



Social Media Policy

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CONTENTS	PAGE
1 Introduction	2
2 Scope	2
3 Legal framework	3
4 Related policies	4
5 Principles – be professional, responsible and respectful	4
6 Personal use of social media	4
7 Using social media on behalf of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School	6
8 Monitoring of internet use	7
9 Breaches of the policy	7
Appendix 1: template letter	10
Appendix 2: template letter	11
Appendix 3: Contact details for requesting to remove content	12
Appendix 4: Governors Code of Conduct	13
Appendix 5: Parent/Carer Code of Conduct	17
Appendix 6: Social Media Guidance for School Use	19
Appendix 7: Process to follow when inappropriate use of social media is observed by parent's	22

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The internet provides a range of social media tools that allow users to interact with one another, for example from rediscovering friends on social networking sites such as *Facebook* to keeping up with other people's lives on *X* and maintaining pages on internet encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*.
- 1.2 While recognising the benefits of these media for new opportunities for communication, this policy sets out the principles that Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School staff are expected to follow when using social media.
- 1.3 It is crucial that pupils, parents and the public at large have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly so that confidentiality of pupils and other staff and the reputation of the school, Merthyr Tydfil and the Archdiocese are safeguarded.
- 1.4 Staff members must be conscious at all times of the need to keep their personal and professional lives separate.
- 1.5 This policy incorporates previous social guidance provided by the education department and is in line with other local authority social media guidance for schools.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School governing body, all teaching and other staff, whether employed by MTCBC or employed directly by the school such as:-
 - External contractors providing services on behalf of the school or MTCBC
 - teacher trainees and other trainees,
 - volunteers and other individuals who work for or provide services on behalf of the school.

These individuals are collectively referred to as 'staff members' in this policy.

- 2.2 This policy covers personal use of social media as well as the use of social media for official school purposes, including sites hosted and maintained on behalf of the school (see sections 5, 6, 7).
- 2.3 This policy applies to personal webspace such as social networking sites (for example *Facebook*), blogs, microblogs such as *X*, *Snap Chat*, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia*, social bookmarking sites such as *del.icio.us* and content sharing sites such as *flickr* and *YouTube*. (This is not an exhaustive list). The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media - the principles set out in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School is committed to ensuring that all staff members provide confidential services that meet the highest standards. All individuals working on behalf of the school are bound by a legal duty of confidence and other laws to protect the confidential information they have access to during the course of their work. Disclosure of confidential information on social media is likely to be a breach of a number of laws and professional codes of conduct, including:

- The Human Rights Act 1998 Article 8 of this Act gives a right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence. The Council acknowledges that employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy in the workplace. This Policy does not intend to infringe your Article 8 rights.
 - . Common law duty of confidentiality, and
 - . The General Data Protection Regulation which comes into force from May 2018.
- The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – This Act covers the extent to which the Council is able to monitor and record private communications received within its telecommunication systems. It applies to all public and private communications networks. The Council will abide by these Regulations and will not unlawfully intercept employee’s communications. Where appropriate approval will be sought prior to any interference of staff private communications.

3.2 Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Person-identifiable information, e.g. pupil and employee records protected by Data Protection Laws
- Information divulged in the expectation of confidentiality
- School or MTCBC business or corporate records containing organisationally or publicly sensitive information
- Any commercially sensitive information such as information relating to commercial proposals or current negotiations, and
- Politically sensitive information.

3.3 Staff members should also be aware that other laws relating to libel, defamation, harassment and copyright may apply to information posted on social media, including:

- Defamation Acts 2013
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 2001
- Malicious Communications Act 1998
- Communications Act 2003, and
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

- 3.4 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School and MTCBC could be held vicariously responsible for acts of their employees in the course of their employment. For example, staff members who harass co-workers online or who engage in cyberbullying or discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, etc or who defame a third party while at work may render Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC liable to the injured party.

4 RELATED POLICIES

- 4.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school and County Council policies:

- Merthyr Tydfil Code of Conduct for Employees
- 360° degree safe cymru - <https://360safecymru.org.uk>
- School's Safeguarding Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

5 PRINCIPLES – BE PROFESSIONAL, RESPONSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL

- 5.1 You must be conscious at all times of the need to keep your personal and professional lives separate. You should not put yourself in a position where there is a conflict between your work for the school or MTCBC and your personal interests.
- 5.2 You must not engage in activities involving social media which might bring Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC into disrepute.
- 5.3 You must not represent your personal views as those of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC on any social medium.
- 5.4 You must not discuss personal information about pupils, Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your job on social media.
- 5.5 You must not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame pupils, their family members, colleagues, other professionals, other organisations, Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC.
- 5.6 You must be accurate, fair and transparent when creating or altering online sources of information on behalf of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC.

