and easily understood within the context.

6.4. Absence from work and use of social media

Use of social media whilst absent can create the impression that staff are well enough to be working. We accept that this is not necessarily the case, but this may be how it is perceived by colleagues and others. Taking this into account we would guide staff to be mindful of their use of social media during absence from work. Each case will be considered on its individual facts, and no assumptions will be made solely based on social media activity.

7. Guidelines for responsible use of social media

You should make it clear in social media postings that you are speaking on your own behalf.

You should be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which will be published on the internet for anyone to see. You should ensure that you use privacy and access settings whilst being aware that you cannot control the use of your postings by others.

All communication with pupils must take place through approved school systems.

You should also ensure any content you post on social media is consistent with the professional image you present to colleagues, pupils, and parents.

If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, you are advised to refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with the Headteacher.

Any contact with ex-pupils and parents / carers must be approached with professional judgement and transparency. Where there is any doubt about the appropriateness of contact, staff should seek advice from their line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before engaging.

If you become aware of social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should contact the Headteacher.

8. Monitoring

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review your use of social media. We consider valid reasons for checking your internet usage include suspicions that you have:

- been using social media when you should have been working.

- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

Monitoring is in our legitimate interests and is to ensure that this policy is being complied with. Monitoring will be proportionate, carried out in accordance with data protection legislation, and limited to what is necessary to achieve a legitimate purpose.

For further information, please refer to the eSafety and data security policy.

9. Breach of this policy

Any concerns or alleged breaches will be considered fairly and may be investigated in line with the school's disciplinary procedures. Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Where this policy requires you to disclose matters from your personal life, we will consider the circumstances and context of each matter before determining whether any further action is required.

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