



C4 Social Media Policy

Social media (e.g. Facebook, X (formerly 'Twitter'), LinkedIn, Instagram) 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 social media can offer. Staff, parents and carers and learners are actively encouraged to find creative ways to engage with social media. However, there are some risks associated with social media use, particularly regarding 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 learners.

Scope

This policy is subject to the school codes of conduct and 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 any platform
- encourages the safe and responsible use of social media through training and education
- *defines the monitoring of social media activity pertaining to the school.*

The school respects privacy and understands that staff and learners may use social media in their private lives. However, personal communications likely to have a negative impact on professional standards and/or the school reputation are within the scope of this policy.

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.

Personal communications are those made via personal social media accounts. In all cases, where a personal account is used which associates itself with, 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 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.

Digital communications with learners are also considered. *Staff may use social media to communicate with learners via a school social media account for teaching and learning purposes but must consider whether this is appropriate and consider the potential implications.*

Organisational control

Roles & Responsibilities

- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for
 - Adhering to Welsh Government [Practices and principles for schools' use of social media](#).
 - Facilitating training and providing guidelines on Social Media use (see Welsh Government social media guidance).
 - Agreeing social media account monitoring requirements.
 - Developing and implementing the school's Social Media policy.
 - Consideration and approval of account creation.
 - Taking a lead role in investigating any reported incidents.
 - Making an initial assessment when an incident is reported and involving appropriate staff and external agencies as required.
- Administrators/moderators are responsible for
 - Creating the social media accounts following SLT approval.
 - Storing account details, including passwords securely.
 - Undertaking the monitoring and oversight of accounts.
 - Ensuring that all access to accounts is controlled (i.e. in the event of staff turnover or changes to roles and responsibilities).

- Staff are responsible for
 - Knowing the contents of and ensuring that any use of social media is carried out in line with this and other relevant policies.
 - Attending appropriate training.
 - Regularly monitoring, updating and managing content they have posted via school accounts
 - Adding an appropriate disclaimer to personal accounts when naming the school.

Process for creating new accounts

The school community is encouraged to consider if a social media account will help them in their work, e.g. a history department Twitter account, or a "Friends of the school" Facebook page. Anyone wishing to create such an account must present a business case to the Leadership Team which covers the following points: **Anyone wishing to create such an account will consider the questions below as part of any decision-making before an account is created.**

- What is the aim of the account?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How will the account be promoted?
- Who will manage the account? (It is recommended that at least 2 staff members manage any account, and notwithstanding this, schools should identify a responsible owner for each account, who may be a member of the senior leadership team)
- How will the account be monitored?
- How will the account be configured: open, private or closed?
- Are staff clear as to how and for what purpose each communication method will be selected?
- From where will the account be accessed?
- What are the escalation procedures should something go wrong?

In all cases, the SLT will ensure 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 and carers.

Monitoring

School accounts are monitored regularly and frequently. The school checks for inappropriate or unauthorised content and promptly responds to and addresses any

issues. School accounts may not be monitored or responded to outside of school hours or school holidays. During periods where the account is not monitored, the school may 'pin' appropriate messages to the profile advising when a response should be expected. These are prominent fixed messages and often appear at the top of a social media feed.

Monitoring posts about the school

- As part of active social media engagement, the school will pro-actively monitor the internet for public postings about the school.
- The school will respond to social media comments made by others according to a defined policy or process.

Behaviour

- The school requires that all users using social media adhere to the standard of behaviour as set out in this policy and other relevant policies.
- 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 on the rights and privacy of others or make ill-considered comments or judgments 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.
- Users must declare who they are in social media posts or accounts. Anonymous posts are discouraged in relation to school activity.
- If a journalist makes contact about posts made using social media, staff must follow the school media policy before responding.
- Unacceptable conduct, (e.g. defamatory, discriminatory, offensive, harassing content or a breach of data protection, confidentiality, copyright) will be considered extremely serious by the school and will be reported as soon as possible to a relevant senior member of staff, and escalated where appropriate.
- 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 take action according to the disciplinary policy.

Legal considerations

- Users of social media should consider the copyright of the content they are sharing and, where necessary, will 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.

Managing incidents

The school recognises that abusive and harmful behaviours carried out through social media may impact staff and learners, and the schools' reputation.

- If an individual is subject to abuse through the use of social media channels associated with the school, then this action will be reported using the agreed school protocols and appropriate access to support will be made available.
- When acting on behalf of the school, offensive comments will be handled swiftly and with sensitivity.
- It may be necessary to block individuals from interacting with the school's social media channel if they do not adhere to the acceptable use agreement. Grounds for blocking may include harassment, offensive language, inappropriate content, spamming and any other behaviour that goes against the school's values or principles as set out in the expectations for use.
- If a user is blocked they will be informed exactly why the action was taken

Use of images

School use of images can be assumed to be acceptable, providing permission to use any photos or video recordings is sought in line with the school's digital and video images policy. If anyone, for any reason, asks not to be filmed or photographed then their wishes will be respected.

Staff must strictly adhere to the following guidelines:

- Under no circumstances should staff share or upload learner 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. Learners 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.

Personal use of social media accounts

- Staff
 - 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 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.
 - Staff are encouraged to refer to the section 'Using social media in a personal capacity' in the [Practices and principles for schools' use of social media](#)
- Learners
 - **Staff are not permitted to follow or engage with current or prior learners of the school on any personal social media network account.**
 - The school has a cross-curricular approach to educate learners to be safe and responsible users of social media.
 - Any offensive or inappropriate comments relating to the school will be resolved by the use of the school's behaviour policy
- Parents and Carers
 - **If parents and carers have access to a school learning platform where posting or commenting is enabled, parents/carers will be informed about acceptable use.**
 - The school has an active parent/carers education programme which supports the safe and positive use of social media. This includes information on the website.
 - In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made about the school, the school will ask the parent or carer to remove the post and invite them to discuss the issues in person. If necessary, refer parents to the school's complaints procedures.

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