6 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 6.1 Staff members must not identify themselves as employees of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School. This is to prevent information on these sites from being linked with the school and MTCBC and to safeguard the privacy of staff members, particularly those involved in providing sensitive frontline services.
- 6.2 Staff members are **strongly** advised not to have contact through any personal social medium with any pupil or parent of a pupil whether Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or any other school, unless the pupils are family members or existing close

friends or existing close friends. **All communication should be conducted through official school channels.**

- 6.3 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School does not expect staff members to discontinue contact with their family members via personal social media once the school starts providing services for them. However, any information staff members obtain in the course of their employment must not be used for personal gain nor be passed on to others who may use it in such a way.
- 6.4 Staff members must not have any contact with pupils' family members through personal social media if that contact is likely to constitute a conflict of interest or call into question their objectivity.
- 6.5 If staff members wish to communicate with pupils through social media sites or to enable pupils to keep in touch with one another, they can only do so with the approval of the school and through official school sites created according to the requirements specified in section 7 e.g. PTA Facebook and X, school account.
- 6.6 Staff members must decline 'friend requests' from pupils they receive in their personal social media accounts. Instead, if they receive such requests from pupils who are not family members, they must discuss these in general terms in class and signpost pupils to become 'friends' of the official school site.
- 6.7 On leaving Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School's service, it is advisable that staff members do not contact Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School pupils by means of personal social media sites. Similarly, staff members must not contact pupils from their former schools by means of personal social media.
- 6.8 Information staff members have access to as part of their employment, including personal information about pupils and their family members, colleagues, MTCBC staff and other parties and school or MTCBC corporate information must not be discussed on their personal webspace.
- 6.9 Photographs, videos or any other types of image of pupils and their families or images depicting staff members wearing school or MTCBC uniforms or clothing with school or MTCBC logos or images identifying sensitive school or MTCBC premises (e.g. care homes, secure units) must not be published on personal social media accounts. This includes images of pupils/staff on any school based activity whether in school uniform or not. However, it should be noted that if they are family members, then staff are entitled to post photos of their own children on their personal accounts.
- 6.10 School email addresses and other official contact details must not be used for setting up personal social media accounts or to communicate through such media. Staff should not disclose their school email accounts unless for a business-related purpose.
- 6.11 Staff members must not edit open access online encyclopaedias such as *Wikipedia* in a personal capacity at work. This is because the source of the correction will be

recorded as the employer's IP address and the intervention will, therefore, appear as if it comes from the employer itself.

6.12 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC corporate, service or team logos or brands must not be used or published on personal social media accounts.

6.13 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School only permits limited personal use of social media while at work in line with the MTCBC Social Media and Internet Acceptable Use policies, i.e. ONLY during staff breaks and not when pupils are present. Staff members are expected to devote their contracted hours of work to their professional duties and, in practice, personal use of the internet should not be on the school's time.

6.14 Caution is advised when inviting work colleagues to be 'friends' in personal social networking sites as social networking sites can blur the line between what is public or private, personal or professional. (see **Appendix 6**)

6.15 Staff members are strongly advised to review their privacy settings and have an understanding of who see your personal information and content you publish. Staff members should keep their passwords confidential, change them often and be careful about what is posted online, it is not safe to reveal home addresses, telephone numbers and other personal information. It is a good idea to use a separate email address just for social networking so that any other contact details are not given away.

6.16 Staff members should be aware that information posted publically on social media is instantly available across the world and that online conversations can never be fully private.

7 USING SOCIAL MEDIA ON BEHALF OF Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School

7.1 Staff members can only use official school sites for communicating with pupils or to enable pupils to communicate with one another. All agreed school procedures for setting up a school social media account should be followed and authorised by the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

7.2 There must be a strong pedagogical or business reason for creating official school sites to communicate with pupils or others. Staff must not create sites for trivial reasons which could expose the school to unwelcome publicity or cause reputational damage.

7.3 Staff members must at all times act in the best interests of children and young people when creating, participating in or contributing content to social media sites.

