Introduction and aims

At Wanborough, we acknowledge that social media is an integral part of 21st Century life. It presents an exciting opportunity for us to share what takes place in school and to celebrate everything that the school does. The widespread availability and use of social networking applications bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly, and consider the potential impact on the schools' reputation.

This policy provides pupils and staff with guidance around the use of social media and advises school leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking applications. For example, the use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

 This policy aims to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

• Encourage good practice and promote the safe, sensible and effective use of social media.

 • Encourage the safe and sensible use of social media by pupils, staff and parents or carers.

 • Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites.

• Safeguard the reputation of the school from unwarranted abuse on social media.

• Clarify what the school considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social media by pupils, staff and parents or carers

• Set out the procedures the school will follow where it considers pupils, staff or parents / carers have inappropriately or unlawfully used social media to the detriment of the school, its staff or its pupils.

• Provide social media guidance to staff, pupils and parents on social media usage.

• Ensure the school is not exposed to legal risks arising from social media usage.

• Ensure the reputation of the school is not adversely affected from social media usage.

• Ensure users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the school.

Scope

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all school stakeholders, including, employees, governors, pupils and volunteers. These groups are referred to collectively as 'school representatives'.

This policy applies to all uses of social networking applications used for school related purposes. It applies regardless of whether the school representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications or otherwise. This policy also applies to internally facing uses.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies:

- Online Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Mobile Phone and Smart Technologies Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

What is social media?

Social media is the term commonly used for a range of websites and apps that allow users to directly interact with one another. This takes many forms such as video and photo sharing websites such as YouTube, Instagram and X (previously known as Twitter). For the purposes of this policy, the term social media is also being extended to include gaming platforms including Roblox and Minecraft. Most commonly, people interact with one another through websites such as Facebook and X. The school itself has its own X account and regularly posts updates on the school website. Tapestry (communication and assessment tool) is used by the school reception class. The terminology Social Media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, smartwatches, cameras, tablets or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communication technologies.

The school's use of social media

The school recognises that social media is another platform by which it can communicate with the parent body. All members of the school community will be encouraged to engage in social media in a positive, safe and responsible manner at all times.

The school runs the following social media accounts:

• Twitter

• School website

• Tapestry (Reception class)

The school's social media accounts can be used to communicate the following:

• Pictures and details of a particular event including, but not limited to, a trip, sporting event, lesson or whole school day.

• Celebrating the achievements of a class, group or individual children in relation to the life of the school.

• Advertising an upcoming event at the school such as a house day, school play, or parents' evening.

• The sharing of key information in relation to the school, such as a school closure.

• The sharing of external events or activities that will contribute to the continued education of the pupils in attendance at Wanborough.

• Give urgent news updates to parents e.g. extreme weather/school closures.

• Provide links to other websites if deemed appropriate by the school. • Increasing parental engagement.

• Marketing the school.

It will be taken into account that communications posted on this page will not reach all parents so important information will still be shared with parents using the existing approaches (namely email, text messaging and the school website).

Safeguarding

In line with the school's data protection and child protection policies, the school has taken the following steps to protect its pupils, staff and parent body when using social media:

• Written permission has been obtained from parents with regards to posting pictures of their children. Where permission has not been obtained, staff must take steps to ensure that pictures of that particular child are not uploaded to social media.

• Parents/carers are asked not to post images (photos and videos) of pupils other than their own on social media sites unless they have the permission of parents of the other children pictured.

• At public events, parents will be reminded that they should not post images on social media sites of pupils other than their own.

• Where a photo of a child has been uploaded to social media without parental permission, the school must ensure it is removed as soon as possible.

• A list of children for whom parental permission has not been given is given to teaching staff to make them aware of which children cannot be included in photos on the school's social media sites. This is updated yearly.

• If and when a child joins the school after the beginning of the academic year, permissions for social media use will be sought as part of the child's enrolment at the school.

• Children's full names are not to be included in the school's social media posts.

Using social media on behalf of the school

All adults working with children and young people have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children and young people. The staff at Wanborough are expected to adhere to high standards of professionalism and behaviour in order to maintain the confidence and respect of their colleagues, children and young people, public in general and all those with whom they work in line with the school's code of conduct. This applies as much to the content published on social media as it does to their day-to-day conduct in and around school, outlined in the Code of Conduct. Adults in contact with children and young people should understand and be aware that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting. As such, the following expectations are in place with regards to the staff's use of social media as a means of communication:

• Any posts submitted by staff to a social media platform must retain the same standards of respect and professionalism as in any other form of communication.

 • Provide a good example and a positive role model for all those who may read the school's communications on social media.

• Communications should be appropriate to the audience while retaining these high professional standards. As such, posts should be engaging, conversational, informative and welcoming.

Inappropriate use

Social media is a wonderful tool by which users can communicate with one another and spread positive news and messages. However, the school recognises that a minority of users are using social media platforms to spread negativity and derogatory comments. The following are examples of what is not an exhaustive list of inappropriate uses of the school's social media platforms:

• Making allegations about staff, pupils or parents or cyberbullying.

• Making complaints about the school or staff.

• Making defamatory comments about the school or staff.

 • Posting negative/offensive comments about the school or specific pupils, staff, governors or volunteers.

 • Posting racist comments.

 • Posting comments which threaten violence.

If posts of the above nature are made on the school's social media sites, the administrator(s) will take the following actions:

• Any posts of a negative or derogatory nature will be deleted.

• Where parents/carers raise queries, concerns or complaints on social media, they will be asked to make contact directly with the school rather than posting them on social media so that their allegation or complaint can be dealt with fairly, appropriately and effectively for all concerned in line with the Complaints Procedure.

