

# Social Media Policy

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>St Edward's Catholic Primary School</b>
<b>Policy implemented</b>	<b>September 2024</b>
<b>Date of next review</b>	<b>September 2025</b>
<b>Who will review this policy?</b>	<b>Ms S Naz</b>



**St Edward's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff, governors, trustees, parents and volunteers to share this commitment.**



## **Objectives**

This policy sets out St Edward's Primary School's policy on social networking. Social networking activities conducted online in school and outside work, such as blogging, involvement in any social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image.

Negative coverage almost always causes some level of disruption. Up to half of cases dealt with by the Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH: [helpline@saferinternet.org.uk](mailto:helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)) involves schools and staff members online reputation.

We manage and monitor our social media footprint carefully to know what is being said about the school and to respond to criticism and praise in a fair, responsible manner. The school's senior SLT members (Mr Underwood, Mrs Casely and Ms Naz) are responsible for monitoring and managing our social media accounts and checking our Wikipedia and Google reviews

In addition, St Edward's School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children and staff in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

## **Key Principles**

- ☐ Everyone at St Edward's School has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school with professionalism and respect.
- ☐ It is important to protect everyone at St Edward's from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- ☐ Safeguarding children is paramount and is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone at St Edward's School considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites in and outside of school. Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.
- ☐ With safeguarding in mind, staff, parents and visitors are prohibited from using mobile phones in public areas around school and on school premises.

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*



☐ This policy relates to social networking outside work and in school where they are used for professional reasons. Blogging and accessing social networking sites at work or at home using school equipment is not permitted, unless for professional purposes and authorised by the Headteacher.

☐ It is also completely unacceptable to communicate on social media about the school or any member of the school community in or out of work on personally owned equipment.

## **Aims**

☐ To set out the key principles and code of conduct expected of all members of staff, governors, friends, parents/carers and volunteers at St Edward's School with respect to social networking.

☐ To further safeguard and protect children and staff.

## **Overview and Expectations**

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 is an attempt to identify what behaviours are expected of schools' 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.

Staff, Pupils and parents social media presence – the use of social media (including apps, sites and games) that allow sharing and interaction is a reality

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*



of modern day life. We accept that parents, volunteers, staff and pupils will use it. However, we expect that everybody behaves in a positive manner, engaging respectfully with the school and each other on social media as would be the case when meeting face to face.

Positive behaviour means NOT making any posts which are or could be construed as bullying, aggressive or rude, insulting, illegal or otherwise inappropriate or which might bring the school, teaching profession or staff into disrepute. This applies to both public pages and private posts such as parent chats, pages or groups including WhatsApp.

If parents/carers have a concern about the school, they must contact the school directly and in private to resolve the matter by phoning the school and speaking to a senior leader or e-mailing asking for a meeting. If after this the matter cannot be resolved then parents/carers should follow the school's complaints procedure.

Sharing complaints on social media is unlikely to resolve the matter and can cause upset to staff, pupil and parents.

Many social media platforms have a minimum age of 13 with WhatsApp being 16 plus but the school regularly deals with issues arising on social media and messaging apps. We ask parents/carers to carefully monitor their children's online activity and set a good example of how to use online platforms appropriately.

Any breaches of this policy by staff, pupils and parents/carers will be dealt with in line with the school's behaviour policies for pupils and staff code of conduct for staff.

Any incident that relates to inappropriate, upsetting, violent or abusive behaviour on social media by a member of the school community, St Edward's school will request that the post is deleted and will expect it to be actioned promptly.

Any posts made by a third party will be reported to the platform where it is hosted and may contact either the online safety help line and where necessary the police.

The school has obligations relating to radicalisation and all other forms of extremism. Staff will not support or promote extremist organisations, messages or individuals, give them a voice or give them an opportunity to visit the school, nor browse, download, or send material that is considered offensive or extremist in nature. We expect that parents/carers, governors and trustees to support this and the school especially relating to social media where extremism and hate speech can be widespread on certain platforms.

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*





## **Code of Conduct: Social Networking**

Under no circumstances should staff make reference to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event.

### **The following are also not considered acceptable at St Edward's School:**

- ☐ The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Headteacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- ☐ The posting of 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.
- ☐ The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- ☐ The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.