8 MONITORING OF INTERNET USE

8.1 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School monitors usage of its internet and email services without prior notification or authorisation from users.

8.2 Users of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School email and internet services should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send or receive using the school's ICT system.

9 BREACHES OF THE POLICY

- 9.1 Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the staff member/s involved in line with Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 9.2 A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC or any illegal acts or acts that render Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School or MTCBC liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.
- 9.3 MTCBC school staff must inform the relevant school or MTCBC officer immediately of any breaches of this policy so that appropriate action can be taken to protect confidential information and limit the damage to the reputation of the school and MTCBC. Any action against breaches should be according to contractors' internal disciplinary procedures.
- 9.4 There are a number of categories into which social networking/social media problems for schools can fall:
1. Interaction between pupils.
 2. Interaction between teaching staff.
 3. Interaction between pupils and teaching staff.
 4. Interaction between teaching staff and parents.
 5. Unpleasant/abusive postings about teaching staff and/or pupils
 6. Postings that are critical of leadership/management of school.

Points 1-4

Any concerns regarding Points 1-4 should be addressed by reference to the relevant parts of this policy.

Point 5

With regard to postings involving teaching staff, the advice is as follows:

- A) If the post is threatening or causes the member of staff to feel threatened (where violence is threatened or encouraged or the post has a racist element) the matter should be referred immediately to the Police.
- B) Where the post falls short of that described in A), but none the less causes upset to a member of staff, the quickest way to get the material taken down is to ensure the person who posted it understands why the material is unacceptable and to request they remove it. It is recommended that this is not done via the social media site that hosts the offending post but is undertaken by the school either face to face with the person who posted the offending comment, by letter (model letters attached as **Appendix 1 and 2** to be sent from Executive Head Teacher) or telephone call.

Should this prove unsuccessful, the school are able to approach the host of the media site in question and request that the comments are removed. **Appendix 3** contains information on how schools can approach the hosts of the various media sites such as

Facebook, X, YouTube etc. with a view to having the offending comment removed. This is not an action that requires input from the Council's legal services department but rather something that can be undertaken by individual schools and in many ways is best undertaken by the school as they are best placed to understand the background to the offending post.

- C) Where posts are more minor but still unpleasant for the staff member involved, or refer to incidents in school which may be factually correct but have been portrayed in a way that deliberately sets out to undermine the member of staff or where requests to have the post removed have failed, matters may be more difficult to resolve. Whilst it may be difficult to accept, sometimes ignoring the post is the best answer. Schools are advised to consider whether in the particular instance and given the person responsible for the post, whether there is a real possibility that a response from the school to the post will have the effect of disseminating the content of the post to a wider audience.
- D) The school may wish to consider incorporating into its school policy reference to parents' use of social media (**Appendix 7**). Within this document parents can be made aware of their responsibilities when using social networking such as being reminded that parents are not expected to post pictures of pupils other than their own children on social networking sites, that parents should make complaints through official channels rather than posting them on social networking sites and that parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community. Parents should be reminded that if they are found to be posting defamatory comments on social media site, they will be reported to the appropriate 'report abuse' section of the network site and may be referred to the Council's legal section for further action. If the school's policy contains this information, it may make responding directly to parents more appropriate in the circumstances described in B) above.
- E) There may well be instances where the post may be regarded as defamatory. Section 1 of the Defamation Act 2013 states:
A statement is not defamatory unless its publication has caused or is likely to cause serious harm to the reputation of the claimant.
However there are defences to such a claim and sections 2 and 3 state:
It is a defence to an action for defamation for the defendant to show that the imputation conveyed by the statement complained of is substantially true.
It is a defence to an action for defamation for the defendant to show that the following conditions are met.
(2) The first condition is that the statement complained of was a statement of opinion.
(3) The second condition is that the statement complained of indicated, whether in general or specific terms, the basis of the opinion.
(4) The third condition is that an honest person could have held the opinion on the basis of:
(a) any fact which existed at the time the statement complained of was published;
(b) anything asserted to be a fact in a privileged statement published before the statement complained of.

Given the above and the publicity associated, such action would not be lightly entered into by the Council and only where:

- 1) The requirements of the offence are clearly made out **and**
- 2) Where the steps mentioned in B) above has failed to have the desired effect.

Point 6

With regard to postings that are critical of the leadership/management of a school, the advice is as follows:

a) If the post criticises management of the school but is not personally abusive, the advice is to contact those responsible (see model letter at **Appendix 2**) and invite them to address any legitimate concerns via appropriate channels i.e. meetings etc.

