



*'Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in abundance of counsellors there is safety'*  
*Proverbs 11.14*

## **SHIPLAKE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND LITTLE SQUIRRELS @ SHIPLAKE PRIMARY**

### **Social media policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and forums are gradually replacing traditional media and mass communication methods. These tools present opportunities for the School, but also challenges.

The ability for anybody with Internet access to instantly publish to the world brings with it professional responsibilities that all staff need to understand, even if they don't use social networks for work purposes.

The School understands the need to use these channels to stay connected to all stakeholders.

#### **2. Purpose of policy and guidance**

- To minimise the reputational, legal and governance risks to the School and its employees arising from use of social media by staff in both personal and professional capacities.
- To enable the safe use of social media for the purposes of communication, engagement, customer service and service delivery.
- To ensure a consistent approach is applied across the School, focused on achieving business objectives and improving stakeholder satisfaction.

#### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to the use of social media by all School employees and volunteers for both business and personal purposes regardless of whether they are accessed using School equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' refers to websites and online services that allow users to publically interact with each other. This includes but is not limited to:

- Facebook/Instagram
- Twitter



- YouTube
- Blogs
- LinkedIn and other professional recruitment networks
- Message boards/forums
- Comments under news items and other articles

#### **4. Users' responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

Any misuse of social media must be reported promptly to the Headteacher.

#### **5. Headteacher responsibilities**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of this policy and act in accordance with its requirements.

#### **6. Compliance**

If any employee is found to have breached this policy, they may be subject to the School's disciplinary procedure. If a criminal offence is considered to have been committed, further action may be taken to assist in the prosecution of the offenders.

#### **7. Monitoring**

The School ICT system may be monitored in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy, so personal privacy cannot be assumed.

The School respects the privacy of its employees. However, postings made on a personal account may attain a wide readership and will therefore be considered public rather than private. Publically-accessible postings may be investigated if there is a suspected breach of this policy.

#### **8. Use of social media at work and at home**

School ICT equipment is primarily reserved for business use. However, in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use policy, you can access and use social media in your own time, during break periods, providing it does not interfere with your work.

The following applies to all School staff regardless of what equipment is used or when postings are made:

1. Discussing the School, your work, any stakeholder (including pupils) or the people you work with on social networks should not be considered private, even in a forum with restricted access (such as on someone's Facebook wall). It is not the same as having an offline discussion among friends or a one-to-one email conversation. Social networks are designed



to make sharing as easy as possible, so anything you say may be circulated to a wider audience and could be brought to the attention of school colleagues, Senior Leadership Team and Governors.

2. Staff are personally responsible for anything they post online.
3. You must not do or say anything that may harm the reputation of the School or undermine your role as a representative of the school.
4. You must show proper consideration for the privacy of the people you work with.
5. You must comply with your responsibilities under the Dignity at Work policy.
6. You must comply with your responsibilities under the School's Code of Conduct:

*You must not allow your professional and personal use of social media sites to become blurred; you need to be mindful of your duties not to:*

- *disclose School without authority*
- *take part in any political or public activity, which compromises or might be seen to compromise your impartial service to the School and its stakeholders*
- *make derogatory comments about the School, its policies or procedures*
- *make derogatory comments about other School employees or stakeholders*
- *continue to engage with others who become abusive or aggressive.*

7. You may identify yourself as a School employee and contribute to a conversation to inform stakeholders or protect the School's reputation. The School encourages this use of social media, but it falls under professional use, so you should first read the guidance on pages 4 - 7.

8. Staff will be required to remove postings that are deemed to be in breach of this policy.

## **9. Legal implications**

Staff should be aware that there are a number of legal implications associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Liability can arise under the laws of:

- Defamation
- Copyright
- Discrimination
- Contract
- Human Rights
- Protection from harassment
- Criminal Justice
- Data Protection

## **10. Professional use of social media**

'Professional use' is when you use social media for official School business or post in a way that implies that you represent the School. This includes:



- publishing information via a School-owned account
- posting in your role as an employee of the School
- posting as an official spokesperson for the School.

Appropriate professional use of social media is encouraged but you should familiarise yourself with the guidance on pages 4 – 7 before posting.