• With regards to offensive or racist comments, or those which threaten violence, the post will be logged and a record made in line with the school's behaviour, anti-bullying and child protection & safeguarding policies.

• Report the user posting comments using the 'Report Abuse' protocols.

In the event that a pupil, parent or other member of the public continues to post comments of the above nature, the school will report the abuse to the relevant social network. All social network sites have clear rules about the content which can be posted on the site and they provide robust mechanisms to report contact or activity which breaches this. The school will also expect that any parent/carer removes such comments immediately and will be asked to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the matter and the possible repercussions of such action. If the parent refuses to comply with these procedures and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the school considers inappropriate, the school will consider taking the following action:

• Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this.

• Set out the school's concerns in writing, giving a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed.

• Contact the Police where the school feels it appropriate – for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence.

• If the inappropriate comments have been made on a school forum, the school may take action to block or restrict that individual's access to that website or forum.

• Contact the host/provider of the Social Networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information;

• Take other legal action against the individual.

Staff's personal use of social media

Social media platforms are used by many adults in today's society. It is expected therefore that staff at Wanborough will be using platforms such as Facebook, X, YouTube, Instagram and possibly others. As such, it is necessary to protect both the school's reputation and image as well that of its staff.

The following actions can be taken by staff in relation to their own private use of social media:

• The use of the school's name, logo or any other published material should not be used within a private context, except with written permission from the Headteacher. This applies to written documentation or materials found on the Internet.

• Staff should not post any form of communication or image which may damage its reputation, including defamatory comments.

• Staff should not disclose confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclose information or images that could compromise the security of the school.

• Staff should not post images of employees, children or anyone else directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities. These posts should be posted only on the school's social media accounts if necessary.

In addition to these actions, the staff of Wanborough should also ensure that they adhere to the following:

• Use of social media should be responsible and ensure that personal and professional reputations and that of the school is not compromised by inappropriate postings.

• Staff will not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or at anyone connected with the school.

• Staff should be aware of the potential of online fraud and be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.

• Communication between pupils and adults should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries.

• Staff will not share any personal information with children or young persons.

• All communications with children or young persons are transparent and open to scrutiny.

• Personal contact details, including email, home or mobile numbers should not be given unless the need to do so is agreed by the Headteacher.

• Ensure that personal social media accounts are set to private and pupils are never listed as approved contacts.

• Staff should never use or access social media accounts belonging to pupils.

• Staff should not give their personal contact details to pupils, including their mobile telephone numbers or details of social media accounts.

• Staff should not use internal web based communication channels to send personal messages to children and young people.

• Staff should not send Facebook friend requests to, or accept Facebook friend requests from, parents, pupils or past pupils under the age of 18.

• Use of social media for personal reasons within the school setting is prohibited during directed time and should only be used in appropriate settings e.g. staffroom.

Pupil use of social media

Many social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram prohibit users under the age of 13. However, there are social media platforms, particularly gaming sites such as Roblox and Minecraft, whose target audience is primarily children and young people. As such, it is the school's responsibility to teach children how to stay safe when using social media platforms such as these.

With regards to the use of social media, the school will teach children to:

• Describe simple strategies for creating and keeping strong and secure passwords safe and for keeping personal and private information private, depending on context

• Explain that others online can pretend to be the children, or other people, including their friends and suggest reasons why they might do this.

• Explain the risks of communicating online with others I don't know very well.

• Explain how their own, and other people's, feelings can be hurt by what is said online.

• Describe rules about how to behave online and how to follow them.

• Describe how presenting themselves in different ways online carries both risks and benefits and to assess what these could be.

• Describe strategies for safe and fun experiences in a range of online social environments.

• Give examples of how to show respect online.

• Describe ways people can be bullied through a range of media.

• Think carefully about how content that children post might affect others, their feelings and how it might affect how others feel about them (their reputation).

• Make positive contributions and be part of online communities and describe some of the communities in which the children are involved and describe how they collaborate with others positively.

• Show an understanding of their responsibilities for the well-being of others in an online setting.

• Explain how impulsive and rash communications may cause problems (e.g. flaming, content produced during live-streaming).

• Describe ways of increasing privacy on social media apps.

External communication with pupils

Communication with pupils will take place face-to-face in school, via portfolios on Class Dojo (in the form of feedback on work during remote learning) or through Teams (e.g. remote interventions) and never be for social purposes. Staff members will not communicate with a pupil via their personal mobile phones or using personal email addresses.

External communication with parents/carers

The school has many lines of communication to maintain positive working relationships with parents/carers. These may include: letters, phone calls, email, face-to-face meetings, Microsoft Teams, Class Dojo, the website, newsletters, progress reports and parent-teacher meetings. Effective communications not only deliver the specific information required, but also enable the school to demonstrate values and our school ethos. Communication with parents should always reinforce parental support and engagement.

Communications will seek to establish open and positive relationships with parents, whilst always ensuring that these relationships are professional.

Staff will not communicate with parents/carers or students via any form of networking site, personal mobile or email. Where there is a need to communicate directly with parents/carers (i.e. on school trips) staff will have access to school provided equipment i.e. mobile phones.

Monitoring

School social media accounts will be monitored regularly. Any comments, queries or complaints made through these accounts must be responded to within 24 hours (or on the next working day if received at the weekend) even if only to acknowledge receipt. Regular monitoring and intervention is essential in case a situation arises where bullying or any other inappropriate behaviour arises on a school social media account.

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