Support is available via the Council's Corporate Communications Department, Legal Services Department or Information Security Officer for advice and guidance relating to the school's use of social media.

Point of contact for schools is Information Security Officer. 01685 727444
information.security@merthyr.gov.uk

Legal Services – 01685 725129 – legalmail@merthyr.gov.uk

Corporate Communications – 01685 725166 – corporate.communications@merthyr.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Dear

I am writing to advise that I have been made aware of a post made by yourself on(name of social media platform) regarding.
.....
.....
.....
.....

As Executive Head of I find the content of this post to be unacceptable for the following reasons

.....
.....
.....
.....

I therefore politely request that you take steps to remove this post as soon as possible. Should you fail to do so, you will leave me no alternative but to report you to the network site hosting the post and also refer the matter to the Council with a request that they take whatever action they deem appropriate in the circumstances.

Appendix 2

Dear

I am writing to advise that having viewed your post onregarding
.....
.....
.....

I wish to inform you that I find such comments unacceptable.

If you are unhappy about any aspects of your child’s education or the management of the school there are appropriate and established channels through which such views can be raised (make reference to school policy should it be relevant).

Therefore should you have a legitimate complaint, I would advise that you follow the schools complaints procedure which can be can be obtained (where) or where your concern falls short of a complaint but wish clarification on a specific aspect of school management, I am happy to meet with you (subject to availability) to discuss the matter face to face.

In the meantime I would be grateful if you could remove the said post which I believe is inappropriate and undermines the school ethos of all members of the school community working together for the benefit of the children.

Appendix 3

REPORTING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

The following information provides you with a link to the relevant Social Media application where you can find out how to report inappropriate content.

FACEBOOK HELP CENTRE

Go to the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/help/reportlinks>

Select **Report Something** to report content you can see.

If you do not have a Facebook Account or cannot see the content that you want to report, select the **Something I Can't See** option.

Facebook - Support Inbox to:

1. Get updates about things that you've reported
2. Check and reply to messages from the Help Team
3. See important messages about your account

https://www.facebook.com/support/?ref=help_center

TWITTER HELP CENTRE

Go to the following link: <https://support.twitter.com/>

See **Policies & Violations** and **Safety & Security**

YOU TUBE REPORTING AND ENFORCEMENT CENTRE

Go to the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/en-GB/reporting.html>

INSTAGRAM HELP CENTRE

Go to the following link: <https://help.instagram.com/165828726894770/>

RATE MY TEACHERS

Go to the following link: <http://uk.ratemyteachers.com/>

Select **Contact** at the bottom of the page and complete the online form.

SWGfL

Go to the link safety@swgfl.org.uk

Appendix 4

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

It is recommended that governing bodies adopt a code of practice which sets out the purpose of the governing body and describes the appropriate relationship between individual governors, the whole governing body and the leadership team of the school.

Governors are responsible for the conduct of the school with a view of promoting high standards of educational achievement and for exercising their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.

The code of conduct is based on recognised standards of good practice; however, each governing body may wish to tailor the code to their own situation. It is recommended that the code be thoroughly discussed so that the whole governing body has ownership of it. Once adopted, the Code of Conduct should be reviewed on a regular basis and all new governors made aware of it. Part 1 of the Code of Conduct refers to the purpose and role of the governing body; Part 2 provides the expectations of individual governors.

PART 1

The Purpose of the Governing Body

The governing body is the school's accountable body. It is responsible for the conduct of the school and for promoting high standards. The governing body aims to ensure that children are attending a successful school which provides them with a good education and supports their well-being. The key responsibilities are:

- Set the strategic direction of the school by:
 - Setting the values, aims and objectives for the school;
 - Agreeing the policies for achieving those aims and objectives;
 - Setting targets for achieving those aims and objectives, and
 - Reviewing progress towards achieving the aims and objectives.
- Challenges and supports the school by monitoring, reviewing and evaluating:
 - The implementation and effectiveness of policies;
 - Progress towards targets;
 - The implementation and effectiveness of the school improvement strategy; and
 - The budget and the staffing structure.
- Ensures accountability by:
 - Responding to School Improvement Partners (Local Authority, Consortium, Estyn) reports when necessary;
 - Holding the headteacher to account for the performance of the school;
 - Ensuring parents and pupils are involved, consulted and informed as appropriate;
 - Making available information to the community.

