

Digital Communications (Social Media) Policy



King Henry VIII 3-19 School Ysgol 3-19 Brenin Harri'r VIII

We believe in the limitless capacity for everyone to achieve great things.

Effective from: July 2024

Approved by Governors: July 2024

Reviewed by Governors: July 2025

Next Review Due: July 2027

Purpose

Digital communications are an essential part of day to day business, and we can't thrive without communicating in this way. It is a very useful tool to engage with our pupil families, to communicate our school activity and to publicise our school. E-mail is a fundamental way of staff communication within the school. Digital communications are a fundamental way of updating parents and carers on key information.

Employees are actively encouraged to consider the use of digital communications to complement other traditional communication methods.

This policy helps school staff make the right decisions about the use of digital communications and understand the impact should they get it wrong. It outlines the standards we expect of people when using social media and publishing on the internet, how we will monitor use and what will happen if it is used inappropriately.

Definition

Social media (e.g. Facebook, 'X', Instagram, LinkedIn) is a broad term for any kind of online platform which enables people to directly interact with each other. However, some games, for example Minecraft or World of Warcraft and video sharing platforms such as YouTube have social media elements to them.

The school recognises the numerous benefits and opportunities which a social media presence offers. Staff, parents, carers and pupils are actively encouraged to find creative ways to use social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, especially around the issues of safeguarding, bullying and personal reputation. This policy aims to encourage the safe use of social media by the school, its staff, parents, carers and children.

Scope

This policy is subject to the school's Acceptable Use Agreements. This policy:

- Applies to all staff and to all online communications which directly or indirectly, represent the school;
- Applies to such online communications posted at any time and from anywhere;
- Encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education;
- Defines the monitoring of public social media activity pertaining to the school.

Professional communications are those made through official channels, posted on a school account or using the school name. All professional communications are within the scope of this policy.

The school respects privacy and understands that staff and pupils may use social media forums in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative

impact on professional standards and/or the school's reputation are within the scope of this policy.

Staff are asked to refer to EWC guidelines on this matter. [Please click here.](#)

Personal communications are those made via personal social media accounts. In all cases where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer. Such communications are within the scope of this policy.

Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.

Digital communications with pupils are also considered. Staff should only use approved modes of communication with pupils such as Google Classroom / Microsoft Teams which are available through Hwb. Staff should not create social media groups such as WhatsApp groups to communicate with pupils.

Roles & Responsibilities

SLT

- Facilitate training and guidance on social media
- Develop and implement the Social Media Policy
- Take a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
- Make an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involve appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
- Receive completed applications for social media accounts
- Approve account creation and store copies of passwords and account access

Administrator / Moderator

- Create the account following SLT approval
- Store account details, including passwords securely and ensure named member of SLT has passwords and access details to your account
- Be involved in monitoring and contributing to the account
- Make clear that social media accounts are not to be used for parents and carers to make queries and that they should follow the school's communication processes.
- Control the process for managing an account after the lead staff member has left the organisation (closing or transferring)
- When establishing a new social media account ensure their affiliation with school can be clearly seen through the use of school name and logo and is compliant with the King Henry VIII 3-19 school 'corporate branding' guidelines.
- All staff considering using social media as a form of school promotion / communication should watch the following video from Welsh Government:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSye9H2WDOY&t=50s>

Staff

- Know the contents of and ensure that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies
- Attending appropriate training
- Promote responsible social media use with pupils at all times through formal and informal curriculum opportunities
- Regularly monitor, update, and manage content posted via school accounts
- Add an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school
- Participate in teaching of acceptable use of social media in PSE lessons and form time sessions

Following consideration by the SLT an application will be approved or rejected. In all cases, the SLT must be satisfied that anyone running a social media account on behalf of the school has read and understood this policy and received appropriate training. This also applies to anyone who is not directly employed by the school, including volunteers or parents.

Monitoring

Regular monitoring and intervention by administrators are essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

School accounts must be monitored regularly and frequently. The Senior Leadership Team monitor school accounts outside of school hours

Behaviour

When using social media, the following should be adhered to

- All users of social media adhere to the standards of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies (for example, communication policy)
- All communications, especially those by social media (for example, twitter posts), are to be checked for clarity and accuracy before proceeding. This is to avoid readers mis-reading the intended message. The Senior Leadership Team will regularly check and sample social media posts.
- Under no circumstances are personal views to be posted on school social media accounts.
- Digital communications by staff must be professional and respectful at all times and in accordance with this policy. Staff will not use social media to infringe the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgements about staff. School social media accounts must not be used for personal gain. Staff must ensure that confidentiality is maintained on social media even after they leave the employment of the school.
- If a journalist makes contact about a post made using social media staff must contact the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in their absence) before responding.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g., defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality or copyright) will be considered extremely seriously by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated as appropriate. This is for school and personal accounts.

