



## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy sets out The Sandhill Trust's agreement on social media. New technologies are an integral part of life in the twenty-first century and can be powerful tools which open up teaching and learning opportunities. 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 positively, effectively and safely. This document aims to:

- Assist schools' staff working with children to work safely and responsibly with the internet and other communication technologies and to monitor their own standards and practice
- Set clear expectations of behaviour and/or codes of practice relevant to social networking for educational, personal or recreational use
- Give a clear message that unlawful or unsafe behaviour is unacceptable and that, where appropriate, disciplinary or legal action will be taken
- Support safer working practice

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 in schools will always advise the Headteacher/Executive Headteacher of the justification for any such action already taken or proposed. Headteachers will in turn seek advice from the Schools' HR team where appropriate.

### **SCOPE**

This document applies to all staff who work within The Sandhill Trust as adopted by the governing body. This includes teachers, support staff, supply staff, governors, contractors and volunteers. It should be followed by any adult whose work brings them into contact with pupils. References to staff should be taken to apply to all the above groups of people in schools. Reference to pupils means all pupils at the school including those over the age of 18.

### **STATUS**

This document does not replace or take priority over advice given by HR, the safeguarding unit or the school's codes of conduct, dealing with allegations of abuse, other policies issued around

safeguarding or IT issues (email, ICT and data protection policies), but is intended to both supplement and complement any such documents.

## **PRINCIPLES**

- Adults who work with pupils are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff in schools should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way.
- Staff in schools should continually monitor and review their practice in terms of the continually evolving world of social networking and ensure they follow the guidance contained in this document.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

For the purpose of this policy, social media is the term commonly used for websites which allow people to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social networking websites such as Facebook, bebo, Instagram and MySpace are perhaps the most well-known examples of social media but the term also covers other web based services such as blogs, video and audio podcasts, wikis, message boards, photo document and video sharing websites such as YouTube and micro blogging services such as Twitter. This definition of social media is not exhaustive as technology develops with new ways of communicating advancing every day.

In addition, mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it still continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording. Therefore, for the purpose of this document, the terminology Social Media is not exhaustive and also applies to the use of communication technologies such as mobile phones, cameras, PDAs / PSPs or other handheld devices and any other emerging forms of communication technologies.

## **USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS PART OF SCHOOL SERVICE**

### **Safeguarding the children**

Please note that no photographs of children must ever be published without gaining parental consent. A list of children who cannot be posted is available at the school office. Photographs can only be taken using school devices and must be stored on the school network. Cameras must not leave the school setting (unless being taken on an educational visit) and should be kept securely at all times.

School devices such as laptops, ipads and hard-drives should be password protected and under no circumstances should these be shared with anyone. Staff must ensure that devices are not left unlocked if unattended. In addition, images, videos and websites that are shared with the children should be screened first, before presenting them to the children.

## **Social Networks**

The Sandhill Trust recognise the benefits of positive, purposeful use of social media and therefore all schools that form part of The Sandhill Trust will promote events, learning and achievements through the following social networking platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Primary Blogger.

## **Primary Blogger**

Blog accounts for members of staff must only be created by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.

It is the bloggers responsibility to:

- Ensure parental consent has been obtained for any use of children's photographs
- Where it is necessary to name a child, only the first name is to be used
- Blogging is only conducted using school devices
- Ensure no account is left open or unattended and passwords are kept strictly confidential

Comments made by members of the public have to be approved before being displayed on the Blog. These comments can be approved by any account holder if deemed appropriate. Any negative or inappropriate comments must not be approved and must be brought to the Headteacher's attention.

## **Facebook and Twitter**

The school's Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated automatically when content is posted to the Blog. The Facebook and Twitter account can be only be accessed and updated individually by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher.

These methods of communication have been set up to try and keep parents updated with everything going on in school. We will also try to provide useful links and any other information that we feel will help improve the children's learning. In addition, it will help with our paperless project to try and cut the costs of ink and paper.

The pages are to be strictly used as a one way communication tool with parents. If parents feel they need to discuss any issues, we would encourage them to contact the school office rather than use this page to respond to information. Any parent, or other member of the public, who comments on our pages negatively or inappropriately must be reported to the Headteacher immediately. The comments will be deleted, the person in question will be contacted and they may be blocked from the site.

Staff must not use their personal accounts to interact with the school's social networks. Professional accounts using formal names (e.g. Mrs Smith) can be created using school email addresses. However, staff still must not 'befriend' or 'follow' any parent, child or former pupil of the school as outlined in the Terms of Use below.