- Appoints and performance manages the headteacher who will deliver the aims (through the day to day management of the schools, implementation of the agreed policy framework and school improvement strategy, and delivery of the curriculum) and report appropriately to the governing body.

For governing bodies to carry out their role effectively, governors must be:

- Prepared and equipped to take their responsibilities seriously;
- Acknowledged as the accountable body by the lead professionals;
- Supported by the appropriate authorities in that task; and
- Willing and able to monitor and review their own performance.

PART 2

The role of the governor

In law the governing body is a corporate body, which means:

- No governor can act on her / his own without proper authority from the full governing body;
- All governors carry equal responsibility for decisions made, and
- Although appointed through different routes (i.e. parents, staff, Local Authority, Community, Foundation), the overriding concern of all governors has to be the welfare of the school as a whole.

General

- We understand the purpose of the governing body and the role of the headteacher as set out above.
- We are aware of and accept the Nolan seven principles of public life: see appendix.
- We accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when the governing body has given us delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak on behalf of the governing body when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We will encourage open government and will act appropriately.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the governing body or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the governing body meeting.
- We will consider carefully how our decisions may affect the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school. Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school we will follow the procedures established by the governing body.

Commitment

- We acknowledged that accepting office as a governor involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the governing body, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on committees or working groups.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance in full why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
- Our visits to school will be arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the governing body and agreed with the headteacher.
- We will consider seriously our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training.
- We are committed to actively supporting and challenging the headteacher.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other governors.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct both at meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other governors in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with the headteacher, staff and parents, the local authority and other relevant agencies and the community.

Confidentiality

- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff and pupils, both inside or outside school.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a governing body meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any governing body vote.

Conflicts of Interest

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the governing body's business in the Register of Business Interests.
- We will declare any pecuniary interest – or a personal interest which could be perceived as a conflict of interest – in a matter under discussion at a meeting and offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.

Breach of this code of practice

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the Chair and the Chair will investigate; the governing body should only use suspension as a last resort after seeking to resolve any difficulties or disputes in more constructive ways;

- We understand that any allegation of a material breach of this code of practice by any governor shall be raised at a meeting of the governing body, and, if agreed to be substantiated by a majority of governors, shall be minuted and can lead to consideration of suspension of the governing body.

Appendix: The Seven Principles of Public Life

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations).

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Mission Statement

Available on request.

Code of Conduct

At Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School we value the strong relationship with parents and carers. Together, this helps us achieve the very best for the children in a mutually supportive partnership between parents, class teachers and the school community.

As a partnership, parents understand the importance of a good working relationship with the school. We continually welcome and encourage parent and carers to participate in the life of the school. Parents and carers are always encouraged to contact the school with any concerns and/or issues so that they can be resolved.

Parents, carers and visitors are reminded:

- To respect the caring ethos and values of the school;
- That both teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of their children;
- Approaching school staff for help to resolve an issue is done in an appropriate manner; and
- All members of the school community are treated with respect using appropriate language and behaviour.

The school will not tolerate:

- Disruptive behaviour which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of the schools operation or activities anywhere on the school premises;
- Any inappropriate behaviour on the school premises;
- Use of loud or offensive language or displaying temper;
- Threatening, in any way, a member of staff, visitor, fellow parent/carer or pupil;
- Damaging or destroying school property;
- Sending abusive or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communications to anyone within the school community;
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comment regarding the school or any of the pupils/parents/staff at the school on Facebook or other social sites (see below *)

Should any of the above occur on school premises, the school may feel it necessary to take action by contacting the appropriate authorities and / or consider banning the offender from entering the school premises.

* **'Social media'** is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by providing information, signposting to services, sharing opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation, engagement, pass information and services over a wide network of people. This could include blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) and content sharing websites (such as Flickr, Youtube) and many other similar online channels.

Definitions of misuse or inappropriate behaviour

The following actions may constitute misuse of social media or inappropriate behaviour; it is however by no means exhaustive:

- Publishing materials that might be considered inappropriate, offensive or libellous
- Publishing materials considered to be defamatory or to the detriment of the School and its community

In the event that any pupil/parent/carer of the school is found to be posting libellous or defamatory comments on Facebook or other social media network sites, they will be reported to the appropriate “report abuse” section of the network site. The school will also expect the pupil/parent/carer to remove such comments immediately. The school will consider its legal options to deal with any such misuse or inappropriate behaviour.

