



Straits Primary School Social Media Policy

Introduction

The widespread availability and use of social media applications brings opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with our audiences in new and exciting ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our duties to our school community and partners, our legal responsibilities and our reputation. For example, our use of social media applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation and schools of the 21st Century, whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- we encourage the responsible use of social media by all staff, governors, parents and pupils in support of the school's intent and values;
- that we protect employees from allegations and misinterpretations and that Straits Primary School, its leaders, staff and governors are not exposed to legal risks;
- that the reputation of Straits Primary School, staff, pupils and governors at the school are not adversely affected;
- all children are safeguarded;
- clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal or recreational use;
- that any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social media applications is legitimately representative of Straits Primary School;

Scope

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines “**social media**” as any online platform that offers real-time interaction between the user and other individuals or groups including, but not limited to, the following:

- Blogs
- Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com
- Messaging services such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Telegram
- Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook, Instagram
- Media-sharing devices, such as YouTube, TikTok,
- ‘Micro-blogging’ applications, such as X, Tumblr, Reddit

Social media use – staff

This policy covers the use of social media applications by school employees, volunteers and students, governors and/or elected members and by partners or other third parties on behalf of the school.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both work and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff. Many of the principles of this policy also apply to other types of online presence such as virtual worlds.

If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the school in a social media environment, you must seek approval for such communication from the Headteacher, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

Personal conduct

All adults working with children have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. It is therefore expected that they will adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues,

children, public in general and all those with whom they work. Adults in contact with children should therefore understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting.

The guidance contained in this policy identifies what behaviours are expected of school staff who work with children. Anyone whose practice deviates from this document and/or their professional or employment-related code of conduct may bring into question their suitability to work with children and young people and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them. School staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour, during their use of the internet and other communication technologies, which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

All school representatives, including governors, should bear in mind that information they share through social media applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection (GDPR) and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School and Local Authority Equality and Safeguarding Policies.

Code of Conduct:

- School staff will not invite, accept or engage in communications with children (current or previously on role up to the age of 18) from the school community to any personal social media sites while in employment at Straits Primary School.
- Any communication received from children to school representatives must be immediately reported to either the Head Teacher (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and procedures for safeguarding followed.
- If staff have communications with parents/carers from the school community then under no circumstances will school information, pupils, staffing arrangements or activities be discussed or commented upon.
- It is best practice for governors to operate under this code of practice, and while they will be encouraged to do so, it is recognised that community and family links will sometimes mean that strict separation is not always possible.
- School staff must not use the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Headteacher. This applies to any published material or written documentation.
- School staff must not post any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- School staff must not disclosure confidential or business-sensitive information; or publish information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- School staff must not post any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities unless on school communications (website/Facebook page).
- All staff, particularly new staff, should review their social media sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the school if they are published outside of the site.

Protection of Personal Information

Staff should not give their personal e-mail addresses to children or parents. Where there is a need for communication to be sent electronically the school e-mail address should be used. Likewise staff should keep their personal phone numbers private and not use their own mobile phones to contact children or parents in a professional capacity. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between

children and staff, for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Staff have a responsibility to make any such contact known to the senior leadership team. Staff are advised to understand who is allowed to view the content on their pages of the sites they use and how to restrict access to certain groups of people.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is *'the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them.'*

If cyberbullying does take place, employees should keep records of the abuse, text, e-mails, website or instant message and should not delete texts or e-mails. Employees are advised to take screen prints of messages or web pages and be careful to record the time, date and place of the site. Staff are encouraged to report all incidents of cyberbullying to their line manager or the Headteacher. All such incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in consideration of the wishes of the person who has reported the incident. It is for the individual who is being bullied to decide whether they wish to report the actions to the police.

Monitoring

We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as keystroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

Enforcement

Any breaches of this policy will be fully investigated. Where it is found that there has been a breach of the policy, this may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether our equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of staff suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with our investigation.

Any communications or content you publish that causes risk or harm to pupils, damage to the school, Local Authority, any of its employees or any third party's reputation may amount to misconduct or gross misconduct to which the school and Local Authority Disciplinary Policies apply. The Governing Body will take appropriate action in order to protect the school's reputation and that of its staff, parents, governors, children and anyone else directly linked to the school.

Social media use – pupils and parents

As a school, we recognise that there are times when parents may wish to celebrate their child's experiences at school, share information or raise a concern.

In many ways, the use of social media sites to express these opinions is an extension of how people can already express their views on the internet. People use sites such as 'Trip Advisor' to review holiday accommodation and are encouraged to give online assessments of particular products they have purchased. However, remarks made about a school, member of staff or child can be destabilising for a community and, in particular, for the professional status of staff members who may have had allegations made against them and the emotional well-being of children and young people who may have been identified. It can also lead to a 'whispering campaign' which can undermine the school leadership or target a particular child or family.

Key guidance provided for our community is:

- Pupils and parents should not attempt to "friend" or otherwise contact members of staff through their personal social media accounts. Pupils and parents are only permitted to be affiliates of school social media accounts. Where a pupil or parent attempts to "friend" a staff member on their personal account, it will be reported to the headteacher.
- Pupils and parents should not post any content online which is damaging to the school or any of its staff or pupils – this includes to criticise and, in some cases, make malicious comments about

individual members of staff or the community or regarding decisions that have been taken by the school.

- Pupils are instructed not to sign up to any social media sites that have an age restriction above the pupil's age.
- If inappropriate content is accessed online on school premises, it will be reported to the headteacher.
- Parents are not permitted to use the school's WiFi network to access any social media platforms on personal devices.
- Breaches of this policy will be taken seriously, and in the event of illegal, defamatory or discriminatory content this could lead to prosecution, or exclusion.

If an incident occurs involving the use of social media, then advice will be taken from the Local Authority Safeguarding Lead or from our School Improvement Advisor.

Whilst every attempt has been made to cover a wide range of situations, it is recognised that this policy cannot cover all eventualities. There may be times when professional judgements are made in situations not covered by this document, or which directly contravene the standards outlined in this document. It is expected that in these circumstances staff will always advise the Headteacher of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. The Headteacher will in turn seek advice from the local authority where appropriate.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct.

Signed by:

Chair of Governing Body:

Date:

Head teacher:

Date:

Agreed at the Full Governing Body Meeting on: