

Introduction to the Policy

The Federation is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. St Mary's is establishing in 2022 the use of Facebook, St Thomas's may follow this at a later stage to share news, celebrate success and as an additional 'more immediate' vehicle of communication to parents and our wider community.

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. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff across the Federation and advise School leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That the Schools within the Federation are not exposed to legal risks
- That the reputation of either school within the Federation is not adversely affected
- That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the School/Federation.
- That staff recognise that they are responsible for their actions and comments upon social networking sites, and they must exercise sound judgement and use common sense at all times.
- To protect employees' own professional reputation and that of the Federation, St Thomas' and St Mary's Primary Schools and the Governing Body reminds all members of staff that all communication via social networking sites must be made with the awareness that anything said, shown or received could be made available, intentionally or otherwise, to an audience wider than that originally intended.

2. SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all Federation stakeholders, including, employees, volunteers, those working within regulated activity, Governors and pupils. These groups are referred to collectively as 'Federation representatives' for brevity.

All Federation representatives should bear in mind 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](#) including [GDPR](#), the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#) and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the School's Single Equality Policy.

3. Use of Social Networking sites in worktime

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is strictly **not** permitted, unless permission has been given by the Executive Head teacher or Head of School. This includes the full duration of all trips or visits which may extend beyond the usual hours of the working day.

4. Social Networking as part of School Service

All proposals for using 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 Executive Head teacher or Head of School first.

Use of social networking applications which are not related to any School services (for example, contributing to a blog provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the Executive Head teacher.

However, Federation representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy.

5. Use of School Facebook Pages

At present St Mary's is establishing an active Facebook Page which the executive head and head of school can upload and share information, photographs and advertise events upon. All staff are to adhere to safeguarding precautions when using these sites:

- Photographs of children can be posted onto Facebook if they have the relevant and required permissions to appear on the social networking site.
- Photographs will not be uploaded of an event until 24hours after the event has taken place.
- Full names of children will not be used on our Facebook pages and staff will ensure that secondary checks are undertaken to ensure only the images of children with necessary permissions are posted.
- If a large quantity of photos are to be uploaded they will be uploaded in batches to enable the required checks to be undertaken.
- The site is to be used to inform parents and the wider community of events, news, celebrations, successes and promote local and regional activities etc.
- If a parent responds to a post in a negative or damaging way then the post will be taken down and the parent will be contacted by the Executive head or Head of School.
- Use of images by third party representatives will not be permitted without direct consent being obtained from the family.

6. Federation representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use.

The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all Federation representatives. 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 Federation 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. As a school we have to plan and ensure that we balance the use of social networking and the associated risks and take necessary steps to protect the image and reputation of the staff, school community and organisation.

7. 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 either school into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns which may impact on the School.
- 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 a pupil or former pupil under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with - the only exception is direct family members (son or daughter).
- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the school/Federation.
- 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 Executive Headteacher/ Head of School.
- 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.

8. Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any pupil in either school on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-pupil of either school on social networking sites who is under the age of 18 with the exception only of family members. This means that 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.

- No member of staff should post anything on their own social networking site whilst at work or undertaking duties relating to the care of the pupils (e.g. residential trips, visits etc)
- Where family and friends have pupils in school and there are legitimate family links, please inform the Executive Headteacher in writing (as per the appendices below)
- Where staff have children within the Federation it is advised that they do not partake in class WhatsApp groups or similar forums as inclusion can provoke a conflict of interest.
- It is a good idea to keep a check on your online presence – for example by typing your name into a search engine. If there is negative content online it is much easier to deal with this as soon as it appears.
- Be aware that your reputation could be harmed by what others share about you online, such as friends tagging you in inappropriate posts, photographs, or videos.
- Consider your own conduct online; certain behaviour could breach your employment code of conduct.
- Discuss these same issues with close family, friends and colleagues, as you could become a target if they do not have security and privacy settings in place.
- Do not accept friend requests from pupils past or present. If you feel this is necessary, you should first seek guidance from a senior member of staff. Be aware that your social media friends may also be friends with pupils and their family members and therefore could read your post if you do not have appropriate privacy settings.
- 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 Executive Headteacher / Head of School immediately.
- It is strongly advised that staff are not friends with any parents associated with the School/Federation on social networking sites. Those who do, do so at their own risk as any public contact that could be deemed as defamatory, embarrassing or bringing the School/Federation into disrepute will result in immediate disciplinary action and may result in termination of contract.
- It is strongly advised that staff do not engage in social media forums linked to any children that they may have at either school as this could compromise the personal/professional boundaries.
- If a staff member is threatened by a parent or is subject to comment that may be deemed defamatory the Executive Headteacher is to be informed directly – the individual should not respond directly over the social networking site. If possible, the comment should be printed as a permanent record. The School expects that a complaints procedure is followed should parents have a grievance and comments made over social networking sites will not be tolerated.
- Be a 'scout' for compliments and criticism. If on any social networking site you discover positive or negative remarks about the schools / Federation or the employees which you deem are important to report, then it is **YOUR** responsibility to share the information with the Executive Head and Head of School.

9. Guidance/Protection for Pupils on using Social Networking

- No pupil may access social networking sites during the school working day
- Any pupil found to be using a mobile phone in either school will have it removed, taken to the school office and retained prior to a parent collecting.
- 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 Executive Headteacher. Parents will be informed if this happens.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using school ICT equipment other than with close supervision
- Improper contact or cyber bullying should be reported to a trusted adult in confidence as soon as it happens.
- We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying, sexting or bullying via online applications.

10. Child Protection Guidance

If the Executive Headteacher receives a disclosure that an adult employed by the school/Federation is using a social networking site in an inappropriate manner as detailed above they should:

- Record the disclosure in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding policies
- Refer the matter to the LADO who will investigate via Isle of Wight Police Child Protection Team.
- 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, the routine processes in the Child Protection policy will be followed.
- All staff will have received Prevent training which is to increase awareness of activity on such sites and staff are expected to inform senior staff if they feel behaviours have changed, and /or pupils refer to an increased interest in various social networking sites for example.

11. Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended no use of social networking sites on School premises, The Federation protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of the Federation's policy of access to social networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, Schools now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the school.

NAME:

SCHOOL:

I wish the School Governors to be aware that the following associates are 'friends' on my Facebook page and I have stated the reasons why below:

e.g. Mr and Mrs Smith (Parents of Bob Y4) reason - I am Bob's Godmother.

I wish the School Governors to be aware that the following minors (children aged between 13-18) are 'friends' on my Facebook Page for the reasons listed below:

e.g. Bob – My son aged 14 (I wish to monitor his social networking activity)