- The use of social media by staff while at work, may be monitored, in line with school policies. The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites. However, where excessive use is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The school will take appropriate action in the event of breaches of the social media policy. Where conduct is found to be unacceptable, the school will deal with the matter internally. Where conduct is considered illegal, the school will report the matter to the police and other relevant external agencies, and may act according to the disciplinary policy.
- Remember and understand that all information posted as part of your job role is a school record, evidence of the school's work, and may be used for reference by others in future.
- Be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to the reputation of King Henry VIII 3 -19 School.
- Do not upload, post, or forward any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content. This includes about the school, colleagues, members of the public or MCC as an organisation. It could result in disciplinary action. This is for school and personal accounts.
- Never share private or confidential information.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, should seek permission from the copyright holder before sharing.
- Users must ensure that their use of social media does not infringe upon relevant data protection laws, or breach confidentiality.

Tone

The tone of content published on social media should be appropriate to the audience, whilst retaining appropriate levels of professional standards.

Key words to consider when composing messages are:

- Engaging
- Conversational
- informative
- Friendly (on certain platforms, e.g. Facebook)

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing the following guidelines are strictly adhered to:

- Pupil images can only be used if we have parental consent, as stored on our data management system. It is the staff member's responsibility to ensure we have permission before the image is published
- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload pupil pictures online other than via school owned social media accounts

- Staff should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on school social media accounts. Pupils should be appropriately dressed, not be subject to ridicule and must not be on any school list of children whose images must not be published.
- If a member of staff inadvertently takes a compromising picture which could be misconstrued or misused, they must delete it immediately.
- We do not add pupils' full names to images in a way that they can be identified by 'outsiders'

Personal use

Staff

- Personal communications are those made via a personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with the school or impacts on the school, it must be made clear that the member of staff is not communicating on behalf of the school with an appropriate disclaimer for example: "The views expressed are my own and don't reflect the views of my employer".
- Such personal communications are within the scope of this policy.
- Personal communications which do not refer to or impact upon the school are outside the scope of this policy.
- Where excessive personal use of social media in school is suspected, and considered to be interfering with relevant duties, disciplinary action may be taken.
- The school permits reasonable and appropriate access to private social media sites.

Pupil

- Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior pupils of the school on any personal social media network account.
- Staff should take extreme vigilance if they are follow or engage with the parents/carers of current or prior pupils online
- Any offensive or inappropriate comments will be resolved by the school's behaviour policy.

Parents/Carers

- The school has an active parent/carer education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website and activities around internet safety.
- Parents and carers are encouraged to comment or post appropriately about the school. In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made, the school will ask the parent/carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, the school will refer parents to the school's complaints procedures or our Communication Policy. If necessary, the school will follow the Unacceptable Behaviour of Parents and Carers Policy.

Minimum age requirements

Most popular social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register, although some sites are created specifically for children under the age of 13 (see [Internet Matters Social Networks made for children](#)). The age requirements are there because

of data protection laws. Online services are not allowed to collect or store children's data if they are under the age of 13. Data protection laws also state that only children aged 13 and over can sign up to an online service without parental permission. Following the age restrictions sets a good example, although the age requirements doesn't always mean the site is inappropriate for children to use, it's a good indication, especially for younger children.

Monitoring posts about the school

As part of active social media engagement, it is considered good practice to pro-actively monitor the internet for public postings about the school. All staff are encouraged to be aware of postings about the school on the wider web and inform the Senior Leadership Team if they have any concerns about what is posted.

Across the curriculum

- As part of the school's PSE curriculum, pupils will receive training on internet safety and the use of social media, underpinning pupils' development as 'Healthy confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives.'
- In Information Technology lessons pupils will receive training on internet safety and the safe use of social media.
- Linked to the school's ethos of promoting healthy habits, King Henry VIII 3 -19 school is a 'mobile phone free', allowing pupils to have quality time away from social media, enabling pupils to develop as ethically informed citizens.
- All subjects within the curriculum are expected to reinforce key messages around safe use of the internet and social media.