### **Social Media Code of Conduct for employees working with children and vulnerable adults**

1. Only use School approved accounts and equipment to communicate with stakeholders. Do not “friend” or enter any private online contact with children or adults who use the School services. This includes family members, carers or friends of stakeholders. Friend requests should be politely declined by explaining that it is against School policy, which is designed to protect staff and the public from any misunderstandings.
2. Be responsible for the way you behave, for what you post and for the language you use whether you are communicating by text, email or social media. Remain professional and use your common sense and judgment.
3. Conduct yourself in a way that does not breach any of the School's policies including the Staff Code of Conduct or your professional codes of practice.
4. How you behave online can have an impact on you professionally as well as personally. Anything that is posted online including photos, images and video material, could leave you open to scrutiny from the public and people who use services and could affect your own professional reputation and that of the School and could be viewed as misconduct.
5. Employees should respect the privacy and rights of young people and vulnerable adults they are working with. However, from time to time, you may become aware of material or information posted on social media sites or through other communication channels, which causes concern about the safety of vulnerable users. In these circumstances you have a duty to report these concerns and follow the appropriate safeguarding procedures.
6. Where a child or young person is in care or a care leaver, it is particularly important to inform the relevant Social Worker/Personal Advisor about anything of concern or any inappropriate information shared online.
7. Use and regularly check your personal security settings. To keep your accounts private, choose settings that mean only the people on your “friends”, followers or contacts lists can see your profiles.
8. It is advised that as a general measure to protect your personal safety and identity, you should not accept friend requests from people who are not personally known to you.
9. Be aware also that anyone can search for information about you online, just as they do for any service or product. Avoid putting personal information up on your page e.g. where you



work, live, your phone number. Find out about your “web shadow” – search for yourself online and see what comes up.

10. You may wish to ask friends to check before photographs are posted which may cause you embarrassment. When posting your own images, bear in mind the fact that any image can easily be downloaded and manipulated and choose which images you share accordingly.

11. It is recommended that you do not post images that could be used to identify your home or family.

12. All staff working with young people are advised to make themselves familiar with the advice that is available for parents/carers/professionals and for young people about being safe online:

- Oxcentric - Keeping safe online
- Boombox - Be safe on the web
- CEOP - [www.thinkyouknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkyouknow.co.uk)

### **Guidance on professional use of social media**

The following guidance should be considered in conjunction with the Social Media Policy above. It is intended to provide extra detail and advice for staff who use social media in such a way that they are representing Shiplake CE Primary School ('professional use'), whether that be as part of their role or in an ad-hoc fashion.

#### **1. General guidance**

- Be honest, courteous and professional at all times.
- Avoid arguments.
- Be positive and add something significant to the conversation.
- Only post facts that you are sure of.
- Don't do or say anything illegal.
- Remain politically neutral.
- Understand the situation and audience before you post.
- Tell colleagues before you post if something you say may affect them.
- Get permission before you re-publish copyrighted material.
- Don't share confidential or sensitive information, even in private forums.
- In general, you may republish anything that is already in the public domain.
- How you deal with a complaint is as important as the complaint itself.
- Nothing you say can be 100% deleted, so always be sure before you post.
- Journalists may quote you – would you be happy for this to happen?



- If you are in any doubt, contact the Headteacher for advice before posting.
- If you are threatened with legal action for something you have posted, remove the posting immediately and inform the Headteacher/Governing Body.

## **2. Contributing using a personal account**

In your personal or professional use of the Internet, you may come across opportunities to identify yourself as an employee of Shiplake CE Primary School and contribute positively to a discussion or otherwise publish something online.

In these situations, you are representing the organisation and yourself.

We encourage this kind of participation, as long as the following guidance is observed:

- Think through the reason for participating before posting. Good reasons for getting involved:

- o to help people using your professional knowledge
- o to correct misinformation
- o to direct people to useful information

Poor reasons for getting involved include:

- o to respond to comments clearly intended to provoke a response (known as "trolling").
- o participating in arguments or political debates.

- If you are in any doubt, talk it through with your manager first.
- You can of course simply notify the Headteacher about a discussion concerning the council without getting involved yourself.
- Be up front about who you work for and your role in the School. You do not have to give your real name or personal details, however.
- Stick to your area of expertise.
- Be aware that, once you identify yourself as a School spokesperson, the rest of your postings under the same account may be scrutinised. This includes your profile details, any photo you may have submitted etc. Ensure that your history on that account will not bring the School into disrepute.
- Be clear about whether what you are saying is your own personal view or represents official School policy.
- Contact the Headteacher/Governing Body if:



- o you are in any doubt about a contribution you are about to make
- o the situation turns negative and you need advice on how to proceed
- o your contribution results in a tangible positive outcome (e.g a satisfied stakeholder who says as much).