Appendix 6

Schools Social Media Guidance for Use

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the School Based Social Media Policy

Introduction

Social media provides a two-way communication portal for engaging with parents, students and for sharing news with the local community. Teachers, students, staff, and other school community members should feel encouraged to use social networking/media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) as a way to connect with others, share educational resources, create and curate educational content, if they believe it will enhance the school experience.

While social networking is fun and valuable, there are some risks you should keep in mind when using these tools. In the social media world, the lines are blurred between what is public or private, personal or professional.

This guidance is not an exhaustive list of do's and don'ts but aims to provide some useful information for schools to consider when using social media to communicate with parents and staff.

Please do the following when using social media on behalf of the school:

Use good judgement

- You must know and follow the school's Code of Conduct and Privacy Policy, if one has been set out.
- Regardless of the accounts privacy settings, assume that all of the information you have shared on any social network, on behalf of the school, is public information.

Be respectful

- Always treat others in a respectful, positive and considerate manner when using the school's corporate account.

Be a good listener

- Keep in mind that one of the biggest benefits of social media is that it gives others another way to talk to you, ask questions directly and to share feedback.
- Be responsive to others when conversing online. Provide answers, thank people for their comments, and ask for further feedback, etc.
- Always be doing at least as much listening and responding as you do "talking".

Don't share the following:

Confidential information

- Do not publish, post or release information that is considered confidential or not public. If it seems confidential, it probably is. Online "conversations" are never fully private.

Private and personal information

- Schools are advised to consider making their social media account(s), particularly X, private to prevent any unwanted followers from accessing the information shared. Schools should be aware that a private Twitter account prevents followers from sharing content or accessing web links.
- NEVER give out or transmit personal information of students, parents, or co-workers.

Engaging with parents and students:

Following/befriending

- Schools are advised not to directly follow or befriend students or parents through the school social media account(s). Many people use social media for personal reasons and may not wish for their school to read everything.

Sharing/Retweeting

- Only share student or parent posts if they tag the school their message or ask consent from the person before sharing through the school platform.

Communication with students

- Hashtags on X are a great way to get students talking about specific projects or events – such as charity bake sales, sports days, etc. This will stir up conversation around these topics so students/pupils can engage with you and each other.
- Homework reminders can also be sent out on platforms.
- Share insightful videos or images that can encourage pupils to study and improve their learning.

Communication with parents

- Most communication with parents is welcomed – discussion of school holiday dates, closure dates, discussion of community-school events.
- If a parent asks for sensitive information on social media then the conversation needs to be taken into a more private domain.
- Never get into political/personal conversations with parents on social media – whether this be in private or in public view.
- If a parent comments favourably for something school related – you can re-share this with your followers, providing you check that the parent is OK to do so.

Please be cautious with respect to:

Images

- You may use photos and video (products, etc.) that are available on the school's website – providing consent was given for use.
- It is not acceptable to post pictures of students under 16 without the consent of their parents. Students over the age of 16 may give their own consent but schools advised to also seek parental consent.
- Do not post pictures of others (co-workers, etc.) without their permission.

Other sites

- A significant part of the interaction on blogs, X, Facebook and other social networks involves passing on interesting content or linking to helpful resources. However, the school is ultimately responsible for any content that is shared. Don't blindly repost a link without looking at the content first.
- Pay attention to the security warnings that pop up on your computer before clicking on unfamiliar links. They serve a purpose and protect you and the school.
- When using X, Facebook and other tools, be sure to follow their printed terms and conditions.

And if you don't get it right...

- Be sure to correct any mistake you make immediately, and make it clear what you've done to fix it.
- Apologise for the mistake if the situation warrants it.
- If it's a MAJOR mistake (e.g., exposing private information or reporting confidential information), please let someone know immediately so the school can take the proper steps to help minimise the impact it may have.

Netiquette:

- Users should always use the Internet, network resources, and online sites in a courteous and respectful manner.
- Users should also recognise that among the valuable content online is unverified, incorrect, or inappropriate content. Users should use trusted sources when conducting research via the Internet.
- Users should also remember **not to post anything online that they wouldn't want parents, teachers, or future colleges or employers to see**. Once something is online, it's out there - and can sometimes be shared and spread in ways you never intended.

