Wincanton Primary School
Social Media Policy

February 2024

Approved by the Governing Body

Signed  **Date: February 2024**

Proposed Date of Future Review: February 2026

Introduction

For the purposes of this policy, social media are interactive online media that allow parties to communicate instantly with one another or share information in a public forum. Examples include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and LinkedIn. Social media also include biogs and video- and image-sharing websites such as YouTube and TikTok. Staff should be aware that there are many more examples of social media and this is a constantly developing area of communication. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use, both at work and in their personal situation.

Scope

This policy applies to teachers, support staff, governors and all who work on the school site, including volunteers, where their work brings them into contact with the pupils. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Internet policies.

It sets out to:

- assist those working with pupils to work safely and responsibly, to monitor their own standards of behaviour and to prevent the abuse of their position of trust with pupils and families.

- offer a code of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal and recreational use

- advise that in the event of unsafe and/or unacceptable behaviour disciplinary or legal action (including gross misconduct leading to dismissal) will be taken if necessary in order to support safer working practice and minimise the risk of malicious allegations against staff and others who have contact with pupils

and takes account of the variety of legislation appropriate to this policy.

Use of Social Media in the School

Staff are not permitted to access any social media websites from the school's computers or other devices at any time unless authorised to do so by a member of the senior management team. They may, however, use their own computers or other devices while they are in the school to access social media websites outside of school session times, but excessive use of social media which could be considered to interfere with productivity will be considered a disciplinary matter.

Any use of social media made in a professional capacity must not:

- Bring the school into disrepute
- Breach confidentiality
- Breach copyrights of any kind
- Bully, harass or be discriminatory in any way
- Be defamatory or derogatory

Use of Social Media Outside the School

The school appreciates that people will make use of social media in a personal capacity but they must be aware that if they are recognised from their profile as being associated with the school then certain opinions expressed could be considered to damage the reputation of the school,

so a statement such as "the opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of my employer" should be clearly stated and it is advisable to omit any references mentioning the school by name or the person by job title. Opinions should, in any case follow the guidelines above to not bring the school into disrepute, breach confidentiality, breach copyrights or bully, harass or discriminate in anyway.

General Considerations

When using social media staff and others should:

- never share work log-in details or passwords
- keep personal phone numbers private
- not give personal/school email addresses to pupils or parents (only use office email)
- restrict access to certain groups of people on their social media sites and page, whilst always thinking of the appropriateness of postings and photographs.

Those working with children have a duty of care and therefore are expected to adopt high standards of behaviour to retain the confidence and respect of colleagues and pupils both within the school and outside of it. They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information professionally so that it cannot be misused by third parties for "cyberbullying" for example or possibly identity theft. Staff should not make "friends" of pupils or families at the school as this could potentially be construed as "grooming", nor should they accept invitations to become a "friend" of any pupil. Prior to joining the school new employees should check any information they have placed on social media sites and remove any statements that might cause embarrassment or offence.

Staff should not use personal mobile phones to contact pupils or families and should keep any communications transparent and on a professional basis, for example by using the office email address. Where there is any doubt about whether communication between a pupil/parent and member of staff is acceptable and appropriate a member of the senior management team should be made aware and will decide how to deal with the situation.

Disciplinary Action

Any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the school's disciplinary Policy. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually as part of the safeguarding and children protection policy by the Governing Body.

This Social Media Policy links to other school policies including Anti-Bullying, Internet and Disciplinary.