## **Terms of Use**

All staff must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all school representatives. This includes, but is not limited to,

public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on school network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. The Sandhill Trust expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use:

#### Social Networking applications

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the school into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put school representatives in breach of school codes of conduct or policies relating to staff
- Must not breach the school's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to school matters, staff, pupils or parents
- No staff member should have any parent, pupil or former pupil as a 'friend' to share information with

#### **Additional Social Networking Applications**

Proposals for using further social networking applications as part of a school service (whether they are hosted by the school or by a third party) must be approved by the Headteacher first. Use of social networking applications which are not related to any school services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Headteacher. However, school representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

#### **Communication with Pupils**

Communication between pupils and staff, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. It should only be done using school devices. All staff are provided with a work email address for communication and must never give personal email addresses to pupils. By using school devices, email addresses and only using networking applications that have been granted permission by the Trust, staff should ensure that all communications are transparent and be aware that they are open to scrutiny. Staff should also be circumspect in their communications with pupils so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives. Communications between pupils and staff outside the agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations.

## **STAFF GUIDANCE FOR PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

All school representatives should be mindful that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Staff need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile numbers. This will avoid the potential for pupils or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. All staff, particularly new staff, are encouraged to review their social networking sites regularly 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.

No member of staff should interact with any pupil in the school or any former pupil on social networking sites. In addition, no member of the school staff should request access to a pupil's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the pupil access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend. Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the head teacher in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on school equipment.

Please note that it is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child. If you have any evidence of pupils or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in school. Additionally, staff must not use school devices to access any inappropriate images, material or web links.

Confidentiality needs to be considered at all times. References should not be made to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Headteacher. All adults working with pupils have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interest of the pupils. It is therefore expected that high levels of personal conduct are upheld in order to maintain the confidence and respect of colleagues, pupils and members of the public, in line with the trust's Code of Conduct. Therefore, staff should be aware and understand that safe practice also involves using judgement and integrity about behaviours in places other than the work setting. Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action. Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

## **PUPIL'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Sandhill Trust recognise that social media forms a growing part of children's lives as networking sites and apps are becoming more readily available. It is therefore important that children are taught the dangers of social media and how to use it safely and responsibly.

Please note that no pupil under 13 should be accessing Facebook or Instagram.

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day, unless it is for educational purposes, directed by the Class Teacher and permission has been sought from the Headteacher
- All mobile phones must be handed into the office at the beginning of the school day, the Internet capability must be switched off. Failure to follow this guidance will result in a total ban for the student using a mobile phone.
- No pupil is allowed to take a mobile phone on an educational visit
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision
- Pupils are encouraged to report any improper contact or cyber bullying to their class teacher in confidence as soon as it happens
- No pupil should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If pupils attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Headteacher. Parents will be informed if this happens

Further guidance can be found in the Trust's E-Safety Policy.

### **USE OF MOBILE PHONES**

Staff are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to allocated lunch/breaks. Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made during work time. Staff are not permitted, in any circumstance to use their phones or personal devices for taking, recording or sharing images. In addition, staff must not use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting.

The Sandhill Trust recognise that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times. Therefore, in agreed exceptional circumstances, staff are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. All requests should be directed to the Headteacher. This is to enhance their own well-being and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work.

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in the school building. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others. The use of mobile phones is prohibited in the toilets. Under no circumstances is any individual permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone, other than as stated in the Parental Agreement. Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

## **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE**

If the head teacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school is using a social media in an inappropriate manner they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with their child protection policy
- Schools must refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate via agreed procedures
- If the disclosure has come from a parent, take normal steps to calm the parent and explain processes
- If disclosure comes from a member of staff, try to maintain confidentiality
- The LADO will advise whether the member of staff should be suspended pending investigation after contact with the police. It is not recommended that action is taken until advice has been given.
- If disclosure is from a child, follow your normal process in your child protection policy until the police investigation has been carried out

## **CYBERBULLYING**

Cyberbullying can be defined as ‘the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate an individual in attempt to gain power and control over them.’

The Sandhill Trust recognises that both staff and pupils can be subject to cyberbullying and following the advice contained in this policy it should reduce the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands. Staff should ensure that the guidance outlined for pupils is adhered to in order to limit instances of cyberbullying during school time.

Staff should report all incidents of cyberbullying to the Headteacher. All incidents will be taken seriously and dealt with in confidence. Care should be taken to keep records of the abuse, being carefully to record the time, date and place.

Schools have the duty to investigate and protect staff/children, even where the bullying originates outside the school. This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.

Agreed by The Sandhill Trust Board on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_