### **In addition to the above everyone at St Edward's School must ensure that they:**

- ☐ Communicate with children and parents in an open and transparent way using the school phone number and school email address.
- ☐ Never 'friend' a pupil at the school where they are working onto their social networking site.
- ☐ Do not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- ☐ Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- ☐ Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.
- ☐ Make sure that high levels of privacy are set if they choose to use social media.
- ☐ Mobile phones must not be used on the premises by parents and carers.

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*

## **Potential and Actual Breaches of the Code of Conduct**

**In instances where there has been a breach of the above Code of Conduct, the following will apply:**

- ☐ 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 action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- ☐ A breach of this policy will be considered to be a serious disciplinary offence which is also contrary to the school's ethos and principles.
- ☐ The Governing Body/Trustees 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. 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 HR where appropriate.

This policy takes account of employment legislation and best practice guidelines in relation to social networking in addition to the legal obligations of governing bodies and the relevant legislation.

## **Safer Online Behaviour**

Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc. If you are an employee of a school and particularly if you are a teacher, you should not put any information onto the site that could identify either your profession or the school where you work. In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the school, the profession or the local authority.

In their own interests, staff need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for children or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties.

All staff, particularly new staff, should review their social networking 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.

Employees need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of work, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character.

Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other employees, children or other individuals connected with the school, or another school, Brentwood Diocese or Newham Council could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might put the school into disrepute.

### **Mobile Phones/Camera/Video Recorder Usage**

**To ensure the safety and welfare of children in our care personal mobile phones, cameras and video recorders must not be used when children are present.**

- ☐ All mobile phones (unless it is a work phone solely for work purposes) must be kept in a secure place (not in a pocket), switched off and not be accessed throughout contact time with the children.
- ☐ In exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed and agreed with a member of the leadership team, staff may keep their phone switched on and accessible as long as they use their phone out of view of children, i.e. in a room designated for staff, e.g. the staff room, an office or the PPA room.
- ☐ During school visits mobile phones should be used away from the children and for emergency purposes only.
- ☐ Photographs or images of any children within our care may only be taken following parental consent and only using one of the school cameras / i-pads. These images should remain within this setting or be shared only with the parents of the child concerned.
- ☐ Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorders cannot be used to record classroom activities. ONLY school property can be used for this.
- ☐ School photographs and recordings can only be transferred to, and stored on a school computer or a school phone.



## **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, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle or members of the same parish or community. 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 should never share their work log-ins or passwords with other people.

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.

## **Access to Inappropriate Images and Internet Usage**

There are no circumstances that will justify adults possessing indecent images of children. Staff who access and possess links to such websites will be viewed as a significant and potential threat to children.

Accessing, making and storing indecent images of children are illegal. This will lead to criminal investigation and the individual being barred from working with children, if proven.

Staff should not use equipment belonging to their school/service to access any pornography; neither should personal equipment containing these images or links to them be brought into the workplace. This will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue to work with children.

Where indecent images of children are found by staff, the police should be immediately informed. Schools should not attempt to investigate the matter or evaluate the material themselves, as this may lead to evidence being contaminated which in itself can lead to a criminal prosecution.

Where other unsuitable material is found, which may not be illegal but which raises concerns about that member of staff, the Headteacher (and in the Head's absence, a member of the SLT) should be informed and that person will seek advice from HR.

The school will not attempt to investigate or evaluate the material themselves until such advice is received.

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*





## **Cyber-bullying**

St Edward's definition of cyber-bullying 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.'

In order to reduce the potential for cyber-bullying ONLY children in Years 5 and 6 are allowed to bring phones into school with written consent from the parent/carer and in agreement with the Head Teacher.

If a mobile phone is brought into school by a child it must be kept by the class teacher in a locked box in the classroom or in the main office until home-time and parents made aware. In exceptional circumstances, parents may ask for the office staff to keep safe a child's mobile phone, but consent from the Headteacher must be granted first.

Prevention activities are key to ensuring that staff are protected from the potential threat of cyber bullying. All employees are reminded of the need to protect themselves from the potential threat of cyber-bullying.

Following the advice contained in this guidance should reduce the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands.

If cyber-bullying 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 cyber-bullying 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.



### **Link with Other Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

Computing policy 2023/2024

Online safety policy 2023/2024

Acceptable User policy 2023/2024

GDPR – Data Retention, Data breach and freedom of information policies

Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy 2023/2024

Whistle-blowing Policy 2023/2024

*'Following Christ we reach our goals'*