Safeguarding

If you see any content which raises safeguarding concerns please follow the school and Local Authority safeguarding protocols.

Appendix 7

Process to follow when inappropriate use of social media is observed by parents

Legal

- Legal can support schools in the writing of letters to individuals where appropriate. This could range from remarks made that are malicious or libellous remarks to those that ill-informed or mean.
- To be a criminal offence any comment would have to be racially or sexually discriminatory or offensive, or would have to be a threat of real violence.
- A continued course of harassment via social media could be classed as criminal harassment but that would have to be directed at the person not just be comments about them.
- There is also a civil action which could be brought for defamation in certain circumstances. There is no 'legal aid' funding for that type of civil action so the person bringing it would have to pay for it, and also the costs of the other person if they lost the case.

Online Safety Advice and Guidance

- The Professionals **Online Safety Helpline** are used to dealing with issues of inappropriate use of social media and are therefore well placed to respond.
 - Whether the incidents involve a child, staff members or the school, the **Online Safety Helpline** are able to provide support and advice.
 - A poster for the staffroom wall can be sourced from <http://swgflstore.com/collections/resources/products/helpline-postcards>
 - Schools are strongly recommended to contact this helpline for advice tailored specifically to their issue and situation; contact details - 0844 381 4772 or via email at helpline@saferinternet.org.uk or you can visit their webpage at www.safeinternet.org.uk for help, support and guidance.
 - This **service is provided free of charge** and schools will benefit from their extensive expertise in this area
 - Advice and guidance can also be obtained from **360 degree safe Cymru (available free from hwb.wales.gov.uk)** as referenced in the April Edition of the **Inclusion Newsletter** (see extract below). Colleagues from the **Online Safety Helpline** will soon be contacting all LA's in Wales offering 2 funded days of training/consultancy from Andrew Williams. Schools experiencing issues would be well advised to engage with the tool in order to review their current provision and plan for improvements in their provision for e-Safety.
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e-safety and the Hwb Digital Learning for Wales
Please visit hwb.wales.gov.uk/pages/eSafety-Index

The **e-Safety** zone contains resources, links, advice and support for children and young people, parents/carers and education professionals, and promotes safe and responsible use of the internet by all. The internet and social technologies offer huge possibilities for learning and research, for communication and collaboration and for limitless creativity and we should not lose sight of this positive message but we need to ensure that it is used safely.

Cyber-bullying and young people using social media inappropriately has become a growing concern and as outlined in the recently published **“Keeping Learners Safe”** document all professionals working with children and young people, have a responsibility to keep them as safe as possible and to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of their actions.

This website provides relevant information for Schools, Pupils and Parents

The e-Safety zone for schools is where you will find information on how young people, staff and the wider school community can stay safe online. It also contains specific guidance on the Acceptable Use of Hwb+ other safeguarding guidance documents, resources and advice for education professionals.

Access to **360 degree safe cymru** is available under the schools section. This is a self-reviewing tool that aims to check the quality of your school’s e-safety provision, simply and without costing a penny. If there are any queries using this then please email 360safe@swgfl.org.uk or telephone 0844 8002382

Wherever possible these matters are definitely something that is better ‘managed’ by school rather than recourse to law, but if problems persist colleagues in legal will be able to support schools.

Parents and pupils all too often fail to grasp that their words are too often public and can be seen by many people.

Based upon the advice and information received I would suggest that those schools experiencing problems in the first instance invite the parents in to speak directly with them, as unlike social media which allows people to distance themselves from the people they are abusing, it is far more difficult for them to be gratuitously abusive in person. The following options could also be considered;

- Hold a parents evening to remind parents of the importance of appropriate use of social media and the dangers of inappropriate use and that comments posted on social media can be offensive and disrespectful. This would also be a good opportunity to remind them of parental responsibility in the use of their child’s access to social media.

- Share the schools' E-Safety Policy with parents, where there is lots of useful information and messages applicable to both the school and wider community on appropriate usage.

Example

Some internet activity eg accessing child abuse images or distributing racist material is illegal and would obviously be banned from school and all other ICT systems. Other activities eg Cyber-bullying would be banned and could lead to criminal prosecution. There are however a range of activities which may, generally, be legal but would be inappropriate in a school context.

- All pupils to receive E-safety lessons with the objective of relying this to their parents; pressure from a children can be a very powerful way of communicating a message.
- Offer to hold training sessions for E-safety for parents