### 3. School-owned social network accounts

These guidelines cover the setting up and use of social media accounts that are directly associated with the School .

- The Headteacher/Governing Body should agree and approve all accounts and pages that represent the School. • Every account or page should have a primary contact who is responsible for administration.
- To provide cover when the primary contact is not available, trusted colleagues can also be provided with log in details.
- Everyone with log in details to School-affiliated accounts must be known to the Headteacher/Governing Body.
- Keep account log in details secure and never email passwords.
- Know what you want to achieve before you start. Plan how you will evaluate the success or otherwise of any social media activity.
- Use of social media should align with the School's ethos and values and form part of a wider communications and marketing strategy for your school.
- The Headteacher/Governing Body will provide advice as to whether use of social media is appropriate in any given instance and, if so, in what form. This advice must be followed.
- Accounts and pages should use the School's branding.
- Make sure you understand the potential time-investment: building and maintaining online communities/relationships takes time and effort.
- User comments that breach the rules of engagement (see below) must be addressed as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours.
- You should check your account at least once a day, even at weekends, in case anything urgent arises. Be aware of this minor out-of-hours commitment before you start.
- Ensure everything you post is accurate and conveyed in plain English.
- Be prepared to respond in a timely fashion to feedback. Direct questions should be answered.
- If it takes time to prepare an answer, publish a 'holding' message to show that you're listening.
- On the other hand, too much engagement can draw accusations of "wasting taxpayers money" so be concise. Avoid protracted discussions and don't be drawn away from the topic at hand.
- How much personal information you disclose (e.g your real name) is up to you.
- Never use official accounts to post personal opinions that could bring the School into disrepute or which conflict with official School policy.



#### **4. Requesting a new account, page or other online presence**

All requests for new accounts must come through the Headteacher/Governing Body. You might be asked some follow-up questions, including:

- What time resources are available to maintain the account?
- What is the anticipated lifespan of the account?
- If your target audience is unable to access or use social media, in what other ways will you be providing an equivalent service?

#### **5. Running an online community**

When you set up a School-affiliated group, page or discussion forum, you are responsible for administering and moderating user contributions.

Your role is to encourage discussion, set user's expectations, create and follow the rules, check the content of everything posted and respond to feedback.

As the administrator of an online community, you should follow these basic guidelines:

- Make sure you publish the Rules of Engagement (see below) in a prominent place.
- Apply the rules fairly and consistently.
- Respond to questions and feedback quickly. Social networks move quickly, and a delay of more than 48 hours could cause frustration.
- Make sure you have time to pro-actively encourage participation. The biggest threat to online communities is a lack of activity.

#### **5.1 Rules of engagement**

Any group, page, forum or other council-affiliated online presence that allows users to post must make available clear rules for participation.

These will allow you to moderate (i.e. edit, delete, warn or ban) submissions and participants fairly. They let users know what is and isn't acceptable up front, which could save you a lot of time and hassle.

The following 'rules of engagement' should be made clearly accessible to visitors. You may wish to adapt them to your specific use-case (for example, if young people or vulnerable adults are involved).

If your online group or community is hosted on a third-party site (such as Facebook or Flickr), you should make sure that your community's rules don't contradict the hosting website's rules.





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The views expressed by members of the public do not represent the views of and are not endorsed by the School.

We reserve the right to remove any contributions that break the following rules:

- Be civil, tasteful and relevant.
- Do not post messages that are unlawful, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive.
- Do not swear.
- Do not post content for which you do not own the copyright.
- Do not post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once (also called "spamming").
- Do not publicise other people's personal information, such as contact details.
- Do not advertise products or services.
- Do not impersonate someone else.

Please note that comments that are critical of the School are fair game unless they breach the above rules. Seek to address any criticisms or complaints quickly and fairly.

## **6. Closing down accounts and pages**

Sometimes groups, pages and accounts just don't attract the following they need to remain viable. Leaving dormant or poorly-visited accounts online can cause confusion and doesn't reflect well on the organisation.

The Headteacher/Governing Body will periodically check the activity on School-owned accounts and have the right to remove them from the public domain if they seem to have run their course. The owner of the account will be contacted first.

Adapted – OCC Model Social Media Policy 2017

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